



Coasties

My Service in the United States Coast Guard, 1952-1986

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“COASTIES”

FORWARD

These writings cover the 32 years of my active service in the U.S. Coast Guard, from early 1952 until mid 1986. The people I served with over those years were fascinating to me, and perhaps of interest to others as well. There were experiences and occurrences which speak to humor, ineptness, arrogance, failure and other human frailties - and sometimes incredible displays of honor, devotion to duty and professionalism. I found my service with other “Coasties” to be overall uplifting and worthwhile. I always felt that the Coast Guard people with whom I served, military and civilian, often - no, usually - performed their duties with a degree of dedication that is hard to explain. This is particularly true of the “one-hitch” Coasties that made up the bulk of the active service. True, there are multi-generation traditions of Coast Guard professionals. The Midgetts and Grays of the Carolina Outer Banks are among them.

There are many father-son examples - Admiral Ed Roland and his sons Bill and Allen, Rear Admiral “Ric” Ratti and his son Steve, Rear Admiral Ed Nelson and his son Darrell, Rear Admiral Robert Durfey and his son Bob are a few whom I knew during my service years.

I stumbled into joining the Coast Guard on what can best be described as an adolescent whim rather than any “calling” to a high profession. A teenage friend of mine was contacted by a Coast Guard recruiter in late 1951, telling him he was likely to be drafted any day, and that foot-soldier duty in Korea was probably less desirable than an enlistment in the Coast Guard. I accompanied this friend to see the recruiter, mainly out of curiosity, and he proved to be a convincing fellow indeed! I was 5 months shy of my 18th birthday, and it took some “doing” to convince my father to sign a “permission to enlist” document. But he finally did, and I officially enlisted on January 4, 1952. So did my friend.

In retrospect I may have been predestined to join a military service and become a career officer. Back in late 1945 or early 1946 (I was 11 or 12), my father and I

were boarders in the home of a wonderful lady whom I recall only as Mrs. Wright. She had a reputation as a clairvoyant, though she steadfastly (and good-naturedly) refused to “tell my fortune” each of the many times I pleaded with her. Finally, one day she agreed to “read the tea leaves” for me. She prepared tea in a pot, poured some into a cup, and drained the liquid leaving a residue of wet tea leaves at which she stared intently. She told me only two things. First, I would receive a large package in the mail within a few days. I did, though there was no birthday or other similar event in the offing. She also told me I would make my profession wearing an eagle on my hat. I didn’t quite understand, at least not then. A dozen years later it seemed to make sense!

But whatever twist of fate led me to the Coast Guard doesn’t matter all that much. To me, I was blessed with the opportunity to serve in that fine outfit. It was, to me, more than just a “line of work.”

Richard Wight, CAPT USCG(ret

CHAPTER ONE

SEMPER PAR

The bus, a rattling relic, apparently a Navy cast-off, bounced across the low bridge to Government Island, a small patch of flat property in the harbor at Alameda, California. Several young men in sailor's garb, but with leggings like infantrymen, waved and jeered at the 40-odd of us gawking out each side of the ancient vehicle. We could hear snatches of their taunts. "Your ass belongs to the Coast Guard!" "You'll be sorry!" "Mama can't help you now!"

I didn't care much. I was tired!! We'd had a tough two days, the dozen of us who'd come from Washington State. We had arrived in Seattle in early afternoon, on a cold blustery day just after New Year, and were met by a blasé and officious Coast Guard petty officer who swore us in as recruits. He issued us meal tickets, YMCA room chits and train tickets to Oakland, California. That night we rambled the city, feeling adult and dramatic, on the verge of a new and urgent change in our lives. At age 17, I thought I was pretty well up to it - if I could just figure out what "it" was! We didn't sleep much that night, trying to find someone who'd serve us a beer, looking for one of "those places" where "women of the trade" were - trying to act out how we THOUGHT we were supposed to act!! Nothing much happened, but we didn't get to sleep until way past 3 a.m.! We were on the train headed south by late afternoon the next day. Not much sleep that second night either, in a sleeper car full of guys mostly away from home for the first time, and nearly all under 20 years old. Some recruits boarded in Tacoma, some in Portland, maybe a few others further south in Oregon. Among those on the train were two fellows from my hometown - Marvin Grey, with whom I enlisted, and another fellow - Bill Tracy - who was a year ahead of me in high school. We disembarked the train in Oakland on January 5, 1952.

The bus lurched to a stop in front of a long barracks building. A slender young fellow in traditional Navy enlisted blue uniform, but wearing olive drab leggings, boarded the bus. "Fall out!" he shouted. Some of the guys looked bewildered,

and I permitted myself an inward smirk at their stupidity. I scrambled into the aisle and headed for the exit, one of the first to hit the asphalt parking lot. The young "Coastie", perhaps a seaman recruit himself, more or less herded us into a formation of three ranks and told us to stand fast. A buzz of whispering and low conversation raged for a minute or two, mostly speculation on what came next! We fell silent. A broad-shouldered man, dressed in khaki with a billed hat, walked briskly down the barracks porch steps and toward us. He halted in front of us, strangely silent, looking back and forth at our loose formation. I felt sweat running!

He cleared his throat. "You are the moteliest, milk-sopping, most degenerate looking bunch of unkempt civilian marijuana-smoking, mother-loving, daddy-aping, beer drinking, idiotic looking pieces of inept children I've seen since I got to this place!" He glared at us, hands on hips, and strode back and forth in front of us for what seemed like an eternity. "But you are in luck!" he bellowed. "I, Chief Malone, will lead you! You are about to become Coast Guardsmen, those of you who are worthy! Pay attention!"

With that, he turned to the young sailor who herded us from the bus, and said, "Take charge!" The chief marched briskly back into the barracks. Later on, I realized he'd tongue-lashed us pretty good, but hadn't used one word of profanity!

So started my Coast Guard career. Chief Malone was in charge of the "forming" barracks where a new company of recruits - "boots" we were called - were processed into the service, issued uniforms and other equipment, given physical exams, and taught a bare minimum of rules designed to keep us in line and out of trouble. We didn't see a lot of "The Chief" in the few days he had us in his charge- but from time to time he appeared, silent and observing, and his presence awed us. But mostly we saw the young Coastie who first greeted us, the barbers who shaved our heads, the seemingly-bored enlisted men who issued uniforms and showed us how to stencil our names on them with black or

white paint. We were given a short briefing by a young officer - the first we'd seen - I remember had green socks on with his khaki uniform. I don't even remember what he had to say, I was so amused by his "civvie" socks! After his talk, we were administered several multiple choice tests that we later learned were the basis for qualifications for various training schools.

A few days after arrival, we were moved across the quadrangle - newly issued seabags on our shoulders, into another barracks - 160 of us by now - and informed that we were Recruit Company I-4. Our new leader was a tall, slender fellow who Chief Malone introduced as Chief Baker. Baker seemed quiet and mellow by comparison!

That same afternoon, just after we'd marched back from the noon meal, I went to Chief Baker's small office and asked to speak to him. He patiently listened as I told him I'd like to be considered for transfer to the reserve boot company, which I had learned about from one of the seamen who'd issued our uniforms. This company, I'd learned, completed "boot camp" in 5 weeks instead of 13, and was mostly comprised of prior military enlistees, or reservists going on active duty. I explained to Chief Baker that I had gone to an ROTC military high school for one year, and had been in the Civil Air Patrol for two. I could march and knew close order drill, I'd led a drill team, I said. And I could field strip an M-1 rifle. Moreover, I bragged, I knew Morse Code. Baker peered at me with a long, quizzical stare - not much convinced, I thought - and finally said he'd present my case to the training officer. He dismissed me.

The next morning at first muster, he called me out "front and center" along with two other recruits. We were informed that our prior experience didn't merit transfer to the reserve company, but that since the Coast Guard was short of cadre, we were to be designated as recruit platoon leaders. With that, he directed each of us in turn to conduct a few minutes of close order drill with the entire company of 160! It was something of a fiasco, but when my turn came - blessedly last- I bellowed my commands as loud as I could, and kept them VERY

simple! "Left face. Right face. At ease. Company, attention! Forward, march! Companyyyyyyy, Halt!"

The whole company was lined up in three ranks by height, and Chief Baker separated the recruits into three platoons of 50-some each. With a tightlipped smile, he assigned me to the First Platoon - the tallest group - all over 6 feet, BIG guys! I weighed 140 or less, was 5'10", At 17 I was younger than any of them, and certainly the smallest!

Boot camp actually went well for me. The big guys in the platoon either tolerated me with good grace, or genuinely tried to learn what little I could teach them. Marching and close order drill I KNEW! My platoon was the smartest on the island within a few weeks, and we knew it. We actually had fun, or so it seemed to me. During drill practice, I'd stand out in front of them, chest thrown out as far as I could, and tell them I'd beat the crap out of anyone who fouled up! They'd mostly jeer or crack up laughing! The average guy outweighed me by 30 pounds, and outreached me by a foot in many cases! We had a good-natured time, mostly. And I learned too -- sometimes painfully. Once, during a break in our close order drill practice, I bummed a cigarette from a pleasant young black guy from Los Angeles. He handed me a Philip Morse, I think, and I said, "Why thanks! A white man's cigarette!" He said nothing, and I didn't even realize the racial slur I'd made. It was just a dumb saying I'd grown up with, in a small town where few blacks lived. One of the other recruits grabbed me by the arm, and repeated what I'd said. My knees nearly buckled from embarrassment and alarm. I gulped, went over to the black man and apologized. He smiled grimly and passed it off as nothing important -- but he and I both knew better. Growing up was hell!

One weekend evening Chief Baker had the duty and was in charge of our barracks building, and the adjacent one, for the night. They were huge barracks, or so it seemed to me, and housed the "boots" in four recruit companies, over 600 in number. Baker called me into his office just before the evening meal and

told me I was to relieve him of his JOOD duties until the next morning. I was ordered to form up the companies and march them to the evening meal. I was to announce "movie call" over the PA system at the proper time, have those who wanted to see the movie assemble in formation on the quadrangle, and then march them to the movie. At 2200 I was to announce "Lights Out" over the PA system, make a round of the two barracks to see that all were in bed with lights out, and then I was to head over to the OOD's office and report the four companies and the barracks secure for the night. He directed me to remove my leggings so I wouldn't look like a "boot", and to wear my peacoat when I reported to the OOD so he wouldn't see my seaman recruit rating on my left sleeve. I was terrified at the prospect of the responsibility he placed on me, and was about to argue against relieving him - but he motioned me to keep quiet, reassured me all would be well - and donned his coat and hat and left! I carried out his orders without incident, though I was pretty apprehensive when I had perhaps 450 "boots" assembled for evening mess and movie call. But the other recruits marched cheerfully to the mess hall movie without incident. After my round of the two barracks later on that night I walked hesitantly over to the OOD office and reported. "Barracks 1 & 2 secure for the night, sir!" I'm sure my voice cracked and squeaked as I reported, and thought I detected a faint grin on the young OOD's face. As I headed back to the barracks, I was pondering the heavy weight of military orders and responsibility - but couldn't help letting a little swagger slip into my gait! But I didn't sleep much that night.....

Most of the 160 in Recruit Company I-4 survived boot camp. One fellow from Oklahoma, a gung-ho young guy with lots of savvy, had a leg of not quite normal size and strength because of a bout with polio when he was a child. He pleaded to say in, declaring he could do anything the rest of the "boots" could do. And we mostly believed he could! But they sent him home. Another young fellow, a strangely simple and pleasant young man from Louisiana, nearly "bilged out" because he just couldn't get the hang of marching and keeping in step. He was pretty upset about it, and tried hard, but just always seemed to be out of step, turning the wrong direction, or executing a movement too late. He took lots of

ribbing from others in the platoon, and was dubbed with the cruel nickname of "Swamp Boy". I spent some extra time and effort working with him. I placed him in the middle of the outside rank near where I marched beside the platoon, and made him stamp his feet firmly in time to the cadence I called loudly toward his ear.. I also gave him some private close order drill instructions, in spare minutes - but at first nothing seemed to help. Then one day it "clicked!" He just "caught on" and from then on became a real snappy marcher! By common agreement, we made him the guide-on color bearer for the whole company. He was perhaps the proudest young man in the company when we marched out onto the drill field for our graduation ceremony, one cool morning in early April 1952.

With orders in hand to report to the Coast Guard Base at Seattle, Washington. I shouldered my seabag and boarded a bus. The 150-odd of us headed off to different parts of the country for assignment, with ten days of "boot leave" before reporting. I didn't see very many of them again.....

CHAPTER TWO
FIRST ASSIGNMENT
USCGC WINONA (WPG 65)

Spring 1952

The ten days leave was really more than I needed, because I was really anxious to find out what the future held. My understanding of the Coast Guard was certainly limited, but broader than it had been three months ago. I had envisioned myself as a crewman on a white-hulled boat, patrolling hydroplane races on Seattle's Lake Washington. I now understood I'd probably be assigned to a larger ship; a cutter, assigned to ocean weather patrols, or a buoy tender servicing navigational aids – or, perhaps, to a polar icebreaker. So with anticipation, I reported to the small Coast Guard base tucked along the Lake Washington ship canal, just above the Ballard locks connecting Lake Union to Puget Sound.

It was a bustling place, filled with Coast Guard personnel being processed for re-assignment or discharge. The Korean War was still underway, which had apparently generated additional missions for the Coast Guard. At that time, there were a number of Navy destroyer-escorts and 311' seaplane tenders on loan to the Coast Guard, in addition to its 255' and 327' long range cutters. These ships had crews of perhaps 140 to 160 officers and enlisted men, and the efforts to operate all of them was causing the Coast Guard some difficulties! Anyhow, there were signup sheets posted on prominent bulletin board, allowing us recruits to pick certain assignments. One was for USCGC WINONA at Port Angeles, Washington. I took it upon myself to sign up myself and several of my boot company companions for that ship. As it turned out, my "boot camp buddies" were less than happy about it!

But we reported aboard WINONA one rainy day in the third week of April, were assigned bunks and issued foul weather gear, and assigned to the deck force. My recollections of that first week aboard are hazy, a maze of strange sights and customs. WINONA was a 255' cutter, only 6 years old [and] steam powered. It

was armed with a 5" 38 gun mount, a quad (4-barrelled) 40MM anti-aircraft gun, several 20MM AA guns, 6 depth charge "K" guns and two depth charge racks on the stern. I thought it was an awesome array of weaponry, and began to realize that it was actually a warship!

I remember one sunny day – not real common during spring in Port Angeles – I was assigned to the gunnery department to paint the depth charge rack on the stern of the ship. I was slapping black paint on the depth charge rack with enthusiasm and vigor, eager to please the chief gunner's mate who had told me what to do. "Paint over the grease fittings and all," he had instructed. "We'll replace the fittings later." As I painted, I noticed a fellow in shorts and no shirt sitting in a lawn chair on the weather balloon-launching catwalk above me, overlooking the fantail. He was apparently taking advantage of the rare sunshine and unusually warm day. He seemed to be watching me from time to time, so I redoubled my efforts to paint quickly and effectively.

Eventually the shirtless man stood up, leaned on the rail peering down at me, and said, "Son, don't paint over the grease fittings." "It's o.k.," I responded cheerfully. "The chief said to!" At that moment I saw the chief, standing on deck just below the catch-walk where the shirtless man stood, gesturing and shaking his head. I later learned that the shirtless fellow was our commanding officer, LCDR Russell Serenberg. The chief gunners mate later "caught some flak" over the incident, so we heard.

Those of us in WINONA's crew were engaged in several days of furious activity, loading stores and equipment, taking on fuel from a barge and other preparations to sail. Just before my 18th birthday we sailed from Port Angeles, outbound in the Strait of Juan De Fuca toward the Pacific. As we headed out towards the open sea, the 5 or 6 of us new "boots" were assigned to a painting detail in the upper handling room below the 5" 38 gun mount. The location was below the main deck, near the bow of the ship. We were directed to paint the overhead (ceiling) and fittings with white enamel paint. And as the ship headed toward

open water, the ship's motion – surging up and down in the mounting ocean swells – became more pronounced. The nauseating fumes from the paint, combined with the pitching of the ship, quickly took its toll. The young 3rd class boatswain mate in charge of our detail seemed amused as my companions, one by one, rushed out of the handling room headed for the main deck, suffering the obvious symptoms of sea sickness. I soon figured out we “boots” were being initiated, but in my stubborn way I was determined not to give in to seasickness. One by one my mates on the painting detail disappeared topside, not to return, but I stoically painted on! The young boatswain mate (Settlemeir was his name, I think) would disappear for a few minutes, then return to watch me in silence. I painted on!

After perhaps an hour, as the ship's pitching became more pronounced, I too was feeling the pangs of nausea brought about by the ship's motions and the stench of paint. But I stuck with it as long as I could, before I rushed headlong through the hatchway and up the ladder to the main deck. I nearly trampled Settlemeir on the way up the ladder, and we hit the main-deck railing together, both retching and gasping. “You stubborn sunofabitch!”, he gasped. “Go back and secure the paint and brushes, and knock off!” I did so gladly, feeling lousy – but somehow I recognized I'd earned Settlemeir's grudging respect.

I spent my 18th birthday 1000 miles out in the North Pacific, between San Francisco and Honolulu, where WINONA spent 21 consecutive days launching weather balloons and providing radar tracking services for commercial and military aircraft going between Hawaii and California. The location where we were stationed was called Ocean Station “N” (“Nan” phonetically, in those days - “November” later). The days at sea were routine and not unpleasant, filled with painting and cleaning the ship, exercising at various drills, training at launching boats and fighting imaginary fires onboard. One Sunday, in sunny weather, we rigged scramble nets down one side of the hull and the commanding officer authorized a swim call. It was an eerie feeling jumping into the ocean, knowing the bottom was 2 miles below.

During our time at sea, whenever I had free time, I wandered around the ship investigating the engine room, boiler room, CIC, bridge, radio room, galley and whatever else I could see. Shortly before we left boot camp, I'd been advised that my battery tests qualified me for most service schools, and was offered the chance to apply for several – electronics technician, electrician, radarman were three of those offered. But I didn't know which one I wanted, so I turned them down to get the chance to go to an operating unit to learn what Coasties did. My wanderings around the ship were partly curiosity about the ship, and partly my effort to figure out what specialty rate I'd like the best. A favorite spot became the radio room. It was clean and warm, the operators on watch had their own coffee pot and other "creature comforts", and the environment sure seemed better than working on deck – particularly in bad weather! I knew a little Morse code, and sometimes the watch supervisor - usually a 2nd class petty officer - would let me put on some headphones and try to copy some of it. During one of my visits, the chief radioman asked if I wanted to go to radio school, and I did exhibit an interest.

WINONA put in to Long Beach Harbor after over 30 days at sea. We were out of fresh foods of all kinds – bread and salad stuff in particular. I was a mess cook – lowliest form of life aboard – but not unhappy at being in the galley. The duty cook told me to head across the dock to WINONA's sister ship, either PONTCHARTRAIN or MINNETONKA, to get some bread and lettuce if they had some to spare. The instant the gangway was down, I skipped nimbly to the dock – took several energetic strides – became dizzy and fell down! After over a month of walking about a rolling deck, I couldn't handle a steady platform! Land sickness, they call it, and after being laughed at by Coasties on deck on two ships, I vowed never to catch it again. I didn't, either! I was steadier on my feet when I came back with all the bread I could carry, and returned for the same load of lettuce.

We were moored in Long Beach for several days, and were granted early liberty most afternoons. Two of my boot camp buddies and I rented a car one of those

afternoons, a Chevy convertible, and drove all around the Los Angeles area hunting for Hollywood, "Muscle Beach" and other famous places we'd heard of. We didn't see much of interest. But it was a grand adventure to be free to go wherever we wanted, only blighted by our inability to get any store to sell us some liquor because none of us were 21. That evening we wandered though the permanent amusement park that once nestled next to the beach in Long Beach harbor, and learned that young Coasties in uniform weren't necessarily interesting to pretty young women.

We sailed out of Long Beach on a Sunday, down the coast to San Diego, and moored at the Navy base. For the next three weeks we trained with the Navy, and I remember it as a confusing and demanding time with drills and exercises daily. We spent nearly every day underway the final two weeks, often in exercises with Navy ships. I was assigned duties as a first loader on our 40MM gun whenever we were at "general quarters" ("GQ" or battle stations), and early in our training session our whole gun crew went out on a Navy ship for training. The ship was an old cargo vessel outfitted with what seemed dozens of twin and quad 40MM gun mounts. We fired at real targets towed by aircraft, and the din and smoke was unbelievable!

I don't think I ever learned how we "scored" in training, but at an "all hands" formation just before we sailed for home, the captain complimented us on our training progress and performance. Our transit up the coast was pleasant, with calm seas and good weather. I recall watching, fascinated, as so-called flying fish broke the water's surface and "sailed" for what seemed incredible distances.

We were back to our permanent moorings in Port Angeles in late May, and were granted 72-hour liberty. I hooked a ride home to Richland, Washington with my friend Marvin Grey, who had an old car of questionable reliability. On our return trip we left about midnight to be back to Pot Angeles when liberty expired at 0900. But we had no less than two flat tires enroute, and after the second one we hitch-hiked the rest of the way. We were nearly an hour late reporting, and as

we walked briskly down the dock I saw the quartermaster peering intently at us. By the time we arrived at the gangway, the executive officer - LT Langenbeck was his name - was gesturing urgently for us to hurry up. I thought we were in deep trouble!

That wasn't the case. The XO explained that I was headed for radio operator school in Connecticut, that I had just over an hour to pack my gear and head for the Port Angeles airport, and that I would report to radio school the following day. I think I set a record for emptying my locker and packing a seabag. I was hustled into the ship's jeep, and a young radarman drove me at breakneck speed to the airport.

The flights to the east coast were a marathon! I flew in a DC-3 to Seattle, then a four engine prop plane (a DC-4?) to New York City, then another DC-3 to New London. It was late afternoon the next day when I got off a bus in downtown New London, sweltering in dress blues on an unusually warm New England day. I encountered a New London police officer and learned from him that the Coast Guard training station was back across the Thames River at Avery Point, Groton. New London, he told me, was the home of the Coast Guard Academy where prospective officers were trained. Confused and tired, I shouldered my seabag and walked into a nearby hotel lobby. I rented a room and slept. The next day I found my way to Groton Training Station and reported in, two days late for school, but my explanation of why I arrived when I did seemed sufficient to the OOD and training officer.

I helped organize a USCGC WINONA reunion in the fall of 1996, in Port Angeles, Washington, where the ship was home-ported for just about its whole "life" - 1946 to 1974.

CHAPTER THREE

RADIO SCHOOL

July-December 1952

The school for radio operators was 24 weeks in duration, with a good portion of each day engaged in learning Morse code and improving our copying speed. We were required to reach a minimum speed of 18 words per minutes, I think, with a minimal error rate. We also studied some electronics theory, radio propagation, military circuit procedures as well as maritime (civilian) procedures. We had weekly quizzes and code tests, and as the weeks wore on our ranks thinned. But I had no particular trouble, and mostly enjoyed the school and the station itself. We were required to stay aboard the station weeknights, but were granted liberty from Saturday morning until Sunday evening. I made a number of trips to New York City, riding the train down.

Typically, we'd stay at the YMCA and get free tickets to Broadway shows and other entertainment. I attended performances by the Dorsey brothers, singer Ella Fitzgerald and others. New York was an exciting place for a young guy from a small town in Washington State. I remember one time inquiring about the location Waldorf Astoria hotel, and set out to go there. New York has a legal drinking age of 18, and I wanted to be served a drink in the Waldorf men's bar – I think because of some scene I'd seen in a movie as a youngster. I found the hotel, and a doorman directed me to the bar which was nearly empty a mid afternoon when I arrived. A kindly bar tender, no doubt amused by a young Coastie obviously "out of his element", asked me what I'd like to be served. I was tongue-tied, without the faintest idea what to order. He suggested a Tom Collins, which I gratefully agreed to. After the one drink, I slipped out – the price of one drink was more than I expected to spend for dinner!

One true character in our radio school class was a young fellow named Nicholas A. Adamshock. Nick was from Pennsylvania, had a marvelous sense of humor and comic patter, and was a favorite of us all. He and I made a few "liberties" together, and I learned he wanted to be an actor – indeed, he professed to be one, and said he had

been in Hollywood doing some “B” movies. But the draft was closing in on him, so he joined the Coast Guard. Sure enough, one evening the base theater had a movie scheduled that Adam Shock claimed he had a part in. The movie was a musical with Ralph Meeker, Betty Hutton and other quite well known Hollywood names in it, so most of us were not convinced he was telling us the truth. But sure enough, toward the end of the movie, Nick appeared on the giant screen dressed as a telegram delivery boy. He presented a telegram to Betty Hutton, and uttered his one line: “Telegram from Mr. Benny!” We in the audience who knew Nick roared with laughter. But Nick went on to some success in Hollywood, receiving his first big break with a significant part in “Mr. Roberts” with Henry Fonda and Jack Lemmon. He was still on active duty in the Coast Guard when the movie was shot, stationed on USCGC PERSEUS in San Diego. He took 30 days leave to do location shots in Hawaii, and apparently his commanding officer was pretty cooperative in letting him commute to Hollywood for interior shots.

The story goes that Nick finagled his way in to see the casting director for “Mr. Roberts”, dressed in bellbottom dungarees and white hat, and among other things convinced the director that he could add authenticity to his role. I saw the movie a number of times, and Nick did just that, with speaking parts in a variety of scenes. Nick went on to do roles in a number of films, playing John Dillinger in one. He came up with the idea for the character “Johnny Yuma”, sold it to a TV production outfit, and starred in the character role in a TV series of some popularity for several years. His professional name in films and television was Nick Adams, and he did some Coast Guard recruiting advertisements. Nick died while in his 30s, I think, of an apparent medication and alcohol combination dosage that was fatal – or so the story went. When I knew him he didn’t drink - perhaps he’d sip one beer, nothing more.

There were 46 of us that graduated from Radio School class 67 on Dec. 15, 1952, all seamen with radio operator designations sewn proudly on our sleeves. Three of us were ordered to 13th CG District, Seattle for assignment. The others were Verne Atherly (from Seattle), and Harold G. “Hal” Schall from rural Ohio. I still have an RM Class 67 book that we published ourselves and reproduced on “ditto” paper. It contains the names and addresses of all 46 who graduated, with a number of jokes and personal

vignettes, and a list of all the Groton Training Station hierarchy as affected our class. Station CO was CAPT B Jordan, the XO was CDR F. J. Statts, the training officer was CDR P. E. Burhorst, OINC of the radio school was CDR G.M. Gallagher. I encountered Statts and Burhorst later in my career. We had four chief radiomen instructors: Gadikian, Alles, Roche and Wright; and eight first class radiomen: Fizell, Dean, Gibalski, Franklin, Chesley, Hammack, Wilkinson, and Bridgham.

CHAPTER FOUR

USCGC NORTHWIND WAGB-282

January 1952-June 1955

After leave and travel time I reported to Base Seattle, now a familiar place to me, just after Christmas 1952. Atherly and Schall reported there too, and the three of us were all assigned to USCGC NORTHWIND, a polar icebreaker home-ported in Seattle. The ship moored at the U.S. Navy Station at Pier 91. We reported aboard just before New Year 1953. I served aboard NORTHWIND for 2-1/2 years. At the end of my first year onboard, the district communications officer offered to transfer Atherly, Schall and I. I told him I'd rather stay aboard than go to the district communications center or Westport Washington Radio Station (NMW). So he just left me onboard for the rest of my enlistment.

My tour on NORTHWIND was mostly an adventure. Our chief radioman was a kindly man we called "Pappy" Haskett, and a big, pleasant fellow. RM1 John Sutton was the senior watchstander. We generally had 7-8 radio operators onboard, stood 2-man watches underway, and copied U.S. Navy Fox broadcasts for most of our incoming traffic. We also voluntarily copied commercial press broadcasts each day and published a ship's newspaper. Every radioman on board could copy code above 27 words per minute, after a patrol. We HAD to! I spent my 19th birthday onboard, already the veteran of one winter deployment to the Bering Sea. On that trip we penetrated the ice all the way into the Bering Strait, and made a port call at Nome, in February, 1953. By the time we returned to Seattle, I was promoted to radioman 3rd class.

In all I made five Arctic patrols on the ship, generally of 3-4 months duration. Two summer deployments were DEWLINE missions where we performed icebreaking duties for U.S. Navy ships carrying construction materials and radar equipment to construct the first U.S. radar early warning stations on the Bering Sea and Beaufort Sea coasts of Alaska. We made three trips to San Diego as a part of the deployments, to load special equipment and Navy scientific and engineering personnel. On two patrols we embarked

Dr. Waldo K. Lyon who was head of the Naval Electronics Laboratory, and reputed to be the project officer for deployment of the first nuclear submarine USS NAUTILUS under the Arctic icecap. NAUTILUS did indeed transit from the Atlantic to the Pacific via the Arctic. NORTHWIND was a key player in charting the waterways of the Beaufort Sea, and in testing under-ice submarine operations. On one deployment we had a Navy submarine in company, and NORTHWIND maintained their radio guard. We once nested the sub alongside – after it accidentally rammed us amidships and punctured a diesel fuel tank! I scrambled down into the sub to deliver their radio traffic, found their tiny radio room – and was astonished to find the radioman on watch to be a young guy from my hometown of Richland, Washington. Small world!

During on in-port break I went home on leave, and took another radioman home with me. His name was Jerrell P. “Whitey” Bryant from Lakeland, Florida. Whitey (a towhead) and I attended the Richland (Washington) Kiwanis Club luncheon, sponsored by my father who was club secretary. We had brought some film and photos, and presented a program to the club on NORTHWIND’s arctic operations including charting for the NAUTILUS deployment. Our program made the front page of the local newspaper along with a picture of Whitey and I. I later learned we were spouting off classified information – but nothing ever came of it!

By December, 1953 I was promoted to radioman 2nd class – still age 19, the youngest 2nd class petty officer on the ship. I liked my work, and was a good CW operator. I also assumed duties of the ship’s mailman. In-port, this was a good deal. I rated every night liberty and had weekends off too. Twice a day I’d take the ship’s jeep to the Fleet Post Office down on South First in Seattle, and to the district office on Cherry Street. Afternoons I’d often stop at Ivar’s Seafood House on the waterfront, for a cup of clam nectar. I’d sort mail and guardmail and distribute it around the ship. Often I was called upon to drive the ship’s commanding officer or other officers to various commitments.

The two CO’s I served under were CAPT Richard E. Morrell and CAPT William “Wild Bill” Maloney. Morrell was a fine gentleman, quiet and competent, well liked by the entire crew. Maloney was a totally different kind of man – also friendly and pleasant, but

somewhat more of a character. He was an avid tennis player, and though in his 40s, he won the 13th Naval District tennis tournament at least once.

Maloney was something of a jokester. I recall him standing over me in the radio room as I copied a message. "Amazing!" he said. "How do you type and copy code at the same time?" It took me awhile to figure out he was "putting me on." Once I was "hanging around" on the bridge as we broke ice, and CAPT Maloney vaulted vigorously up the ladder onto the bridge, startling those of us present. He clapped the OOD on the back and said, "Well, where the hell are we, boss?" The OOD, relatively new to the ship, was speechless. Several of us suppressed giggles.

NORTHWIND had its share of characters. One was a first class boatswain mate we all called "The Russian." His surname was Edvokimoff (or something like that). He was a fine petty officer underway, an excellent seaman and boat handler, and a natural leader who got great results from subordinates. Rumor had it he had been out of the service for awhile, owned a machine shop in the San Francisco area, then lost the business under murky circumstances involving a broken marriage (and perhaps a broken heart). "The Russian" was a legendary binge drinker who often failed to return from liberty on time, sometimes AWOL for 2-3 days. He'd eventually show up on his own, disheveled and dirty, and "go on the wagon" for weeks at a time. Apparently the command overlooked his foibles because of his value as a deck seamanship leader, particularly underway. I recall when he was transferred to a 180' buoy tender home ported in Astoria, Oregon. The tender was tied up at the pier ahead of us on a port visit, and "The Russian", on one of his "toots", tried to kidnap our ship's mascot. The dog, a trim and fit male Boxer named Oliver, had probably been looked after more by "The Russian" than any other crew member. Apparently "The Russian's" drinking sprees eventually exhausted the patience of his buoy tender CO. I heard later that he had been demoted two grades to petty officer 3rd class.

Another character was our supply officer, Chief Warrant Officer Larry Probst – if my memory serves me right. Probst paid everyone in cash, even on patrols, though we were allowed to make partial draws instead of full pay if we so wished. Mr. Probst often

bought fresh foodstuffs at any port of call opportunity, and carried cash onboard to cover all kinds of procurement emergencies. One day I was directed to take Mr. Probst to the Federal Reserve Bank in Seattle for a cash draw. We both wore .45 caliber pistols as sidearms, unloaded, but with several clips of ammunition on our belts. I drove him in our WW II-vintage jeep, and remember driving down a drive, through a steel door into a vehicle waiting area where we were identified by an armed guard. A second steel door admitted us to a loading area underground, under the bank. I accompanied Probst up into the bank and sat on a bench when he went off into a vault with an official. He came back with two briefcases full of currency, and we exited the bank and drove through downtown Seattle back to the Navy base at Pier 91 where the ship moored. Probst, on apparent impulse, had me pull up in front of a drug store. "Wait here", he said. "gotta go inside for a card for my wife." I sat nervously in the jeep with the bulging briefcases on the floor, wondering if – when – someone would shove a gun in my face and demand the cash! I loaded my pistol, chambered a round, flipped on the safety and laid the pistol on my lap. When Mr. Probst returned he looked at the pistol and then at me with a quizzical expression, but said nothing. We headed on toward the ship, but Probst directed me to an auto repair shop enroute, I think on 2nd Street not too far from Denny Way. He said his car was there being worked on, and he needed to see if it was ready for him. Moments later he returned, told me his car was ready and he'd drive it back to the ship. "Head back to ship," he instructed, "and I'll meet you at the gangway." I mumbled something about the money. He grinned. "You take it, Wight. You're the guy with the loaded gun!" He chuckled and walked away. That short drive down to Pier 91 was the longest ride I ever took. I learned from him later that there was well over \$200,000 in the brief cases – three months payroll for a crew of over 225, money for fuel and supplies etc. In the early '50s, that was a whole lot of money to a petty officer who earned less than \$150 a month!

We usually deployed with a Navy helicopter, two pilots and ground crew embarked onboard for use in ice recon work. Typically one of the ship's underway OODs would fly with a Navy pilot on recon missions. Once, I was out on deck during flight operations to watch the launch. The little Bell helo lifted off, circled aft – then abruptly lost power and pitched into the icy waters astern of the ship. It seemed an eternity before first the pilot,

and then the Coast Guard officer surfaced alongside the inverted helo, kept afloat upside down by its pontoons. And it seemed even longer for us to get a boat launched to rescue them. I pitched in and helped lower the boat, because I was nearby. Both officers survived without serious injury, but I recall the NORTHWIND officer, LTJG Lambert J. “Juggie” Larson (Academy ’51), was bleeding from the nose and shivering violently when he was helped out of the boat. Larson had been the ship’s communication officer earlier in his tour, and had been a hard task master – but a fair and forthright officer. He had tested me for promotion to RM2, as I recall, and the written and verbal exams were rigorous.

During one of the patrols (summer 1954), with Dr. Waldo Lyon and the Navy scientists onboard, we stopped in Mercy Bay on Banks Island, Canada N.W. Territory. The island, a large one, was apparently not inhabited except for occasional part time visits by Canadian Royal Mounted Police officers. Mercy Bay had been where an American explorer, James McClure, lost his ship when it was caught in the icepack in the bay. He and his crew moved equipment and supplies ashore, may have wintered there, and the following spring hiked south across the island where they rendezvoused with another ship of the expedition, and were saved. We found a rock cairn apparently erected by McClure and his crew, and we were told not to disturb it as it was an important historical structure. We did find old oak barrel staves and metal rings, remnants of dogsled harness and other debris, just scattered about. McClure had been there 100 years early, in 1852-3 or thereabouts. We Coasties were tasked with erecting a temporary electronics navigation station. We built a small Quonset hut, erected a 100’ metal tower, moved a generator and electronic equipment ashore, and blasted a hole in the permafrost for the temporary station’s crew to use as a refrigerator. We had two amphibious DUKW vehicles onboard to help move stuff and people between ship and shore, but our LCVP landing craft – one of NORTHWIND’s boats - was the workhorse. I think it took us about 48 hours to complete the work, with mostly volunteer crew members working around the clock in shifts. I was one of the volunteers, and when the job was done we had a cookout and beer party onshore. We took all the beer cans - Olympia and Rainier, I think - and erected them into a historical cairn of our own to commemorate NORTHWIND’s visit.

On that expedition, the Navy icebreaker BURTON ISLAND was deployed with us, and we were joined by the new Canadian icebreaker HMCS LABRADOR. BURTON ISLAND was an identical "Wind" class icebreaker, and LABRADOR was the same hull size and configuration, but 6-8 years newer and with different engines. LABRADOR was on her maiden Arctic deployment, and made the transit from the Atlantic to join us near Banks Island. I think she was the first ship to transit the so-called Northwest Passage from Atlantic to Pacific, at least in one summer. Later that year there was an issue of *LIFE* Magazine largely devoted to our Arctic operations. A double-size color foldout photo of NORTHWIND appeared in the issue, taken by a Coast Guard enlisted photographer's mate. *LIFE* magazine tried for several days to get photos from the air, and a photographer made several unfruitful flights from Labrador on military aircraft to get the photos. His name was Mike Rozier or something similar, and our three-ship contingent – NORTHWIND, BURTON ISLAND and LABRADOR – would rendezvous for a "group picture" that never happened. We sent photos out with several officers who were flown out from an obscure little Air Force base on Barter Island, east of Point Barrow on the Alaskan northern slope coast.

As we approached Barter Island to disembark our officers, I was the radio operator on watch. I tried to raise the Air Force base on every frequency and mode of communications I could find in the publications, but no response. The OOD, the Executive Officer and the CO were all getting anxious and frustrated. Finally I started making repeated calls to Barter Island on a low frequency "voice" circuit that was supposed to be used by approaching aircraft. I was using our tactical call sign - "Equal King" - as our identifier. During one of my many calls, I got an unexpected response from a voice saying he was "Specter Zero Niner" (or something similar). He too was trying in vain to reach Barter Island on all frequencies that were supposed to work. I asked who he was, and he wouldn't say - but he asked me who "Equal King" was. I told him we were U.S. Coast Guard Cutter NORTHWIND, so he responded "what the 'heck, this is B-47 # (or B-36 – I can't remember). In those days, we had bombers with nuclear weapons flying over the Arctic in the "Cold War" face-off with the USSR. "If you ever raise Barter Island, give them an 'ops normal' from us." I rogered his request.

Later, Barter Island responded to one of my many calls. The conversation went like this: "Equal King this is Barter Island, are you enroute our base?" I responded, "Roger, our ETA is in approximately 3 hours." There was a long silence. Finally, a response: "Equal King this is Barter Island - ah - do you expect to land in about THREE hours? If so, what is your present position?" I realized he figured he was talking to an aircraft, so I told him we were a military icebreaker. There was another long silence, but he finally responded with some traces of doubt in his voice. Not many ships made it to Barter Island! I went ashore at Barter Island later that day to take outgoing mail. The place was terrible - muddy roads, Quonset huts in lousy repair, Air Force people with bored, unhappy or angry demeanors obviously wishing they were elsewhere. The wreckage of a multi-engine aircraft was off to the side of the runway. As I recall, Barter Island was an emergency strip for transiting aircraft, though I wondered how a B-47 would ever be able to land there!

During one of our summer Arctic deployments we were well up into the ice, somewhere near Point Barrow, breaking ice channels for a convoy of Navy ships hauling materials in to build the Dew Line early warning radar system. Our CO, CAPT Maloney, was the senior officer; hence he was the task unit commander, and called "commodore" by the other Navy COs. There were about 15 ships under his operational control, including a communications ship and another Wind class icebreaker. I recall wandering out on deck on day and joining a group of my shipmates staring intently off toward the horizon to the northwest. They pointed out quite a sight! There were seven Navy ships in a line, sailing along upside down. I learned that mirages occur in the Arctic as well as in the deserts. The line of ships was actually somewhere south of us.

On a summer deployment, perhaps that same one, we crossed the Arctic Circle as we did routinely. We had a reserve officer onboard whose name may have been Bursley, a commander, who had been on several Antarctic deployments years earlier, with Admiral Byrd. I recall him getting very, very angry at being initiated into the Royal Order of Bluenoses along with "ordinary youngsters." NORTHWIND also crossed the 180th Parallel on one of our patrols, so we became initiated into Order of the Domain of the Golden Dragon. Years later I applied for the newly-authorized Arctic Service Medal,

citing my service on NORTHWIND for 2-1/2 years. I got the medal, but learned that Coast Guard records contained no information whatsoever about some of the Arctic deployments in which I participated.

In late 1954 I extended my original 3-year enlistment by 6 months, intending to “laze around” the summer of ‘55 after a July 3rd discharge from active duty. I then intended to go to the University of Washington to study electrical engineering, where I had been conditionally accepted into the program. But NORTHWIND sailed before my discharge date, and around 1 June 1955 I was transferred to USCGC WACHUSETT, home-ported at Pier 66 in Seattle. I was sent there to serve out my last few weeks. I don’t remember many of the people on the ship, but the executive officer was a fellow named Harry Haff Jr., a lieutenant commander. Mr. Haff called me in for several counseling sessions trying to get me to re-enlist, but I declined. Finally, one morning less than 10 days before I was to be discharged, he called me in one last time. He told me he could get me orders to electronics technician school in Groton, Connecticut.

The bargain would include a lateral change in rate from RM2 to ET2, permanent change of station orders to Groton, and permanent change of station orders back to the Thirteenth District in Seattle. Also included was a re-enlistment bonus. I pondered the offer overnight.

To this day I’m unsure why I “fell for it” – but I did. Mr. Haff was as good as his word, and message orders to ET School arrived two days before my discharge date. The ship’s pay clerk, another fellow whom I thought to be something of a character, paid me off the day I left – in five dollar bills! I had a re enlistment bonus, Washington State Korean War veterans bonus, a regular payday, advance travel expenses to Connecticut. I don’t remember exactly how much money it was, but I had to load the bills into my “ditty” bag. And while home on leave, I used some of the money plus some savings I’d put aside, with college in mind, to pay cash for new 1955 Chevrolet Bel Air. I “broke it in” driving across the U.S., mostly at breakneck speeds!

CHAPTER FIVE

ELECTRONICS TECHNICIAN (ET) SCHOOL USCG Training Station, Groton, Connecticut

July 1955-January 1956

My 24 weeks in ET School went well, though I was somewhat “at odds” with my impulsive act of re-enlisting. I had signed up for another three years, which obligated me to stay in until July 1958. I still didn’t intend to stay in the service, and since I’d be 24 years old by then, I had reservations about starting college so “late in life.” As it turned out, ET school was a pivotal experience for me. Twenty three of us completed the class. I have a class photo, but after 43 years I can only remember the names of a couple of them. Since I was an “old man” of 21 with nearly four years of service, I was assigned duties as the class leader. I had privileges non-rated students didn’t – liberty weeknights as well as weekends, though I did get duty nights every 10-12 days as a base security petty officer.

The fellows I remember are a young guy from Atlantic City, Marvin Fishman, and a fellow from near Philadelphia named Jack Streeper. Marvin took me home to his folk’s place one weekend, and we had a great time. On Saturday night he said he was going to take us to a night club on the boardwalk where we’d see some great entertainment, and after dinner we headed down there in clean-pressed dress blue uniforms. When we walked in, the entire clientele and staff were black! I was obviously uncomfortable, wondering if we were somewhere we ought not to be. But Marvin reassured me, and sure enough the waiter who seated us at a good table near the stage even greeted Fishman by name. After a beer or two, a small, energetic black guy came on stage and entertained us with singing, dancing, playing the drums, jokes etc. He was great! His name was Sammy Davis Jr., and I guess this was when he was still in his “Chittlin’ Belt” days as he later called his touring of the black night clubs.

Jack Streeper’s family owned a drive-in theater on the outskirts of Philadelphia, and I was a guest of his family one or two weekends. Saw free movies, too! Jack became a career Coastie, went to OCS in the mid ‘60s (I think). He went to flight training, became

career Coastie, went to OCS in the mid '60s (I think). He went to flight training, became a C-130 pilot and by all accounts a fine aviator. Our paths crossed in Kodiak, Alaska in the early '70s.

There were several ET school instructors with about the same years of service as I had – second and first class petty officers. One was John V.A. Thompson, a free-spirited guy who was our practical lab instructor. Another was ET1 Tom Wedgewood. Those two, and another whose name I can't remember, applied for OCS while I was one of their students. They were all selected. Thompson and Wedgewood became aviators also, and had successful careers. I was a passenger in a C-130 flight from Washington D.C. to San Juan in the mid '60s, with John as the aircraft commander. "JAY VAT" was the nickname that followed him, the acronym formed by his initials. John died in a drowning accident, I think, after he retired. Wedgewood retired as a captain after 30 years commissioned service. He was commanding officer of the Coast Guard Aircraft and Repair Center at Elizabeth City, North Carolina in the mid '80s before he retired.

On duty nights, or nights when I just stayed aboard, there was often an impromptu pinochle game or two in the ET School building, consisting of petty officer instructors or permanent detail enlisted men. I was often included. One evening we were playing cards when the officer in charge of ET School walked in, a very tall officer by name of LT Robert Krulish. He seemed displeased to see me, and inquired "what that outlander" was doing there. He was referring to my radio operator rating, and he must have considered me an inferior being in his lofty electronics domain! One of his instructors told him I was an ET school student, and he laughingly remarked that there may be hope for me yet. Eight years later he was my branch chief in electronics engineering at Coast Guard headquarters in Washington D.C.

One of the instructors was ET1 Metcalf, whose first name now eludes me. Metcalf was a fine fellow, well liked by all of us. One evening I was returning from a couple hours of liberty and parked my car (as usual) in a student parking lot some distance from the station's main gate. I didn't feel like walking the whole distance, so I scaled the chain link fence, straddled the top, and jumped down toward the base of a big tree. I literally

knocked a fellow down, inside the fence watching me, and we were both pretty startled. It was Metcalf. "What the hell you doing, Wight?" he sputtered. I explained I was avoiding a long walk around to the gate. He laughed, explained he was watching for students who didn't rate liberty trying to sneak out for awhile, apparently a common occurrence. But rarely did he catch one coming back over the fence early in the evening!

I finished ET school in January '56, first in the class, and was given a lateral change in rate from RM2 to ET2. I also sewed on a "hash mark" signifying I had over four years of service. With PCS orders in hand, I headed back to Seattle for reassignment.

CHAPTER SIX

USCGC WACHUSETT

February-June 1956

After leave enroute from Groton, Connecticut, I reported again to Base Seattle, the third time in just over four years. The next day, I went to the district office to see the district electronics officer, CDR A.J. Summerfield. In those days, the district office controlled enlisted assignments, and Summerfield would quite likely decide where I was assigned. I had met CDR Summerfield a couple of times when I was on the NORTHWIND, during various electronics installations or inspections. He was an affable and outgoing gentleman, and seemed genuinely interested in the enlisted men with whom he had contact. He invited me into his office that day and inquired what type of assignment I was looking for. I told him I'd like to go to sea again, on a major cutter where there was a good variety of electronics equipment. I also said I had served on WINONA, WACHUSETT and NORTHWIND, and the only remaining major ship in the district was USCGC KLAMATH. So I asked if I might be assigned to her. Summerfield smiled, responded that all the ships were short of electronics technicians, so there were openings on all of them. KLAMATH it would be, he said. But he advised me that the ship was out on ocean station patrol, wouldn't be back for nearly two weeks, and that I'd have to await her return. I thanked him and left.

At Base Seattle, there was an electronics shop that performed work around the district, mostly staffed with civilian technicians. I asked if I could work there while awaiting KLAMATH's return. As it turned out, the head of the shop was less than enthusiastic about having transient enlisted people work in his shop, so there wasn't much for me to do. Habitually, the shop head would let me go at noon or even before, and it became my habit to go to the personnel office and ask the chief yeoman for early liberty. He always agreed and sent me on my way. I had a fine time for about a week, seeing old friends, sightseeing, prowling around downtown Seattle. One morning at about 8:45 I approached the chief yeoman for REALLY early liberty as it was a Friday, and I figured I

could get a long weekend off and go to eastern Washington to visit my folks. The chief did a double take when he saw me and said, “Holy cow, Wight, what are YOU doing here?” I shrugged, not knowing what he meant. He then told me I was supposed to be on USCGC WACHUSETT and that they were sailing at 10 a.m. – not much more than an hour away! Somehow, no one had told me the day before. It seems one of the ship’s ETs had been in a car accident, broken his arm and was unable to sail with the ship. I was to replace him.

With much agitation, the chief handed me my records and orders and told me they’d drive me down to ship in a 1/2 hour. I declined, saying I’d make it on my own as I had to get my car into storage. He told me to go ahead, but that it was my neck on the line if I missed the sailing. With all haste, I packed my stuff into my sea-bag and “ditty” bag, hustled out to my car and drove at breakneck speed down to Pier 70 where the ship was moored. I ran down to the quarterdeck, dumped my rear on deck and handed my orders to the quarterdeck watch-stander, yelling that I’d be back shortly. I drove to the district office on Cherry Street, double-parked and ran into the pay office. SK1 Dave Irons, who handled my pay record, was an old acquaintance. I explained that I was sailing in a few minutes and needed my pay record, so he gave it to me. Irons went to OCS that year, became an aviator, and retired in ‘79 as a captain. I ran back to my car, drove quickly to an auto storage garage on North 2nd Street and left my car with shouted instructions that I’d be back in two months! A taxi business dispatching area and parking lot was across the street, and I was able to jump into a cab for the short trip down to Pier 70. As I ran down the dock, the ship’s lines were being singled up and the gangway brought aboard. I was able to scramble from the dock onto the ship, aware that the commanding officer and others on the bridge were watching me with apparent amusement. We sailed right away, to Ocean Station “November” and then to underway training in San Diego. We were away from Seattle for over two months, and it took a couple weeks to get word to my folks and other friends on where I was. I had to mail letters taken ashore by the ship we relieved on ocean station.

My short tour on WACHUSETT was uneventful, mostly, but I wasn't long discovering that being an electronics technician wasn't necessarily the best vocation for me. The chief ET was a kindly, patient fellow – I believe his name was Dixon. There were two other ETs, both 2nd class petty officers like me. The three of us rotated being "duty ET" which meant that whenever there was an equipment failure, the duty ET was dispatched to repair it. In those days, the electronics equipment aboard those ships was pretty old, mostly World War vintage stuff. In particular, the SRa air search radar and the SU surface radar were antiquated at best. But they were essential equipments, and we needed to keep them operating. One night on ocean station, the SRa had a failure, at perhaps 2:00 in the morning, and I was awakened and asked to fix it. I stumbled up to CIC, confirmed it wasn't working at all. The radar transmitter was installed in a separate equipment room, and I eventually figured out that the main power amplifier tube had failed. The tubes were large, maybe 24" tall with electrode connections at the bottom, on the side, and a cap connector on top. It was tricky business installing one, and the ship was rolling pretty heavily. I managed to break two new tubes before I successfully installed the third. The next day, Chief Dixon had a conversation with me. He was obviously less than pleased. Turns out the tubes cost perhaps \$200 each, and our quarterly parts allowance amounted to about \$300. I had broken the equivalent to four months of spare parts!

As I remember, I sailed two "November" ocean station patrols on the ship, the first one coupled with a trip to San Diego for three weeks of training with the Navy. I just can't recall who the commanding officer was, though the name CAPT Hathaway sticks in my mind. I do remember the education officer, whom I'm sure had other onboard assignments. His name was Richard Rounseville, an ensign at the time. I was directed to see him about taking certain tests after I submitted an application for consideration for selection to officer candidate school. Prospective OCS candidates at the time were required to take a set of college equivalency tests, if they had no college degree. At the time I sensed that ENS Rounseville was not particularly supportive of my OCS aspirations, though I had no particular reason to feel that way. But the tests arrived, and he administered them to me.

I also remember the chief radioman onboard, but can't recall his name. Dixon, the chief ET, was often critical of the RM chief and his propensity to "twist knobs" as he described it. In particular, we had some difficult-to-adjust UHF communications equipment that Dixon or one of the other ETs was forced to recalibrate because of the RMC's "knob twisting". So one of my fellow second class ETs decided to take action. He assembled a piece of mock electronics equipment, complete with nameplate and miniature antenna. It had several small colored lights on it, an on-off switch, a selector knob and a button. The button sounded a buzzer, and the selector knob turned on and off the several colored lights. The name plate designated the little equipment to be an "AN/KNOB-1." He left this little box in the radio room for the RMs to find. They did, of course, and turned it over to the RM chief. We expected him to be less than pleased. However, he took it in great high humor and had it installed on a cabinet top in the radio room, jokingly instructed his junior radiomen to carefully dust it daily but not to twist any knobs or push any buttons. And, surprisingly, the RM chief became much more circumspect in his compulsive "knob twisting", much to our relief.

Quite unexpectedly, after about five months onboard, I received orders transferring me to LORAN Station Spruce Cape, located on Kodiak Island in the Gulf of Alaska. I took some leave enroute, went to see my folks in Richland, Washington, and left my car there before I flew from Seattle to Kodiak.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SPRUCE CAPE LORAN STATION

June 1956 to June 1957

LORAN Station (LORSTA) Spruce Cape was a LORAN-A station located, as the name implies, on Spruce Cape, on Kodiak Island, Alaska. Spruce Cape was several miles from the town of Kodiak. It was a pleasant setting adjacent to the entrance of a long channel into Kodiak, with a good stand of spruce trees on part of the reservation. The portion of station land closer to the shoreline was mostly grassy, and there was easy access to the beach area below. The station itself consisted of a complex of WW II quonset huts that contained small bedrooms for the crew, a kitchen/mess hall and recreation area, storage rooms, a garage, generator room with diesel generators for emergency power generation, and the “signal-power” complex that contained the LORAN equipment. Adjacent was the large transmitting antenna array from which we emitted our navigation signals. The station was part of a three-station “net” that provided navigational signals for vessels or aircraft in the gulf of Alaska. Another station was at Yakutat, to the northeast, and Ocean Cape, further east on the Alaska coast. The station’s crew consisted of about a dozen enlisted men and one officer. In command when I reported was LTJG William E. “Wee” Smith, Academy class of ‘53. The nickname “Wee” was no doubt derived from two coincidental sources – his initials “W.E.”, and his size. He was a smallish fellow, less than 5’ 6” tall it seems to me. But his stature had nothing at all to do with his capabilities as an officer.

The year I spent at Spruce Cape was interesting and satisfying. Life aboard the station was generally fairly tranquil and comfortable. Of the crew of 12 or so, usually only four to six of us actually lived on the station, the rest, married with families, lived in rental housing in town. As a result, we who lived aboard “hustled” our own meals on weekends, and in general had the place to ourselves during non-duty hours. There were usually four or five LORAN watch standers, either ETs or radarmen (RDs). The station had one RD assigned, an affable black fellow whose name I just can’t recall. The senior

ET was a chief named Britt, but he left shortly after my arrival and ET1- I can't remember his name - was the senior ET thereafter. Those of us who stood radar watches performed eight-hour shifts in the signal-power building. It was our job to monitor the operation of the LORAN equipment, ensuring that our transmitter was operating correctly and that our signals were properly synchronized with the controlling station at Yakutat. We maintained a voice radio watch as well, a "net" that connected the three LORAN stations. In addition, we were required to monitor a voice calling and distress frequency, 2182 KHZ. The eight-hour watches were mostly routine and often boring, particularly the one from midnight to 0800. Typically, we stood watches for three weeks, seven days per week, then were assigned day-worker duties for a week.

Regularly we communicated with other LORAN stations further to the west. One was located on Sarichef Island, another on Attu, I think. We also served as a frequent radio link with isolated light house stations. These stations usually had four men assigned, for a one-year tour – and "isolated" was surely the proper description for this duty. We would often receive lengthy "LOGREC" messages from these stations – long lists of supplies needed, that were usually delivered by a Coast Guard buoy tender, or sometimes in emergent situations by helicopter.

The Coast Guard had a sizable air detachment co-located on the U.S. Navy base on Kodiak, about seven miles from Spruce Cape. The air detachment performed mainly search and rescue missions, but also provided logistic support to the far-flung LORAN and lighthouse stations dotting the Alaskan coast and on the various Aleutian Islands. One day I was copying a lengthy "LOGREC" message from one of the light stations located up north on the mainland coast. The fellow reading his message to me listed the need for four boxes of regular "Kotex", and I thought I had misunderstood. I queried him about that item, and he said that yes, he needed four boxes. He explained that they were feminine sanitary napkins, in case I didn't understand. I must have sat mute for some time after his explanation, as I knew that no women were assigned to these remote stations, nor were families allowed. Indeed, at the time, we had no "regular" female Coast Guard personnel. I wanted to ask him why they needed this item, but was

a little hesitant to learn more than I needed to know! But he went on to explain to me that the sanitary napkins were absolutely the best item he had ever found to clean and shine the lighthouse's large glass Fresnel lens. Mystery solved!

At that time, the LORAN station at Cape Sarichef was commanded by LTJG G.K. "Kirk" Greiner (USCGA class of '53), who was also an amateur radio operator. I had obtained my amateur radio license while in ET school, call sign W7BKY which I hold to this day. With the permission of my CO, LTJG Smith, I established a "ham" radio station at Spruce Cape, at my own expense using a Heathkit transmitter that I assembled from a kit. I set it up in my own room, and often whiled away spare time "working" other hams around the world either on CW (Morse code) or by voice. I had a frequent schedule with other LORAN stations, and had a station license call sign of KL7CGG. The other stations had call signs KL7CGA, B, C and so on. One day while talking with Greiner, he asked if there was any way I could send him some trees. The request startled me! He said no trees grew out there, but that he thought evergreens might survive, and he'd like to plant some around the station. I told LTJG Smith of the request, and he apparently contacted the Kodiak Air Detachment asking if we could put a couple trees on the next logistics flight. Next I knew, I had "volunteered" to dig up some small trees, bag their root balls in burlap, and haul them to the air detachment. They were loaded onboard one of the detachment's twin-engine Grumman amphibians (UF-1G) and flown out with other supplies. I never heard if the trees survived.

Another time, one blustery day when I was on watch, I heard a "MAYDAY" distress call on 2182 KHZ. It came from a vessel named "DYNAMITE KID, and I answered promptly. The next hour or so were tense and emotional for me, and I can't give a verbatim transcript. The vessel's skipper told me that they were taking on water and sinking, located somewhere northeast of Kodiak Island. He said their small boat had been lost in the storm, they had no survival suits of any kind, just life preservers. I promptly called the air detachment duty officer, giving him all information I had, and he told me that a UF-1G was airborne at that time in the local area, doing training operations. He dispatched the aircraft to the area. I then was able to rebroadcast the

DYNAMITE KID's distress call, and received a response from an Army tug, towing a barge somewhere to the west of where the distressed vessel was supposed to be. He agreed to drop his tow and head for the area. I also had contact from a fishing boat moored or anchored in a cove north of the DYNAMITE KID's location, and he said he'd get underway and try to go to assist. Not long later, he called and said he had to turn back – mountainous seas had shattered pilot house windows in his boat, and he feared for his own safety. Meantime, I had one or two more brief radio contacts with DYNAMITE KID's skipper, and I told him of the aircraft, the Army tug and the aborted try by the fishing boat. In our last conversation, he told me that his boat was close to sinking, that he and his three crewmen were going to have to go into the water. His last words over the radio were, "Thanks for trying, Kid." The aircraft wasn't able to locate them before darkness fell, and vessel searches the next day found only debris from the DYNAMITE KID. I have often dwelt over the feelings of frustration, desperation and sadness I had during and after that tragic event.

One day LTJG "Wee" Smith assembled that part of the crew who were day workers, me among them. He instructed us that we were going to have to clean out the sediment in the station's septic tank, which was nearly full. He had us put on our "meanest" work clothes, and down we headed to the tank, the four or five of us really reluctant as you can imagine. We pried the cover off, revealing the interior of what I recall to have been a huge concrete tank full of foul-smelling sludge. Our job was to dip the "goo" out with buckets and empty it over the adjacent cliff. When Mr. Smith asked for the first volunteer, no one responded. So he grabbed a bucket, crawled down the metal-runged ladder into the tank, and dipped the first bucketful. The rest of us formed a "bucket brigade" to dump the sludge. After perhaps 15 minutes of this unpleasant work, Smith crawled back up to the surface and handed me the bucket. I went down and dipped for 15 minutes without complaint. Each of us did. That was quite a lesson in leadership I received that day.

Alaska was still a territory in the late 1950s, and Kodiak Island seemed a "rough and ready" place in those days. The only apparent law enforcement agency present on

Kodiak appeared to be the town of Kodiak police department. I recall one afternoon three of us from the station were passing through town, returning from the Navy base, and we decided to stop in a tavern for a beer. We were the only patrons on arrival, but a few minutes later another fellow came in and seated himself at the bar. "Ring the bell!" he roared. The bartender rang a bell hanging from a post behind the bar, a signal of 'drinks for the house' and he promptly set the three of us up with a second beer. We thanked the man, and one of my companions asked what the occasion was. The fellow, a huge "rough-and-tumble" looking man, explained that he had just flown in from Anchorage after having been tried for murder. He was acquitted, he said, by the federal judge there. He went on to explain that he had been working on a Navy construction project at the Navy base. He and his fellow workers were lodged in a barracks building, and there had been a rash of thefts of personal items in the barracks. He went on to describe how, one night, he was startled awake by a noise and sat up to see a man rifling his foot locker. He explained that he was so startled that he leaped up and strangled the thief before he was fully awake. We didn't have much to say to his story – I think we wished him well and left as soon as we could!

Not long after I arrived at Spruce Cape, I went to Mr. Smith's office and told him of my ambitions to apply for OCS, and he said he'd take it under consideration. In the meantime, I waited for results of the exams I had taken onboard WACHUSETT, and in due course they arrived. In late fall 1956, Mr. Smith helped with an application for OCS and provided a favorable endorsement to my request. In a month or two, another test arrived, called an "officer qualification test". He had me take the exam, which didn't seem too difficult at the time, and sent it back to Coast Guard Headquarters.

A few weeks later I was ordered to proceed to the Seventeenth District Office in Juneau for an interview to determine my suitability for selection to officer candidate school. It was quite an adventure for me. In those days, travel by commercial airline from Kodiak to Juneau was a two-day trip – to Anchorage the first day, then a wait until the next morning to go on to Juneau. The planes were old DC-3 aircraft, slow but reliable. I arrived in Juneau on the afternoon of the second day, reported to the personnel office,

and was instructed that my interview would be at 0900 the next morning. I was to report to a lieutenant in the operations division shortly before the appointed hour. I checked into a nearby hotel, and spent a nervous night awaiting the interview.

In the morning I groomed myself carefully, put on my best enlisted dress blue uniform and reported as ordered. The lieutenant to whom I reported was a considerate and pleasant fellow who told me he'd be junior officer and recorder on the interview board, and that several other officers would participate. He'd take me to the conference room at the appointed time, which he did. When I entered I was startled to see an obviously senior Coast Guard captain at the head of the table, with two commanders and a lieutenant commander also seated. I was introduced to the four of them, but only remember one – the captain, whose name was Burdine. I nearly swallowed my Adam's apple when his name was spoken. He was the district commander, the most senior officer in Alaska! Later an admiral was assigned to command that district. The board asked me about my Coast Guard experience, current news affairs, I questions about situations I might encounter as an officer, personal data etc. Through it all, Captain Burdine said nothing, just sat and looked at me. I could feel perspiration on my brow! Finally, he cleared his throat and the room fell into silence. He looked at me with what seemed piercing intensity. "Now tell me, son," he asked, "just why do you want to be a Coast Guard officer?" I was almost afraid to answer and my mind raced, trying to figure what kind of answer would be most impressive! Finally, I just told him that I liked the Coast Guard and would like a career in it, but that I wanted to get ahead as well. He nodded, told the others he'd heard enough, and invited me to leave the room. I tried to leave without appearing to be scuttling out in fear and apprehension. In just a few minutes, the lieutenant came out and, with a smile, told me that the board would make a positive recommendation on my behalf. That night I permitted myself a short visit to Juneau's legendary old Red Dog Saloon for a small celebration.

One day in December LTJG Smith called me into his office and showed me a message from Coast Guard Headquarters stating that my orders for transfer to Officer Candidate School were canceled, but that I would be assigned to the first class to convene after

my normal rotation from the LORAN station. That would be about the end of December 1957, the following year. Since we'd never seen the orders in the first place, it was something of a mystery. A few days later, the orders arrived with a Seventeenth District endorsement saying cancellation was directed at the request of the district. The explanation was that I was essential to the station that time – which was a surprise to Mr. Smith and me! About a month later the puzzle was cleared up. The district electronics officer came for a visit, and it turned out to be CDR A.J. Summerfield, who had been in the same position in Seattle when I was assigned to WACHUSETT. It seems he transferred to Alaska about when I did, and admitted that he had had a hand in sending me to Spruce Cape. He seemed to think I would be a good man to help with a major electronics installation scheduled for early in 1957, a change of all the major LORAN equipment. That was why, he said, he had requested my orders to OCS be delayed. While there wasn't much I could say, I was intensely disappointed.

I pondered the situation for several weeks. If I wasn't assigned to OCS until sometime in 1958, I'd probably run into the end of my current enlistment, which was up on 3 July 1958. Moreover, I'd be 24 years of age, which seemed (at that time) late in life to look toward starting college. So, after deliberation, I sat down and wrote another letter to Coast Guard Headquarters asking that they assign me to the next available class in 1957, or just withdraw my request. I tried to explain my sentiments about either getting ahead in the Coast Guard, or proceeding on with my life by going to college to learn another profession. In discussing it with Mr. Smith, he felt I was taking a risk – I'd been promised OCS in 1958, and he felt my prospects were good. I felt that OCS might be a "tough nut", and successful completion wasn't a certainty! Mr. Smith explained that there were no doubt a lot of OCS applicants, and that in lieu of granting my request for the next class, they might just withdraw the promise of the assignment in another year. But I asked to send the letter, so he endorsed it and sent it on.

In the meantime, we started the installation of new electronics equipment, basically completing the job in about two or three weeks with minimum "off air" time for the station.

And not long thereafter, perhaps in April or so, we received a letter from Headquarters, endorsed by the 17th district, saying I would be assigned to the OCS class that was to convene about 1 July 1957. Mr. Smith was transferred to Navy Postgraduate School Monterey, California about a week before I left for OCS.

CHAPTER EIGHT

OFFICER CANDIDATE SCHOOL

June-November 1957

In the 1950s, Officer Candidate School was located at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut. I left Kodiak in early June and flew to Seattle on Pacific Northern Airlines, a predecessor of Alaska Airlines. The plane was a lumbering old Constellation, four-engine, and we seemed to fly at fairly low altitude the whole way. I remember being pretty apprehensive during the final half hour, as we flew in approaching Seattle. I could see glimpses of land mass with trees and water from time to time, as we flew in and out of clouds. I was quite relieved when we touched down safely.

After a few days at home with my folks in Richland, Washington I set out for New London in my 1955 Chevrolet. Since I'd been to Groton, Connecticut for both radio and electronics technician schools, I was pretty familiar with the area and looked forward to returning. My route took me north of Lake Erie and into Canada. At Canadian customs leaving Michigan, I showed my transfer orders and answered the normal questions – destination etc. – and if I had any items such as liquor or guns. I declared to the agent that I had a handgun. With a grimace, he directed me to bring it, and a suitcase I would not need, into the office counter. There, I produced my 9mm German Luger pistol, a fine collectors' item I'd acquired from a Navy man in Kodiak. The Canadian agent looked at it and then had me place it in the suitcase, an old soft-sided leather relic that had been my grandfather's. The agent wrapped the suitcase in twine and clamped lead seals in several places to anchor the line tightly. He then asked if I thought I could remove the handgun without breaking the twine. Taking him seriously, I tried – and succeeded. Apparently exasperated, the agent asked if I could replace it into the suitcase without breaking any twine. I did so. He then said to me, "Raise your right hand and swear after me!" I did, and he directed me to

“solemnly swear I wouldn’t shoot the Prime Minister while passing through Canada! “ I did so, and he told me to get out of there and I did so, quickly.

I arrived at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy without incident and was allowed to drive my car down to the lower campus, nicknamed “Splinter Village”, where Officer Candidate School was housed. I went into the OCS office and found several officers there. One of them read my orders and directed me to a lieutenant commander on the side of the room. This officer wore wings, an aviator, and introduced himself as LCDR McCullough. He told me I was there ten days early, and he was frankly at a loss what to do with me until the OCS class convened. He asked me some questions, learned that I had been a radio operator before I switched to electronics technician. “Can you type?” he asked. I said I could, after a fashion, and he seemed pleased. He told me that there was no yeoman assigned to the school, and that two were expected soon. Meanwhile, they needed help, and I would be the office clerk for the next week or so. He directed me to go unload my gear into a room in the old barracks across the street. I did so, and was the only occupant for some days until others assigned to the class began to filter in.

My time as “acting yeoman” was interesting and busy. In due course, I met all the OCS staff and instructors. I can’t remember them all, but recall LT Al Manning, LTJG Jerome Flanagan, LCDR A. J. McCullough, LCDR Harry Raleigh, LCDR Kuklinski. The Officer in Charge was CAPT Knapp, I think. I typed lesson plans, exams, curricula etc. and was cautioned that I was on my honor not to keep any copies of any data that passed through my hands. I was also instructed that the day the class convened, I would be “just another OCS candidate” and that no favoritism would fall my way. I was also instructed that I would not be able to have my car on Academy grounds while in OCS.

When our class convened on about July 1st, 1957, the Coast Guard was having difficulties with a shortfall of junior officers. Because of that, we had an unusually large class, perhaps 140 of us. Nearly 3/4 of them were college graduates who

were applicants for reserve commissions. Approximately 40 of us were enlisted men with varying amounts of service; some with less than four years, and some, like me, with longer service records. There were several chief petty officers. One was a chief boatswain mate named James Leftwich, who did very well and finished high up in the class standing.

The OCS experience was pretty intense. We were highly programmed from about 0600 to 1000 daily. A typical day started with pre-breakfast physical fitness drills which included running, calisthenics etc. Time was tight. Because my last name started with "W", I was assigned to a room on the third floor of the old wooden barracks, and those of us "up there" must have run up and down those stairs 20 times or more per day. After breakfast we had a morning formation and inspection, then marched to classes. Classroom activities occupied about eight hours per day, with brief "private time" before and after the evening meal. An enforced study period was scheduled from 2000 to 2200 nightly, and "lights out" was at 2230, as I recall. The attrition of officer candidates started quickly. After a relatively few days, several men withdrew themselves from training. One, I remember, was a chief petty officer who simply stated he wasn't going to endure "any more of this b.....s....." Several college guys opted out early on. After two or three weeks, those who left were mostly those who "failed out" in some way or another – aptitude, classroom work etc. At first, I was very much concerned about how I would do, but as time passed, I became more confident on my prospects to complete the course. In fact, it seemed to become easier for me as the weeks slipped by. I thought we were treated rather well – firmly, to be sure, but with a certain level of respect so long as we performed as we were expected to. The main way to "weed people out" was academic performance, and the second way was a rigorous demerit system. Demerits could be earned any number of ways – dress code/uniform violations, deportment in classes, tardiness to formations etc. Each of us was up against a total allowable – if we reached the maximum, we were expelled. As time went on, the demerit system further thinned our ranks. But my accrued demerits remained low, and my classroom work was going well.

Among our ranks we had two young officers from Haiti, candidates for their Coast Guard, I think. There was a definite problem – neither of them spoke much English, and what little they knew was terribly challenged by naval and military jargon. One of our class members, a fine fellow, was RD1 Joseph Tanguay. He spoke French as did the Haitians, so he became their interpreter and daily companion. I know it wasn't easy for him. His academics and other performance factors suffered from this "extra duty." Nonetheless, Tanguay finished well up in the class standing.

Of the instructors, LT Al Manning, sticks out as a good one. He was, at the time, also attending classes on his own time at the University of Connecticut working on a postgraduate degree in electronics. But nonetheless, he was among our most competent instructors. LCDR A.J. McCullough was another. He always seemed very serious – almost grim, and behind his back some called him "Smiley." But he was a competent and fair-minded man. One morning I was the cadet OOD, which entailed being in charge of formations etc. for the day. LCDR McCullough and I performed the ritual of morning inspection, and he had me record several demerits for various candidates – "OCs" as we were called. When I resumed my post in front of the company, LCDR McCullough directed me to march the company to class – and, he added, I should award myself two demerits for the worn collar on my T-shirt. He gave me the barest hint of a smile as I saluted and responded "Yes sir!"

Another interesting instructor was LCDR Kuklinski, who I remember taught our marine damage control classes, among other things. He was an absolute terror at room inspections, and made it clear he would ALWAYS find enough wrong to award demerits to someone during room inspection. We were billeted four men to a room, and at each weekly inspection one of us was in charge, and liable for receiving demerits for general infractions. I remember one of his favorite "if all else fails" tactics was to take the room's dust mop, bang it on a window sill, and watch some dust fly. It is virtually impossible, short of laundering a dust mop, to completely eliminate SOME dust if it is shaken vigorously enough! One

inspection day, near the end of our training, I was the room representative. Just before inspection I carefully unscrewed the dust mop head from its handle until it was just barely “hanging on”. Mr. Kuklinski entered our room and did a rigorous inspection, rubbing white gloves under bunk railings, above closet door moldings etc. looking for dust or dirt. He found none. At last he smiled, grabbed our dust mop and banged it vigorously on the open third-floor window sill. It separated from the handle and plummeted to the ground. He turned to me, smiled wryly, and said, “O.K. - no demerits if you double-time it down and back to get that mop head!” I did, laughing all the way.

After some weeks we were sometimes allowed weekend liberty, but not overnight, just until midnight as I remember it. In August or early September, I went to Ocean Beach in New London for some leisure time on the beach and some sunshine. I remember striking up a conversation with a young fellow who had the look of a military man. Turns out he was just starting his second year at the Coast Guard Academy. I told him I was in the Coast Guard and was attending OCS at the Academy. He proceeded to tell me that I wasn’t going to be a REAL officer like he would be, and that if he ever ran across me, he would not feel obligated to render me a salute. I smiled and changed the subject. I would guess he was in the Class of 1960, and sometimes wonder if we ever saw one another again.

LCDR Harry Raleigh was another interesting man who, among other things, taught us radar navigation and other maritime “arts” such as target plotting etc. He was good at it, and we all felt he was giving us a good start at these skills. RD1 “Frenchy” Tanguay agreed that Mr. Raleigh was “on the ball” as an instructor. Late in our training, Mr. Raleigh summoned me to his office. When I arrived, two other instructors were also present, and I wondered if I was in some kind of trouble. As it turned out, they wished to discuss one of my roommates, a New York City fellow named Wilkins who was a reserve commission applicant. Wilkins wasn’t having an easy time of it academically, but was trying very hard. I was asked to comment on his fitness for graduation and his prospects as an

officer, but cautioned that my comments were never to be discussed outside the room. Nor was I ever to tell anyone. I agreed and told them that Wilkins was a very serious man, trying very hard, a responsible person of fine character whom, I believed, would do fine as an officer. Then they asked me about another reserve applicant whose name I don't remember now. I was less complimentary about him I was excused. I never told Wilkins or anyone else about the conversation with the instructors. Wilkins was commissioned, and as best I know, served well during his three-year reserve obligation. The other fellow "bilged out."

As graduation day approached, we were directed to fill out a form called the "officer assignment and data card." We were counseled that the card was our opportunity to ask for specific types of assignments. There were some ground rules and considerations. Most of the reservists would be sent to assignments that most fitted their recent college degrees – engineering grads would expect that type assignment, for instance. We "regulars", who would be tendered "regular temporary commissions," would likely get operational assignments. The instructor who counseled me suggested I might qualify for flight training, should I care to apply, particularly since my record showed I had private pilot experience. I had no interest in flight school, and said so. My counselor asked what interested me, and I said "any small ship in the Pacific ocean." He asked why I wanted a small ship, and I said I had served aboard an icebreaker and several weather ships (later called WHECs). On these larger ships the junior officers had duties such as "education officer, laundry officer etc." I hoped for more interesting duties. He smiled, and suggested I fill out my form asking for just that – any small ship in the Pacific. I did. We were told that our assignment prospects were directly associated with our standing in the class at graduation, and that I might have a chance for favorable results to my request.

The last two weeks of OCS training were a maze. We were measured for officer uniforms and ordered our outfits from a local supplier. We were allowed \$300, which just wasn't enough. We took final exams, and spent some time in

additional briefings on the etiquette and customs of being a junior officer. Not long before the final day, class standings were posted, and then our assignments. I was, I believe, 9th overall in the class, and about 95 of the original 140 were to be commissioned.

When our orders were posted, I was surprised and pleased. I was assigned to USCGC ACTIVE (WSC-125), home-ported in Monterey, California.

On the final day, November 1, 1957, we dressed in our new officer uniforms and had a graduation ceremony. Following the ceremony, we collected our orders, advanced travel pay etc. and were “logged out” on leave. During my checkout activities, I walked through the main part of the Academy and happened to be on one of the main streets during a break between classes. I exchanged salutes with dozens of cadets, and often wondered if one of them might have been the young man I’d met on Ocean Beach.

Of those with whom I went to OCS, a handful stayed in until retirement. Noel Ballinger, an ETC when he entered OCS, stayed until 1970 and retired as a LCDR. At graduation Noel and I drove across the country in my ‘55 Chevrolet, and two other classmates traveled part way. Noel was headed for Portland, Oregon, and we parted ways in Pendleton after a marathon 70-hour drive across the U.S. We found the local YMCA, shaved and showered, and donned our new dress blue uniforms. I took Noel out to the Pendleton airport, and he caught a flight to Portland. I drove on to Richland, Washington to my parent’s home.

Others who stayed in the service were Donald Nachtwey, Theotis Wood, Philip Coady, Robert Janacek, Wilhelm Wulff and Joseph “Frenchy” Tanguay, all of whom retired as captains. Coady and Wulff were reserve officers who integrated and obtained regular commissions. Another classmate, Jim Newton, was stationed at Yerba Buena Island at San Francisco, and I saw him a number of times in the next couple years. But when his reserve obligation was completed, he evidently left the service. He was the “brain” of our class, finished 1st or 2nd, even though I recall he rarely studied at all.

Of the instructors at OCS, the one with whom I had the most contact over the years was LT Al Manning, who retired in 1986 as a rear admiral. He was an instructor of mine once again in LORAN-C School at Wildwood, New Jersey in 1961; we were Coast Guard Headquarters (electronics engineering) in the mid-1960s; he was my direct superior as district operations officer in Seattle when I commanded USCGC CAMPBELL in 1977-78. When he was an office chief in Headquarters and I was at R&D Center, we shared common interests in certain R&D projects. RADM Manning retired in Seattle after his final tour as Commander, 14th District. I ran into he and his wife at McChord AFB exchange in 2001, and he seemed well and in good spirits.

CHAPTER NINE

USCGC ACTIVE (WSC-125)

November 1957-September 1959

After leave in Washington State I drove on down to the Sacramento, California area and visited my mother and stepfather. Then on to Monterey, where I located USCGC ACTIVE moored at the breakwater pier at the foot of Lighthouse Avenue, just at the end of the famed Cannery Row featured in several Steinbeck books. I was startled to see the little ship had its hull painted black, and had a buoy boom installed on the bow. Somehow I had failed to learn that ACTIVE was one of two “buck-and-a-quarter” cutters converted to buoy tending duties, along with traditional search and rescue duties.

Orders in hand, in my dress khaki uniform, I walked smartly down the dock, crossed the gangway onto the buoy deck, saluted the colors and then saluted a LTJG in rumpled work khakis who stood watching me as I came aboard. He seemed startled at the salute, returned it awkwardly, and mumbled something about “not standing on much ceremony aboard this ship.” He introduced himself – Harrell was his name, I think, and he led me below to meet the CO and Exec. En route, he said I was his relief, and he did leave within a few days. I never saw him or heard of him again.

The ACTIVE’s CO was a “mustang” LTJG named Harold W. Doan, an ex-quartermaster who had been on the ship just over two years, his first assignment out of OCS. He had “fleeted up” from XO to commanding officer several months earlier. The XO was a reserve officer named Jim Fremgen, finishing out his last year of his three-year obligation on ACTIVE. I met them both, and also the ship’s engineer, CWO Roy Singleton. I was directed to a small stateroom, and settled in.

ACTIVE was a pretty crude old vessel, built in 1926 with a riveted steel hull and superstructure, with caulked wooden decks literally bolted down to steel stringers. The foredeck had been modified with steel plating instead of wooden deck, and a buoy hold was plunked down into the crew's quarters. A buoy handling crane was installed on the bow, where other "buck-and-a-quarters" had a 40mm gun. On ACTIVE, a 20mm machine gun was mounted behind the cutter's stack on the 0-1 deck. It was an odd arrangement. The officer complement consisted of a CO (LT), XO (LTJG), a deck officer (ENS/LTJG) and a CWO (engineer). There were about 25 enlisted personnel assigned – a chief boatswain mate, one chief engineman or engineman first class, the rest rated and nonrated at various levels and disciplines. I recall we rated one radioman, one yeoman or storekeeper, one cook, a gunner's mate, two more boatswain mates, one or two quartermasters, several enginemen and perhaps one electrician. The rest were nonrated.

I soon learned that crewmen on the little vessel, officers and enlisted alike, were expected to be "cross trained" to perform a wide variety of duties. The chief boatswain mate, BMC Robert Toll, knew how to go down into the engine room and start the main diesel engines. The ship's yeoman and gunners mate were qualified to stand underway watches as quartermasters. And so on. Before long, I decided that I should follow that approach to my work as well. I learned as much as I could about the buoy handling equipment, launching and retrieving small boats, what made "made things tick" in the engine room, and so on. The CO seemed a little bemused and suspicious, but pretty much let me "nose around" and try anything I wanted to. And within weeks of reporting aboard, he made it clear that I was expected to be able to function as a versatile deck watch officer, docking and undocking the ship, navigating in and out of port, launching boats and retrieving them, and so on. It was a thoroughly interesting time for me, and the next six or seven months passed quickly.

ACTIVE's duties included performing normal search and rescue duties in the vicinity of Monterey, as well as maintaining and servicing navigational aids. The

little ship couldn't handle large buoys, but was able to take care of the smaller buoys in the area. We serviced buoys in Moss Landing, Morro Bay and smaller ones in Halfmoon Bay and various locations in Monterey Bay. We maintained unmanned shore structures as well, including lights on the coast down beyond Big Sur, one on the headland west of Santa Cruz and several others. Since one of my several collateral duties was aids-to-navigation officer, I made a number of visits to the aids along the coast. My favorite was Cape San Martin Light, a small battery-powered light about 60 miles down the coast from Monterey. It was our job to periodically replace the batteries that powered the light, and to install spare lamp bulbs etc. With one of the boatswain mates to help me, I often made the trip down myself. It was an opportunity to drive down past Carmel and down California route 1, perhaps one of the most scenic coastline highways in the world. A stop in the Big Sur area for lunch was always interesting, since the area was inhabited by all kinds of free-spirited artists, authors and other characters, and featured arts and crafts shops, small inns and restaurants scattered haphazardly along the route.

One of the coincidences of the assignment was that LTJG William "Wee" Smith, my commanding officer at Spruce Cape Loran Station, was attending post graduate training at the Navy Postgraduate School there in Monterey. I saw him and his family several times during my first six-seven months there, and was eager to show him that I was trying hard to be a good Coast Guard officer. Smith later commanded ACTIVE, I believe.

The one person who impressed me the most during those first few months onboard ACTIVE was BMC Robert Toll. He was a taciturn, serious and hard-working fellow who brooked little nonsense from anyone. I remember one day when we were servicing buoys in Moss Landing. LTJG Jim Fremgen was conning the ship, and I was doing the navigating and plotting to ensure we placed the buoys on their proper stations. Fremgen noticed something that looked unsafe to him, and shouted down from the bridge wing to Chief Toll telling him about the perceived problem. Toll looked the situation over, found nothing

amiss, and then shouted up to the bridge. “Mr. Fremgen, you drive the ship and I’ll work the buoys!” I observed that Fremgen seemed a little intimidated by the chief, and so was I!. But Toll’s unceasing efforts to keep the ship looking good and functioning well, along with his obviously-good seamanship skills, apparently earned him some “grease” with the skipper, and therefore with the rest of us.

One balmy Saturday in early June I was out on the dock washing the new 1958 Chevrolet convertible I had purchased a few months earlier. A fellow in nondescript clothing – dungarees, sweatshirt and tennis shoes, I think, wandered down the dock and stood looking at the ship with what seemed to be more than just passing interest. I walked over, introduced myself as one of the ship’s officers, and proceeded to tell him in some detail about the vessel, what our duties were and so on. He listened quietly for awhile, faintly smiling, I think, and then interrupted me. He extended his hand and introduced himself as LT Donald Chapman, U.S. Coast Guard. He informed me that he was just finishing his post graduate training at the Navy Postgraduate School there in Monterey, and had been assigned as commanding officer of ACTIVE, to relieve Harold Doan in a few weeks. I was embarrassed about my volunteer dissertation about the ship, the Coast Guard etc., but if Chapman was “under-impressed” by my zeal, he didn’t seem to show it.

LT Chapman assumed command of the ship in late June, I think, and LTJG Doan went off to another assignment. The Exec, LTJG Jim Fremgen, was due to be released from active duty on July 1 1958, but no relief had been ordered for him. Fremgen, incidentally, accepted a position as a teacher at the Navy Postgraduate School in Monterey.

Shortly after Chapman assumed command, and perhaps a week or so before Fremgen departed for civilian life, we got underway one morning and headed up to Moss Landing to service the buoys in the narrow little harbor. I had the first OOD watch as we left Monterey, and conned the ship on into the Moss Landing entrance. In all buoy handling evolutions since I’d reported aboard, either LTJG

Doan or LTJG Fremgen served as underway OOD and conning officer. I did the buoy placement navigation. This time, no one relieved me of the conn as I approached the harbor entrance. I must have seemed hesitant, and LT Chapman finally said, "Well let's get going. Show me how it's done." I looked at Fremgen – he smiled and shrugged. So I maneuvered alongside the first buoy. BMC Toll and his deck crew hoisted it aboard and cleaned the buoy, checked its mooring etc. Fremgen handled the navigating, and we placed the buoy on station. I maneuvered up to the next buoy. Then another, and another. We serviced them without incident and my confidence grew. The last buoy we serviced was well into the harbor entrance, and located very close to a low bridge that carried the coastal highway (Calif. 1) across a slough that branched off from the harbor. By then, the tidal current was beginning to strengthen, flushing water into the harbor and slough. As we released that last buoy on its station, the ship was driven gently up against the bridge, parallel to it and the roadway. A startled motorist or two looked up at me from the bridge, as I was some feet above them on the ship's bridge wing. I sure hadn't intended to touch alongside the bridge, but we were nestled there without any apparent harm to either the ship or the bridge. I used the ship's twin-propeller capability, to "twist" the stern away from the bridge, backed away, and was able to turn the ship into the current and head out the harbor entrance. I recall LT Chapman commenting that using the bridge as a temporary stop before turning around was a pretty good maneuver. He must not have known it was completely unplanned by me, and I had at first viewed it as a total disaster, quite likely to mar my career aspirations!

Don Chapman was perhaps very nearly the ideal CO for a young officer struggling to "learn the ropes." It was his second command afloat (he'd skippered another 125' cutter in the northeast). He was poised and confident, and apparently believed that it was part of his job to try and turn me into a competent seagoing officer. After Jim Fremgen departed the ship, a week or so later, Chapman told me I was designated acting executive officer – which meant, he wryly informed me, that I assumed Fremgen's duties along with the ones I already had. A few weeks later, we received notification that the ship's officer

complement was reduced by one ENS/LTJG deck officer. A separate letter from “Commandant Coast Guard” designated me as executive officer. Ensign Wight, XO! My ego no doubt exceeded my competence!

The next 14 months I served onboard ACTIVE were mostly pleasant, and certainly often interesting and even thrilling. LT Chapman delegated a lot to me, and I DID put in lots of hours. But I figured that’s what ensigns were supposed to do, and I particularly enjoyed ship operations – working buoys, going on assistance cases and towing in disabled vessels, and so on. In late summer, Chapman informed me he was taking 30 days leave, and had me prepare a leave application to send in to the district commander in San Francisco. I typed them up for him, gave it to him to sign. When he gave it back, he had written the following phrase above his signature: “The executive officer is qualified to assume acting command.” He made no comment, other than to tell me to mail the form. About 10 days later, he informed me he was leaving the next morning but offered no other comment. With great apprehension, I asked him what he wanted me to do while he was gone. He smiled, and said I should do what we always do: work the buoys, answer the SAR calls and so on. He went on to tell me that there may be underway training I should conduct, and if we needed significant aids to navigation supplies, I should take the ship to San Francisco Bay to get them. With that, he got up to leave. “Where can I reach you?” I asked. He said he wasn’t sure where they were going, smiled, and said he’d see me in a month. He left. I suddenly felt quite alone.

Two days later, a bright sunny morning, I asked CWO Singleton and BMC Toll what they thought of getting underway for some boat drills and other exercises. Both smiled, and said something like “you’re in charge.” So Ensign Wight, acting CO, got his first taste of underway command of a ship. It was pretty “heady stuff” for a 24-year-old!

Not many days after that, one afternoon, we received a priority message, addressed to ACTIVE and ALERT, directing us to get underway and make a

coastal search between Santa Cruz and Morro Bay for a missing sailing vessel. The sailboat had been participating in a yacht race along the California coast, had reported some rudder trouble, and then hadn't been heard from again. ALERT, a sister ship, was stationed at Morro Bay, about 90 miles south of Monterey. In dense fog, I got the ship underway and we made a two-hour transit up to Santa Cruz, thence southward. We encountered no vessels. After passing Point Pinos, at the southern approach to Monterey Bay, we set up a "ladder" search working our south along the coast, making a radar sweep from the coastline to about 30 miles offshore. Fog was so thick we couldn't see more than a hundred yards or so, but since we were searching for a vessel likely to be moving very slowly, or not at all, I didn't think we needed to try and see any vessel that was underway at 12 knots or more. Well after dark, we received a message from ALERT saying they were still in-port due to heavy fog, and I wondered if I'd erred in getting underway at all. But I continued the search.

In the wee hours, I became so sleepy I just had to have some rest. I went down to the CO's stateroom and flopped on his bunk to rest a bit – my stateroom didn't have a sound powered phone or buzzer for the bridge to call me with. I don't think I'd been asleep long before the OOD, BM1 Dewey, called me and said he had a slow moving or stationery radar target. I ran up to the bridge. We called the unknown vessel on several radio channels with no luck, so I decided to try and get close enough to see it. With careful attention to the radar screen, I maneuvered closer to the unknown vessel. We got within about 1000 yards, and the vessel seemed to get underway and move away from us. I speeded up a little and changed course to get closer. The unknown vessel increased speed too, also changed course away from us – then abruptly disappeared from our radar screen! I was astonished. I turned ACTIVE away from the last known direction of the mystery vessel. Then it occurred to me – we must have encountered a submarine operating on the surface. To this day, I don't know if it was U.S. or Soviet. But I don't know why a U.S. sub would be operating on the surface, in dense fog, along that sparsely populated stretch of California coastline. It was an eerie feeling, though, and I didn't sleep any more that night.

By midmorning, we received another message informing us that the missing vessel had been located. It had headed into Santa Barbara and had abandoned the race apparently without telling anyone. ALERT never did get underway from Morro Bay, and I often wondered if I was nuts to take ACTIVE out in dense fog like that – but I saw the district's message as an order, not an optional action.

BM1 Dewey was an interesting man. When he reported aboard ACTIVE, he made it clear that he hadn't asked for the assignment. Boatswains mates belong on "big" ships, he'd say, though he was good-natured about it. And he was a competent, hard- working fellow, popular with his shipmates. He was also a pretty good amateur cook, so once a month or so in the warmer months, we'd send him off shopping for fresh seafood over on Monterey's Fisherman's Wharf. He'd come back with all sorts of things, and cook up a huge pot of chioppino, an Italian-style seafood stew popular in central California coastal areas. We'd invite all family members and friends, and have a big feast out on the dock, featuring Dewey's chioppino and various other foods, usually cooked on charcoal grills. They were grand feasts that evoke fond memories.

One day we sailed into San Francisco Bay and sailed on in to Government Island (now called Coast Guard Island) in Alameda. Dewey had been qualified as an underway OOD, and was conning the ship as we approached the Coast Guard moorings. Two high endurance cutters were there – GRESHAM and TANEY, I believe. I suggested to the skipper that he tell Dewey to take the ship on into the channel and dock the vessel, and LT Chapman agreed. So, under the watchful eyes of a number of sailors on deck on both ships, some of whom knew him, Dewey conned ACTIVE on past them and docked the ship smartly, with minimum effort. Several times after that I heard Dewey telling anyone who'd listen that a "small" ship was where the action is! He was already a good man, but after that incident was perhaps our most enthusiastic petty officer – and a diehard "small ship" sailor.

Under LT Chapman's command, ACTIVE became a rather remarkable little ship.

His brand of leadership evoked a type of cohesiveness, enthusiasm and professional pride I seldom experienced in the Coast Guard. Perhaps some of it was the “luck of the draw” in people assigned, such as Dewey, BMC Toll, CWO Roy Singleton, EN1 Ferguson and others . The homeport surroundings didn’t hurt either, and many of the crew were there at their own request. The “esprit de corps” spread. One evening after being underway working buoys all day, I had decided to go ashore for dinner. As I headed to the gangway, darkness approaching, a young seaman was energetically rolling fresh paint onto the buoy deck. I smiled and joked that he must have been caught with some minor infraction or something, to be painting like that well after working hours. “No sir!” he replied. “I have the duty tonight, and just thought I’d get the buoy deck looking right again. We scratched it up pretty good today!” Other “appearance” items began to occur – main deck weather-tight door handles would disappear for a day, then be reinstalled chrome plated! The sweep oar and pulling oars for our pulling boat had fancy lanyard work installed on them, and the oar tips were carefully painted red (port oars) and green (starboard oars). “Fancywork” began to show up all over, on engine room railings as well as on deck and on the bridge. There just wasn’t a spot of rust to be found anywhere. ACTIVE had graceful lines, but had adopted something of an “ugly duckling” look when the hull was painted black and the buoy handling equipment was installed. But I doubt there was a better maintained ship in the Coast Guard during the time CHAPMAN was her CO. Moreover, most of the crew just plain WANTED to be there – we had few disciplinary problems, and our crew was willing and able to do most anything asked of them.

One day LT Chapman received a phone call from the Monterey Bay harbormaster, telling him a large, dead whale had floated into the outer harbor. He was asked if we could tow it to sea, and in the usual Coast Guard “can do” spirit, Chapman said we’d try. Before we left the dock, we were able to spot the floating carcass not far from our pier. We got underway and maneuvered alongside the dead animal. The stench was awful! Eventually we were able to pass a line around its tail, not before several Coasties were sickened by the

terrible smell, and we eventually towed the hulk seaward and then turned it loose. The next day, the harbormaster called again – the dead creature had floated back in! We repeated yesterday's effort, much to the dismay of the deck force people who had to rig another towline around the carcass. This time, we towed the dead beast, perhaps 50 feet long, well past Point Pinos and out to sea before we turned it loose again. We then tried to sink the bloated carcass with 20mm gunfire, but that didn't seem to work. But we weren't called again, so I guess the hulk didn't beach itself at any populated coastline location. One of our regular activities was to sail the ship down to Morro Bay, about 100 miles south of Monterey, and moor alongside USCGC ALERT, another 125' cutter. We'd stay a week, and that ship was able to go off search and rescue standby while we were there. Their crew got some well-deserved time off, and were also able to work on machinery, if needed. One trip down, in the early fall, LT Chapman, CWO Roy Singleton and I walked up to just about the only decent restaurant in the little town, to have dinner. Chapman was lamenting that we didn't have a car with us so we could try a restaurant in nearby San Luis Obispo. Roy chimed in with the same sentiment, and they both looked at me. I got the hint – I had a new '58 Chevy Impala convertible sitting on the dock in Monterey. So I said I'd hitchhike up and get it, if the skipper agreed. He did! So after dinner, in my dress khakis, I set out for Monterey. It took quite some time and several rides -- first in to San Luis Obispo, then to Salinas, and finally over to Monterey. It must have been midnight when I got there, and maybe 3 a.m. by the time I made it back to Morro Bay. But we enjoyed the next few days, sightseeing a little locally, also hitting some of the restaurants and clubs in the area. When it came time to sail back to Monterey, we were scheduled to leave in the early evening to arrive home after daylight the following morning. LT Chapman let me know that he couldn't spare me to drive my car back so Roy Singleton "volunteered," Chapman agreed, and Roy headed for Monterey in late afternoon, no doubt home with his wife by dinner time. I felt a little gullible and recognized that perhaps I'd been taken advantage of – but I wasn't aggravated, just amused. After all, what were ensigns for? And Chapman had a valid reason for making

me sail back. He'd been onboard USCGC EASTWIND about 10 years earlier, when EASTWIND had a disastrous collision with a freighter that killed a number of crewmen. It happened on a foggy night off the east coast, and we expected to encounter fog that night en route Monterey. He said he needed me to help cope with a foggy night. Chapman and I took turns standing the underway OOD watches on the way home, in dense fog. I took his trust in me to be a compliment.

In early summer 1959, shortly after I'd been promoted to LTJG, LT Chapman scheduled the ship to sail up to Santa Cruz for maintenance on Santa Cruz Light, an unmanned navigational aid located on the northwest side of the city of Santa Cruz. LT Chapman had brought his father-in-law along as an onboard guest for the three-day trip. After finishing that work, we were to sail to Halfmoon Bay to service buoys at each end of the reef lying in the bay. We spent an entire day at anchor off Santa Cruz beach, with perhaps 10-12 of the crew ashore painting and doing other maintenance at Santa Cruz Light. Chapman intended that we finish the work that day, and in late evening sail north toward Halfmoon Bay to service the buoys there in early morning. Towards dark that first evening, as we rode at anchor, we received an urgent message from 12th District directing us (and other units) to sail out toward the west. An Air Force early warning radar aircraft was in trouble with engine failures and was struggling to maintain altitude and make it back to base in the San Francisco area, from somewhere out in the Pacific. LT Chapman directed us to get underway, with me taking the conn. Shortly after "lighting off" our two diesel engines, I weighed anchor and got underway at 1/3 speed to let the engines warm up, until CWO Singleton, our EO, said it was o.k. to increase speed. LT Chapman's father-in-law was up on the flying bridge, enjoying the scenery and impending sunset, as we rounded the point of land just west of Santa Cruz harbor. I was in relatively shallow water, perhaps 25-30 feet, hugging the point as close as safety permitted, in order to be able to head northwest as soon as possible. Sea swell was moderate, and it was a lovely, calm and clear evening. As we came abreast of the point, I looked ahead to see a GIANT wave approaching! It was actually higher than the

ACTIVE's bridge wings! I rang up "ahead full," glanced at LT Chapman who nodded his agreement, and held on. The ship shuddered up the crest of the giant swell – paused and fell into the trough behind it – and staggered up a slightly smaller swell behind the first one. During the descent between the swells, I had the fleeting thought that the ship would "hit bottom" in the trough - but we didn't, staggered up the second swell, and down beyond it. I slowed to 1/3 speed as we crested the second wave. There were no more giant waves after that. It had been a thrilling but frightening experience, and we later learned that it was an unreported tsunami that did some damage to piers, docks etc. along the central California coast. LT Chapman's father-in-law, from his lofty vantage point, told us HE looked up at the crest of that first wave!

In any event, we proceeded to sea as directed, and later learned that the Air Force aircraft managed to land safely at Hamilton Air Force Base, in Marin County north of San Francisco. Chapman had me take the ship slowly toward Halfmoon Bay, and I got little sleep that night before we serviced the buoys marking the ends of the Halfmoon Bay reef at slack water, shortly after dawn. We then sailed toward Moss Landing, for more buoy work, but en route were diverted to search for a missing fishing vessel last known to be due west of Monterey Bay. The fruitless search continued through the night – another one of limited sleep for me, since the skipper took the 8-12 watch, and I ended up on the bridge from midnight to 0630 or so. As I remember it, LT Chapman conferred with District SAR center by radio, and we were released from the search by 0900 that morning. We headed for Monterey. Shortly after the noon meal, I was back on watch again, heading the ship toward home. It was a beautiful, calm afternoon with good visibility, and when we were perhaps three miles from our moorings, LT Chapman came to the bridge. After surveying conditions, he observed that it would be a good opportunity to "swing ship" and calibrate the magnetic compass. He directed me to get a team together and get started. I was just about dead on my feet from lack of sleep and had no enthusiasm whatsoever for the task. But I piped the senior quartermaster to the bridge and we assembled a calibration team of bearing takers, a good helmsman, bearing

readers etc. The job consisted of swinging the ship through 360 degrees, taking simultaneous bearings on visual targets to verify true bearings, recordings of magnetic and gyro compass readings etc. I conned the ship and recorded the readings as they were called out. LT Chapman observed the process. Perhaps halfway through the “swing ship” process, I “lost the bubble” and began to miss some of the bearings and headings being called out by team members. I also apparently got the ship turning too quickly, making it difficult for the team to get accurate and timely bearings and readings. In disgust, I threw my clip board to the deck, muttered some expletive, and stopped the ship’s engines. LT Chapman looked at me quizzically and asked if I was having a problem. I observed, somewhat sullenly I’d guess, that I was pretty tired from three days of heavy activity and scant sleep, and that I had just “lost it.” Without discussion, he inquired if I had enough stamina left to get the ship in to the dock. I recall being angry, feeling “put upon” by being kept up all hours of the day and night for several days in a row, and by my perception of his lack of sympathy for my well-earned fatigue. I tersely responded I could get the ship tied up all right. Chapman directed me to cancel the compass calibration and head for our moorings. He left the bridge. I moored the ship as directed, and as the gangway was brought aboard from the dock, watched LT Chapman and his father-in-law depart without another word to me. I slammed off to my stateroom for some sleep.

The next morning I awaited the skipper’s arrival with some apprehension, aware that he might be angry with me for my attitude the previous afternoon. When he did arrive, we sat in the little wardroom having coffee, and I started to apologize for my attitude the previous afternoon. He stopped me. LT Chapman then told me that he was well aware how many hours I’d put in the previous three days, but also noted that almost without exception I had sought out the opportunity to conn the ship, work buoys, set up search plans etc. He’d seen me be “Johnny on the Spot” most of the time during the year we’d served together, eager to do all I could in operating the ship and doing its missions. Mostly, he’d given me as much leeway as practicable, and thought I had learned a lot. But one thing was

missing, he noted. I didn't know the limits of my own endurance. If I was going to one day be in command of a ship, I needed to recognize my own limits as well as those who served under my command. He thought that the previous three days might serve to help me understand that responsibility in years to come. It was good advice. I didn't forget.

One stormy day in the late fall of 1958, some months after LT Chapman had assumed command, we deployed on a SAR case that has left me with vivid memories. A fishing vessel was in trouble about 150 miles offshore, southwest of Monterey Bay, in heavy seas and winds. He had rudder problems, his wooden-hulled vessel was leaking slowly as the hull "worked" in heavy seas. He had two engines and twin screws, and his bilge pump worked off one engine if he disengaged the propeller shaft. So while he could steer somewhat with his engines, he couldn't pump out seawater at the same time. We set out in early evening to try and find him. Conditions were terrible. In no time, most of the crew were suffering seasickness, and LT Chapman was no exception. Nor was BMC Toll. Luckily, I seldom was seriously troubled with motion sickness so was able to carry out my duties with relative ease.

We set out to locate the vessel, mainly using our direction finder to "home in" on him as he talked with us on 2670 khz. The old direction finder we had wasn't much good on high frequencies, but a month or two earlier we had painstakingly calibrated the device for homing only (relative bearings close to the ship's bow), and I was confident it was working pretty well. On into the night we plowed, rolling and bucking. At midnight LT Chapman, obviously feeling poorly, headed for his cabin and directed us to call him by 0630 or earlier if we had any luck. Our progress was slow – making 9-10 knots in the heavy seas – so we didn't expect to reach the disabled boat's area before midmorning. I ended up with the underway OOD watch from midnight until about 0600, and a wild night it was! At one point, the helmsman literally collapsed from seasickness and lay curled on deck in the corner of the pilot house. The lookout was similarly disabled, and the QMOW (quartermaster of the watch) wasn't in the best of health either. Finally,

in desperation, I ordered him to go below to the crew's quarters and get someone up to help us on the bridge. In retrospect, I should have called the CO and reported my plight, but foolish pride, I suppose, interfered with better judgment. So for some time – it seemed hours, but might have been 25-30 minutes, I was the only alert and upright person on the bridge. I'd steer briefly, getting the ship on course, then run to the radar and scout for targets, then back to the helm and so on. And I had the increasingly unbearable urge to urinate! Finally, I stepped out onto the lee bridge wing and relieved myself, the ship heading about 50 degrees off course in the process. Finally, the QMOW returned with a drowsy, half-sick seaman who was able to at least steer the vessel. When I finally got BMC Toll to the bridge to relieve me, we still had radio contact with the fishing vessel, and by my reckoning were headed directly towards him. I went below and fell exhausted into my bunk.

Perhaps five hours later I awakened and headed up to the bridge. LT Chapman had the conn, looking pale and tired, but by force of will was "doing the job." But I was dismayed to find we had changed course and we headed due north instead of to the southeast, where I was convinced the disabled vessel was. Chapman explained he had contacted several other vessels and had them take bearings on our search subject. The bearings provided seem to indicate the stricken vessel was north of us. We debated the issue for a few minutes, and I was able to convince him that our direction finder was probably our best bet since it was recently calibrated for HF homing only. I argued that the DF equipment on other vessels might not be working well at all, and that most didn't work very well anyhow on high frequency bands. He finally agreed, and we turned the ship southeast once more, took another homing bearing on our disabled vessel, and reset a course to try and find him. Meanwhile, the skipper notified the district SAR coordinator that we were having trouble located our search subject. I headed below for something to eat, but found no one in the galley and our old oil-fired stove extinguished. A few other sailors sat morosely on the mess deck, and let me know the cook was deathly sick. We tried to get the stove lighted, without success, so I went and roused CWO Roy Singleton to help. He seemed to be

feeling OK himself, and between us we got the range lighted. I remember he mumbled good-naturedly that ensigns DID seem to have trouble lighting matches and holding on in heavy seas at the same time. Between us, we got a large pot onto the stove, chopped some leftover cooked beef roast into it, opened some cans of green beans, corn etc. and created a stew of sorts. It fed those of us who could eat for the next 24 hours or so.

In early afternoon I headed back up to the bridge. Weather was still atrocious, 35-40 knot winds and heavy seas. At one point, I opened the weather-side bridge door to look around – and was astounded to see our pulling boat, which had been rigged out for lowering, had parted its forward fall and was dangling by the after fall, banging against the ship's side. LT Chapman eased the ship around to put the boat into a lee, and I ran below to rouse Chief Toll and others. We managed to recover the boat under terrible conditions by severing the after fall, working the boat alongside the buoy deck and hauling it aboard with the buoy handling crane. We resumed our search.

In late afternoon a USCG UF-1 aircraft arrived on scene to help with the search, and within 30 minutes or so had located our search subject about 12 miles ahead of us, almost directly on our trackline. Our old direction finder had worked! As darkness approached, we located the disabled vessel visually and maneuvered to take him in tow. Winds were still high, and LT Chapman had our gunners mate use a line throwing gun to shoot a messenger line to the vessel. We made three tries – two were caught high in the boat's rigging, one missed. Our GM told us he had one projectile left. At the skipper's request, I asked the fishing boat skipper if we could fire one into his pilot house window, and he readily agreed. I conned our little ship close aboard and at the closest opportune time, LT Chapman had the GM shoot one into a pilothouse window. It worked. We eventually got the 75' fishing boat rigged to tow, with an almost superhuman effort on the part of the skipper and one crewman of the disabled boat in wrestling our towing hawser aboard. There were only two persons on the vessel.

LT Chapman got us underway heading northeast in the general direction of Monterey and in a half hour or so had us settled into a towing routine by adjusting our towline length and our speed to be as easy as we could on our “charge.” We headed for home at about six knots, with somewhere around 150 miles to go. Chapman told me to set a course for home and headed below. I fumbled with the chart and logbook for about a half hour, trying to recreate where we had been. We’d had no good navigational fix for 20 or more hours, and our old LORAN A set just didn’t seem to want to yield any plausible solutions. But I finally used my best guess and set a course for home. During the night, the seas began to abate and the winds died down. By midmorning, sea conditions were MUCH better, and we were able to increase our speed to 10 knots. I remember being on watch that afternoon. In a routine check, I called our “charge” and asked how the tow was going. He said all was OK, but wondered if we could slow down some. I asked why, and he said we were going too fast for him to troll. Needless to say, we didn’t slow down!

Late that day we made radar landfall, and found ourselves just southwest of Point Pinos, on southern approach to Monterey Bay. My “guesstimate” course I’d made the night before was right on the money, probably the result of phenomenal luck. I think LT Chapman was impressed – but he never said so.

The tour on ACTIVE was probably the most formative of my early years in the service, and certainly the one that sharpened my appetite for a Coast Guard career. That little ship was truly a “multi mission” vessel. We did search and rescue, aids to navigation maintenance and vessel safety boardings and inspections as routine missions. We conducted our own small arms training and gunnery exercises. The ship was from time to time involved in other activities as well. I remember one time we deployed with ATON people onboard to conduct tests on the audibility of fog signals. We took reservists onboard for training on several occasions. The people I served with on that little vessel were generally topnotch. In particular my two skippers helped me develop competence and confidence in myself. LT Chapman taught me that our crew, as a cohesive group

and as individuals, were our most important assets. He made it clear that our ability to do our duties was totally dependent on the preparedness, competence and willingness of the crew. And he made it clear to me that it was the unit's CO and exec who, as a team, were responsible to those in the crew for their training, morale and wellbeing. I tried to live by those teachings.

In early September 1959, my relief reported aboard. I was actually sad to see him arrive. His name was LTJG Harry Reckitt, Academy class of '57. I had orders to report to Commander, First Coast Guard District, Boston, Massachusetts, for duty in the reserve training division. It sounded like a fate worse than death!

I saw only a few of my ACTIVE shipmates in years to come, but many of them were my favorites. A seaman named Rossellini was among them, as well as GM2 Palumbo, a kid from New Jersey. EN1 Ferguson was an outstanding fellow whom I saw years later after he'd made chief warrant officer. CWO Roy Singleton made a lifelong impression on me. He was a man of fine professionalism, patience and humor. I kept track of BMC Robert Toll for some years, and we exchanged notes from time to time even after he retired in Florida.

LT Chapman went on to make commander and served as CO of a WHEC in Norfolk before he decided to retire, in 1968. In 1964, when I was transferred to Coast Guard Headquarters, and he was en route staff duty in Juneau, Alaska, he sold me his house in a D.C suburb – Alexandria, VA. I have kept in touch with him from time to time, and at this writing (summer 2001) he resides in Connecticut and is a tribal council member of the Pequot Tribe, owners and operators of one of the largest casino/resort complexes in the world. LT Harold Doan achieved the rank of CDR and retired in 1970. We traded emails in 2000, and I learned he went on to a second career associated with the maritime industry, in California.

I don't think I ever saw ACTIVE again, after I left the ship in September 1959. But I remember it as one of my best tours of duty.

CHAPTER TEN

FIRST COAST GUARD DISTRICT STAFF

September 1959 to April 1961

During summer of 1959, in Monterey, I met, dated and married a woman who was a nurse employed by the Army and the U.S. Army Language School in Monterey. These writings are not about my personal life, but marriage inevitably changed my Coast Guard life as well. The two of us set off across the U.S. in an aging Ford station wagon, found our way to the Boston area, and found a passable apartment in which to live in Quincy, a suburb south of Boston proper.

I reported to the First District office, the bulk of which was located on the waterfront at Constitution Wharf. These offices were in an old waterfront building that was co-located with Base Boston, home-port for several ships. The District Commander, Operations Division and Rescue Coordination Center were located in a small federal building some blocks away. My assignment was to be a training officer in the Reserve Division, and I reported to those offices, headed up by a gentleman named CDR W.D. Strauch, Jr. My immediate superior was LT Alban Landry (Academy class of '55). Al and I comprised the training section of the division, and were the only two regular commissioned officers in the office except for a CWO ship's clerk. We three were the ones generally assigned to visit reserve units throughout the district, to conduct inspections, training, etc. The remaining reserve division commissioned staff were comprised of special Reserve Program Administrators who served on a contract basis, or reserve officers on extended active duty. One was a female lieutenant, the first female officer I had encountered in my budding career. It was an odd tour of duty, but not an unpleasant one. I traveled a lot around New England, and in the office I learned a great deal about administration and finance. The reserve program ran on dollars!

Under Al Landry's tutelage, I learned the ropes. Our duties involved reviewing

and setting up training programs for reserve units, establishing two-week active duty programs for reservists, and arranging active duty training opportunities at Coast Guard units for reserve personnel. In addition, we had to estimate our program costs and budget for them. Each year, the district reserve divisions throughout the Coast Guard submitted their budget requests to the Office of Reserve and Headquarters. Even the pay and allowances for our district staff were included. Al and I, regular officers, were paid by reserve funds during our assignment.

Once during my tour, in spring 1960, I was delegated the task of compiling our district budget request – a task I found fascinating and challenging. With Al's help, and input from others in the division, I prepared a budget request totaling \$1,000,000 (and loose change) for our 1960 submission. Our division chief, CDR Strauch, thought it a bit extravagant, but signed off on it and sent it in. Much to our surprise, the budget was approved and allocated. That summer, Al Landry and I had a much easier time arranging active duty tours for reservists. For example, I recall dealing with one WHEC exec in asking for slots onboard for 20 reservists for two weeks. He was not receptive. I then suggested we could provide him with 40 brand new foul weather jackets for his crew, and perhaps 10 new life preservers. He found room for our twenty reservists.

Other aspects of district staff duty were interesting as well. There was a pretty active social life. Staff officers had a well-attended luncheon once monthly there at Constitution Wharf, in a large wardroom that overlooked the waterfront. There were generally monthly social gatherings of officers and wives, sometimes cookouts at a senior officer's home, sometimes dinner and a play or musical event in Boston. It was a pleasant experience.

Our district commander was Rear Admiral Edwin Roland, an impressive-looking and capable officer who later became commandant. He was a personable gentleman as well. On Christmas Eve day, 24 December 1959, an announcement over our building's loudspeaker system at noon advised that the

District Commander had granted us early holiday liberty, and that we were free to go home. I grabbed my hat and coat and was vaulting down a stairwell, rounded a corner and collided forcefully with RADM Roland. After he listened patiently to my outburst of an apology, he wished me “Merry Christmas” and sent me on my way. One week later to the day we were released from work at noon once again on New Year’s Eve. Again, rounding a hallway corner at top speed, I collided with the admiral again, on his rounds to wish the staff a pleasant holiday. He accepted my apology, and suggested more restraint.

In January, at our monthly district staff luncheon, I was reciting my holiday encounters with RADM Roland to CDR Strauch, as we stood in line at the bar to order a glass of wine. CDR Strauch observed that I now had an opportunity to make amends, and looked over my shoulder, smiling. Startled, I stepped back and onto RADM Roland’s toes! He had been standing right behind me. I have no clear recollection of what kind of apology I mustered up, certain, I think, that my career aspirations were seriously damaged. I do remember that RADM Roland took it in good spirit, with high humor. In the fall of 1964, when I was newly assigned to Headquarters, Roland had been promoted to admiral and was our commandant. One afternoon I met him striding down a hallway – he looked up, saw me and with a smile said, “Oh no! Not YOU again!” I promised to stand still against the nearest wall whenever I knew he was in the area. He laughed, we chatted a moment or two, and he wished me well.

In spring 1960, I received orders to proceed to Wildwood, New Jersey, for LORAN C training and assignment in northern Europe. The death of my stepmother under tragic and shocking circumstances prompted me to request delay of the orders, on behalf of my father who needed my support, and the delay was granted. In August 1960, my relief arrived and reported aboard, so I was assigned to First District electronics engineering branch for duty. I cleaned out my desk and moved to a different floor. My branch chief was LCDR Wesley M. Thorsson (Academy ‘45), a fellow who quite candidly intimidated me greatly at the outset. He seemed gruff and humorless at first, and frankly frightened me a

little. I misjudged him. I suspect he was not particularly happy to have a non-engineer “amateur” assigned to his branch when he had serious work to do. But he put up with me, found some useful tasks within my limited electronics capabilities, and sharpened my interest in Coast Guard electronics. When I had left OCS in ‘57, and in the 2-plus years since, I had hoped to find my way in the service as a good operational (shipboard) officer. I had no thoughts of a specialty, nor was I particularly interested in engineering assignments. Thorrrson largely changed that. One task he assigned to me was an evaluation of communications antennas on district small boats and small shore stations. It was fascinating work. I took portable measuring equipment and a portable high frequency transceiver all over coastal New England, obtaining field strength measurements of various Coast Guard units. I was able to identify some that just didn’t work well at all, and helped “fix” them. However, Thorrrson considered me a temporary “trainee” of limited use, but with potential to do well in electronics engineering. He told me so, and so stated in my fitness report. During my five months under Thorrrson’s supervision I became well acquainted with Lt Richard Malm (Academy ‘51) who has been a lifelong friend. Malm was a recent MIT graduate and a fine electronics engineer. He took me under his wing, particularly during my first weeks in the branch. In late 1960 I received orders to report to Electronic Engineering Station at Wildwood for further assignment as construction officer and prospective commanding officer of “DART ONE.” My orders indicated I’d report to Commander, Mediterranean Section in Naples, Italy. In time I learned I was going to Estartit, Spain. The orders were rather strange and exciting for a LTJG! I was ordered to obtain a special passport identifying me as a representative of the United States government, and to execute my travel to Europe in civilian clothes – dependent travel was not authorized. I learned unofficially that I was being sent to a new LORAN C station in the early stages of construction, on the northern Mediterranean coast of Spain. The location was, at that time, classified. I later learned the Coast Guard was establishing a LORAN C network covering the Mediterranean under a request and funding by DOD, specifically the Navy. We were to provide an electronics

navigation system to be used by our nuclear submarines and other tactical users, as a part of the “Iron Curtain” containment of the USSR.

In January '61 I reported to Electronics Engineering Station Wildwood for 60 days of LORAN C training. On the day I arrived, I met CWO Jack Peterson and another LTJG whose name I can no longer recall. The three of us set out to find temporary lodging, and located a two-bedroom motel unit with kitchen where we set up housekeeping for two months. Typically Jack or I did the cooking and the other fellow did dishes, since cooking was not his long suit. The two-month training session was fairly intense. We were taught theory and practical factors on operations of LORAN C equipment, and I tried to learn as much as I could assimilate since I had no idea what to expect in Spain. One of our instructors was, coincidentally, LCDR Al Manning, who had been an instructor at OCS when I attended in 1957. While I was at Wildwood, LCDR Manning took a routine annual physical at the Public Health Service Hospital in Baltimore. A few days later, he was sent back for additional diagnosis, as they'd found a spot on one of his lungs. He returned, put his affairs in order, and then returned to Baltimore for surgery. They removed one of his lungs! Amazingly, Manning was back at Station Wildwood and back on the job before I completed training. He later faced a medical evaluation board, and convinced them he could continue on active duty. He went on to attain the rank of rear admiral.

Shortly before I left EECEN Wildwood, I met ETC Jeffrey Jackman, who was just entering LORAN C training and was under orders to report to my station after training. On 3 March 1961 I completed LORAN C training and, with leave enroute, departed for my assignment in Europe.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

NE NAVIGATION FACILITY (LORAN STATION), ESTARTIT, SPAIN

April 1961 to April 1962

On 5 April 1961 I reported in at McGuire Air Force Base, New Jersey for transportation to Naples, Italy. I was scheduled for a commercial flight to Paris the next morning, but was informed that a flight for Frankfurt, Germany was available that afternoon. I took it, and rode an uncomfortable MATS (Air Force) flight to Frankfurt, with fueling stops at Gander, Newfoundland and at Lajes AFB in the Azores. The aircraft was the military version of the DC-4, I think – a four piston-engine propeller aircraft. I spent a night in a military BOQ in Frankfurt, and the next day took a Lufthansa commercial flight to Milan, Italy and then Alitalia flights to Naples via Rome. I arrived in Naples and reported in at the U.S. Coast Guard Mediterranean Section Office on 7 April. I stayed in a small hotel across the street from the section office, and remained in Naples for 9 days. Mostly, I read volumes of files about the various negotiations with French and Spanish governments to establish a LORAN C station site on the northeast Mediterranean coast, about selection of the Estartit site after failure to find a location further north in France, and about various agreements and contracts to get the station built. I was briefed by MEDSEC staff people and learned that construction was underway but not nearly completed. However, I was told that our goal was to be “on air” by 1 July if humanly possible.

In off-hours I saw a little of Naples, and was able to visit the ruins at Pompeii, where an Italian village had been completely buried by a volcanic eruption. My recollections of Naples are vague, but I do remember not being impressed with Italian food. In fact, there did not seem to be a T-bone steak in all of Naples!

The MEDSEC office was a bustling place with people coming and going on TAD o other LORAN stations – Libya, Southern Italy, Turkey, LORAN C monitor stations on Sardinia and Rhodes, Greece; and a new LORAN A station in the northwest corner of Spain. Under section command, stationed there in Naples, was an air detachment of Coast

Guard aviation personnel who operated C-123 cargo aircraft in support of the LORAN stations. The section was commanded by CAPT F.J. Statts, and second in command was CDR Helmer "Snapper" Pearson. Pearson retired at the rank of rear admiral in 1974. The section's civil engineer was LT Byron Jordan (Academy '51), a very busy but competent fellow who told me a lot about the station site and its construction. He also inquired if I intended to bring my wife over, and offered that there was affordable housing in the village. I observed that my orders didn't provide for dependent travel to Spain. He explained that travel would be our own expense, but went on to say there was an exchange of messages between MEDSEC and Headquarters discussing dependents on site in Spain. MEDSEC stated rumor had it the prospective COs for Estartit (me) and another station at Estaca de Vares (northwestern Spain) intended to bring wives to the sites, and asked for advice. Headquarters response was that the Coast Guard was not authorized to regulate the travel of civilian dependents abroad. Jordan interpreted this to mean that the decision was mine, but advised that it was a sensitive subject with the MEDSEC command, and probably best just not discussed with the CO. I followed his advice.

On 16 April, CDR Pearson and I proceeded to Madrid, Spain via commercial air. We were met at the Madrid international airport by a U.S. Navy LCDR who escorted us to our hotel, provided us with some Spanish currency (a loan from his office), and gave us some advice on places to dine that evening. He let us know he'd pick us up in the morning and escort us to the offices of the Commander, Joint U.S. Military Group Spain (CHJUSMG). That evening CDR Pearson and I dined at an internationally famous restaurant in the old part of Madrid. Located below ground in carved-out stone caves, El Botin was indeed a new experience for a young fellow from Washington state! Our Navy "guide" had suggested we try an appetizer called "angulas", but declined to tell us what it was, and suggested we share a roast suckling pig as our main course. As an alternative, he suggested rack of lamb. The restaurant itself was an experience. It was composed of a series of underground rooms hewn from stone, with two or three stairways leading down from street level. Most of the cooking was done in a huge clay and stone oven centered in the largest room, with a big firebox fed with charcoal and dried olive pits for fuel. The huge oven had doors at opposite ends, and cooks loaded

the oven with cooking vessels slid in and out on long wooden paddles. The further the vessels were shoved in, the hotter the oven. This restaurant had been in continuous operation since the 1700s, so the story went, except for a few years during the Spanish Civil War in the late 1930s. Young fellows with guitars and other stringed instruments wandered through the restaurant singing and playing for the customers. I was indeed intrigued! CDR Pearson and I took a chance and ordered the *angulas*, but I believe passed on the whole roasted suckling pig in favor of the lamb. When the *angulas* were brought by our waiter they were served in blistering hot crockery dishes, crackling a little in olive oil, and emitting the pungent odor of fresh roasted garlic. In El Botin's dim light, they looked like dishes of white spaghetti. On first bite, I was hooked – they were delicious – and when I discovered that they were actually roasted baby eels, it no longer mattered! I ate them as often as I could find them while in Spain.

The next day our escort picked us up at our hotel, and took us to the Joint U.S. Military Group offices. Among other stops, I was ushered in and introduced the JUSMG commander, LT General Caldera was his name. He was an impressive gentleman who told me I was going to be one of only two U.S. base commanders in Spain who would not have a co-located Spanish military command on site. He promised full support of our mission, and told us our logistical support would be provided by Zaragoza Air Force Base located in central Spain. He cautioned me to maintain good relationships with local citizens, and said to contact him if any problems occurred.

While CDR Pearson met with other people, I was sent to the U.S. Embassy there in Madrid, and met with the naval attaché, a Navy captain, and his assistant, a Marine Corps major. A few minutes into their briefing, I began to understand that the naval attaché was an intelligence officer. In later years, I wondered what rock I'd been living under! These two officers conducted what was basically a political briefing. They advised me that the Catalan people in northeast Spain had not supported Franco in the Spanish Civil War, and that there were still lingering resentments more than 20 years later (incidentally, I did not find this to be true. While some Catalans thought their region should be independent of Spain for economic reasons, they generally thought Franco was a leader who meant the very best for the Spanish people). The attaché warned me

of communist activity, and asked me to report any I heard of or otherwise encountered. (If I ever met a Spanish communist, I sure didn't know it!) Finally they spoke of intelligence aircraft overflights from time to time, and said I would likely be visited by intelligence agents once in a while. (I never knowingly saw a flight, and was never visited!).

CDR Pearson and I left Madrid by train and traveled to Zaragoza in central Spain. We left before dinner time on an ornate old train that seemed to run on square wheels. Each of us had a small stateroom, and we had a fine meal in the train's dining car. Sleep that night was elusive, but I was finally awakened by a porter at about 0630 to find our sleeper car resting quietly on a track at Zaragoza's train station. We had apparently arrived a few hours earlier. CDR Pearson and I were met by an Air Force officer and taken to nearby Zaragoza Air Force Base. After breakfast, we met with the deputy commander and members of his staff. I learned that this base would provide commissary (foodstuffs) and other supplies to my station, and some limited medical support in emergencies. We spent half a day being briefed on procedures, how I was to order supplies etc. Basically, my station would receive supplies on routine deliveries of supplies to a small Air Force tactical early-warning radar site located near Rosas, Spain – about 40 kilometers from Estartit.

The next day, Pearson and I went on to Barcelona and then on to Estartit. As I remember it, we arrived around April 20th. There was a U.S. Navy lieutenant on site, a BUDOCKS (Bureau of Navy Yards and Docks) civil engineer who was administrator of the contract for construction of the station. His name was Bud Weiss, and he was a very pleasant and helpful fellow. A Coast Guard civil engineer was also there, LT Gerald O. Lesperance (Academy class '52). Jerry was on TAD from the civil engineering branch of the 3rd Coast Guard District in New York. We were also met in Estartit by an official from the firm Brown-Raymond-Walsh (BRW), a huge conglomerate that built all the U.S. bases in Spain during the late '50s and early '60s. In the next day or two, I visited the site and met the onsite contract supervisor and his crew of eight or nine American foremen. The supervisor was an Irish-American named Mike. One of his foremen was an Italian-American from New Jersey named Jim Santelli. The night

before CDR Pearson returned to Naples, we were taken to dinner at a local restaurant by the BRW official. It was an interesting dinner. The fellow had more to drink than he probably should have, and told us that our station contract had been negotiated at a loss on purpose because his firm, with a cost-plus DOD contract, was simply making too much money! But he went on to say the while the GAO was about to do its annual review, he wasn't worried. They were giving all their U.S. employees a huge annual bonus, to help reduce profit. And he went on to slyly hint that LBJ (vice president Lyndon Johnson) would "fix" any other problems they might encounter with GAO, since he and his family had financial interests in the consortium. I never learned if any of this was true.

When CDR Pearson left, I surely felt like the "lone ranger" even though Jerry Lesperance was there. His title was "construction liaison officer" and I was the designated prospective commanding officer. But I had no station yet, and no people assigned. On the station site above the village, there was a small temporary office building occupied by the BRW people, a large Quonset warehouse, and one building that was completed far enough to have a roof on it. Perhaps 200 Spanish laborers were on site doing all kinds of work – digging foundations, pouring concrete, quarrying rock for walls, etc. There was another contractor on site as well. An American supervisor (first name Sam) had a crew of about 10 Italians, and they were in the early stages of erecting the station's transmitting tower antenna. This tower eventually was 625 feet tall, a tripod girder structure guyed at various levels. The station site was on a bluff above the village, overlooking the Mediterranean Sea to the east. An expanse of beach perhaps 10 miles long extended to the south. Even in summer, the beautiful beach was mostly deserted except for a short stretch directly adjacent to the village itself. A shallow cove abutted the village, with a small rocky island at the northern edge of the cove. Onsite, the vegetation consisted mostly of a low-lying bush that I remember as some sort of sage.

The Americans working for BRW stayed in a resort hotel named "El Catalan" that nestled on the hillside above Estarrit. Jerry and I were billeted there as well. The resort usually closed in winter and reopened in May, but had been kept open with a small staff

to accommodate the people associated with building the LORAN station. El Catalan was crude and simple by today's "resort" standards, but in the early '60s it was one of the nicer tourist complexes along the Coast Brava of northeastern Spain. It was, I think, owned by a British company and run by a fellow of Russian extraction. The assistant manager was a delightful little fellow named "Pepe", a local man. Food in the hotel's restaurant was quite good, and the dining room itself overlooked the Mediterranean and was abutted by an outdoor stage, dance floor and night club. It became a lively place by early summer, featuring flamenco dancers and a live orchestra. My brief stay there was pleasant enough.

The village of Estartit was small, quaint and fairly attractive. There were basically two streets, parallel to the beach, a lovely expanse actually several miles long. There were a few shops and restaurants, one grocery store and several small hotels. South of the village was another hotel, slightly larger, situated on beachfront property. Population was about 600, as best as I can recall, but swelled to over 2000 in the summer months as tourists, predominantly British, swarmed into the village and filled the hotels and hostels. A local entrepreneur whom I remember only as "Eugenio", whose parents owned the village's only grocery store, booked in groups of English tourists for one and two week vacations. He reserved blocks of hotel space, made meal arrangements, and bussed the tourists down from Perpignon, France into which they flew or rode the train. In later years, I heard he became a millionaire. During my year in Estartit I found him to be a helpful and honest person, one of the few in the village that spoke English. He helped me find hotel space for my crew when they began to arrive in late spring.

The LORAN station site was less than a mile from the village as the crow flies, but rather steep cliffs abutted the plain on which the station was being built. Our access road skirted the village to the south, then wound up the hillside and through a sizable farm and cattle ranch that abutted the station on the south. It was perhaps 1-1/2 or two miles by road. When I arrived, the only building nearing completion was the transmitting equipment building, on the east side of the station, with the 625' tower being erected directly outside the building. The largest structure, called the signal-power building, was well underway with some concrete block walls under construction. This building would

house the LORAN C timing equipment, radio communications gear, a garage and shop, three large Caterpillar electrical generators, a garage and maintenance shop, an electronics shop, and most of our expendables storage and spare parts. Diesel fuel and water storage tanks were to be installed behind this building. The other major building, just barely started, would house the station's kitchen and food storage equipment, a recreation and dining hall, laundry facility, and crews quarters – a series of double rooms and a separate area for the chief petty officers. In all, about 25 men were to be assigned to the station. A fourth building was to be the commanding officer and executive officer quarters, and would contain two bedrooms, a living room with kitchenette facilities and an office for the commanding officer. As it turned out, Estartit was not assigned a chief warrant officer as executive officer, at least not in the first or second crew rotations. I never really determined why, as all other LORAN C stations all over the globe had a commissioned warrant as exec. I heard rumors that there was some sort of “turf battle” between the USCG Office of Personnel and Office of Engineering over the issue, and Estartit was the test case. But since it was a new station under construction, assignment of a CWO (electronics) would have made good sense. So I eventually occupied this building by myself.

My first two or three weeks were pretty fairly uneventful and not too arduous. There really wasn't a lot for me to do but observe construction and familiarize myself with the area. The BRW supervisor, Mike, assigned me a car and a driver, a pleasant Spanish fellow who spoke no English and drove like a Tokyo taxi driver! I traveled to the Air Force site at Rosas, about 45 kilometers to the north, and met the commanding officer, a most pleasant and helpful lieutenant colonel. I learned they had a nice exchange, with some groceries, and a fine stock of liquor that sold for astonishingly low prices. I recall liter bottles of Canadian Club whisky were somewhere around \$2.50. Dutch gin was perhaps \$1.50, for example. No U.S. taxes, no Spanish import duties. I had decided a car of my own would be useful and I approached the lieutenant colonel about it. He said I could order a new Volkswagen through his exchange for about \$950 delivered - or he had a 1960 VW “bug” he'd sell me for \$800. I accepted. He called his admin sergeant in and told him to order a new VW for himself! A few days later I picked up his '60 model for myself. In the weeks following, I had time to meander around the

local countryside. I found a Roman ruins on the coast south of Rosas, with a small museum. The ruins had been “found” in the ‘30s, the curator told me, and then he took me on a tour of the site. He told me that the first Roman detail there was headed up by Julius Caesar’s nephew, and that there were perhaps a dozen Romans on the site supervising several thousand Greeks who were engaged in agriculture and trading. It was an impressive site. The remains of the villa, a huge building, had fine terrazzo floors, tall granite pillars, running water inside from cisterns and so on. The museum displayed artifacts such as tiny glass medicine vials, wire safety pins and other items I wouldn’t have guessed would have been available over 2000 years ago. Primary export crop was apparently olives, as the surrounding hillsides – now mostly barren - were terraced and had evidence of being tree-covered many years past. The Greek village ruins, below the villa, had irrigation-type ditch networks used for sewerage and household wastes, and had a water distribution system of tile waterways. Impressive, for a society that existed before the birth of Christ.

That part of northern Spain was full of interesting places. Several impressive castles were nearby, the closest about 10 kilometers from Estarrit. This imposing structure sat atop a hill overlooking a sizable village, larger than Estarrit, whose name I just can’t remember any more. Discussions with local folk led me to understand that the castle was never really occupied by anyone. It had been built in medieval times by the local lord for protection, and if an invasion or attack was imminent, the lord and villagers took their weapons, food and water to the castle to defend themselves. Another smaller castle south of Rosas was occupied by a detachment of Guardia Civil troops, Franco’s federal police force. I visited most of the local villages and towns – Figueras, La Bisbal, Palafrugell and the largest, Gerona (population perhaps 50,000). I remember one small village I’d pass through enroute the Air Force station that seemed to raise nothing but onions. The town smelled of onions, and dried onion husks always seemed to be blowing down the village’s main street. In these travels I used my own little VW. The driver assigned to me by BRW was a nice fellow, but his driving terrified me. Once, returning from Rosas and going down a winding mountain road, I made him stop and let me drive. He was humiliated, I think – but I didn’t want to die young! I got Mike to reassign the fellow to other duties, take back the sedan he had provided me, and give

me a little Ford pickup for me to use for official local travel. I'd take the black Chevy sedan when I needed to travel to Barcelona, because it seemed prestigious to the local folk and expected of me. In Estarrit, even though I was always in civilian work clothes, the local folk always greeted me as "commandante", doffing their hats in deference, and sometimes stepping off the sidewalk to let me pass. I wasn't very comfortable with that! At age 27, I hardly felt like a "commandante".

I made several trips to Barcelona early in my tour to establish liaison with the U.S. Navy Support Facility located there. Headed up by a Navy commander, this facility provided logistics support for visiting U.S. Navy ships, and for handling of cargo and supplies headed to and from U.S. facilities in eastern and central Spain. The detachment was commanded by a pleasant fellow named Commander R.H. Bentley, USN supply corps. CDR Bentley also arranged a meeting with the Spanish Navy Sector Commander, an admiral, who later was helpful in arranging temporary electronic monitoring sites for me.

My communications with Naples were difficult at best. Mail worked OK, although slow. Telephone service was possible, but difficult. I would have to go to the Estarrit switchboard, run by an old one-armed Spanish civil war veteran. If I tried to call from another phone, through his switchboard, he always claimed he couldn't understand me. When I'd enter his office with the Naples number written down, he'd smile and dial through for me. Later on, he and I became more friendly – and his difficulties in understanding my admittedly bad Spanish seemed to vanish! Once in a while the Navy people in Barcelona would call me and read me a message from MEDSEC. Mail came via the contractor's office, such as it was. But I received little mail. LORAN Station Estarrit was not officially a Coast Guard unit, and therefore was on no official distribution list. Later on, I was able to write to LCDR Don Chapman, who was stationed then in Headquarters, and asked if he could help get me into the "official mail" pipeline. He was able to get SOME things started, such as routine distribution of "Commandant Instructions" and "Notices," etc.

In early May the 625' tower was basically completed, and Sam and his crew of tower monkeys packed up and headed off to another job in Libya or Saudi Arabia or some

other Middle East locale. LT Byron Jordan paid one of his several visits checking on contract progress, and inspected the tower. He found some deficiencies in the paint touchup (the tower was painted white and international orange), and some missing lock nuts etc. He advised LT Jerry Lesperance to get the crew back and clean up the discrepancies – but Jerry had no way to really do that! So he and I spent a week wielding paint brushes and crescent wrenches up and down that tower. Well, the view was good and it was something to do. And climbing 625' to the top was great exercise.

In late May or early June, I learned by telephone that some of the station personnel were in Madrid at Torrejon Air Force Base, and were being sent to the site. I was a little dismayed – no station, no quarters for them, etc. After phoning Naples, one of the MEDSEC officers made a hasty trip over, and we negotiated for hotel rooms for them in a small hotel annex in Estartit. I made arrangements for meals at a couple small local restaurants, on credit, to be paid twice monthly. I met the first two or three men at the railroad station in Flassa, about 25 kilometers from Estartit. Before long all two dozen men were onsite – four chief petty officers, several first class and others including a couple nonrated young fellows. It was a trying time for a while. Their hotel accommodations weren't very good – no private bathrooms, no central heating, etc. And quite a few of the younger men showed up with no money. I loaned money to them until I was nearly broke myself, to pay their food bills, then resorted to loaning money from my official "imprest fund", a \$500 renewable cash fund I was given to pay for local supplies and emergencies. Loaning money to the crew was not authorized! Luckily no one audited the books. The crew and I carved out a section of the temporary warehouse as our "turf" – a desk for me, etc. I tried to keep the crew busy with training and "busywork." I remember one week we just recovered used lumber around the site – pulled nails, sorted and stacked it. I had no idea what we'd use it for. We never did!

As 4 July 1961 approached, the chief petty officers and I talked about having some sort of American-style Independence Day celebration. We figured a beach cookout, and a bonfire would be appropriate. One day in mid-June I discussed the idea with Mike, the BRW construction supervisor, and he thought it was a great idea. He "bounced it off of" his American foremen, about a half dozen of them, and they all agreed to chip in money

to help out. One day Mike told me he had a munitions-demolitions man in his crew, a Spaniard, who was also a professional fireworks craftsman. He asked if we'd like a fireworks display at the picnic, and said he'd provide it courtesy of the company if I wished. I wholeheartedly agreed. As Independence Day approached, we "Coasties" hauled at least three truckloads of scrap lumber and other wood we scrounged down to the beach and made a huge pile for our bonfire. We bought picnic stuff – hot dogs, hamburgers, beer and soft drinks, etc. from the Air Force station at Rosas, and we fashioned a couple big charcoal grills from split 55 gallon drums. I bought charcoal from a vendor who produced his own charcoal in a large kiln, the charcoal pieces consisting of small pieces of wood – branches etc. – "coked" into charcoal in his kiln. It was the best charcoal I've ever used, far superior to the bricket stuff we use here in the U.S. The "powder monkey" fireworks craftsman had apparently been making rockets etc. for days, and spent almost the entire day erecting his display down the beach from our picnic area.

In late afternoon, we Americans gathered on the beach – 25 "Coasties", about seven civilian contractor folk and several of their wives, and a number of local Spanish folk we had invited. Before dusk, a steady stream of Spanish people started to arrive and line the beach, politely not encroaching on our picnic area. As dark approached there must have been over 1,000 people assembled, much to our surprise. We learned from one of our Spanish friends that fireworks were extremely popular in Spain, and the word had spread that the "Americanos" were going to set some off at sunset. So, as darkness descended, we gave the word to start the fireworks – and quite a display it was! I'd guess our "powder monkey" sent up 40 or more impressive rockets with all sorts of colors and patterns, and then at the end lit off a pyrotechnic American flag he'd fashioned on a large wooden stand down the beach. He set off another ten or so red, white and blue rockets as a finale. Everyone cheered, Spanish and American! Then everyone cheered again when our huge bonfire erupted into a tower of flames. It was quite a day.

Construction of the station was proceeding at a furious pace, but too slow to suit me. I had been ordered to take all possible actions to have the station "on the air" by July 1 –

but obviously the buildings would not be done by then. Jerry Lesperance and I opened discussions with the BRW supervisor, and Mike agreed to expedite completion of the electronics portion of the signal power building, and would provide and hook up a temporary electrical generator. In return I and my crew would lay electrical and electronics cables in the trenches between the signal power and transmitter buildings, and we'd erect the large "screen room" inside the signal power building as soon as it was finished enough to give us access. At last we had some COAST GUARD work to do. I pushed the start button on getting the station's outfitting equipment shipped over, including the electronics equipment. Some came by ship to Barcelona, but a great deal of the outfitting equipment was flown from Brooklyn by Coast Guard C-130. One of our first significant new pieces of equipment was a brand new Dodge 1-1/2 ton truck. Not long after we received it, I came across the chief boatswain mate and the chief engineman having a heated argument. Seems the BMC wanted to send the truck somewhere, the ENC wanted to do some maintenance and they were having a scheduling jurisdiction debate. I wasn't sure what to do, so I told them the truck was mine – I wanted the BMC to schedule its use, the ENC to maintain it, and to call me when they needed more guidance. The problem went away.

When our first C-130 load of gear was due at the Barcelona International Airport, several of the crew and I set out with our Dodge truck, my pickup and a big flatbed semi provided by the construction contractor. When we arrived at the airport, about 110 kilometers south of Estarrit, we found the C-130 sitting on the tarmac with two armed Guardia Civil men guarding it and the huge stack of crates, boxes etc. sitting behind the aircraft. Not a Coastie was in sight! I sought out the airport's customs office and found an official to whom I presented some sort of document that allowed me to clear our materials into the country. He looked at it, read it, and handed it back. With a smile and a salute, he thanked me and said something about having a good trip back to Estarrit. I asked if he didn't want to have someone come out and inventory the load etc. He smiled and said that the document I showed him had designated me a customs officer of the Spanish government. He said I had the same authority that he did. He said he'd send over a fork lift. We loaded everything onto the trucks and headed back to the station site.

The next weeks were extremely busy, mostly 7-day-a-week workdays as we pulled cable, erected the screen room and installed electronics equipment. We started with the transmitting equipment, huge transmitters capable of transmitting one megawatt of pulsed power. With not much to go on in way of wiring diagrams, etc., we learned as we went. ETC Jeffrey Jackman was the senior ET, and he led the effort with my help. But everyone worked – enginemen, ETs, our cook and so on. We installed the LORAN antenna coupler and dummy load equipment and connected to the tower. After the screen room was in, we installed the LORAN timing equipment and the radio gear. ENC Exley was the senior engineer, and he and his electrician led the effort to wire up power from the temporary generator provided by BRW. It was a happy day when we got our radio communications equipment operating. For the first time, we had direct communications with the office in Naples, with the LORAN stations in Italy, Turkey and Libya, and with the monitor station on the island of Sardinia. As 1 August approached, it appeared we might be ready to go “on air” that date. So I sent a message to Commander Mediterranean Section saying we’d be ready. The Section Office ordered the master station in Italy, and the “slave” stations Turkey and Libya, and our station in Spain, to prepare to configure into a four-station LORAN net at a specified time on 1 August.

On the date specified we were ready. We had our equipment up and running and had been transmitting signals into the dummy load. We had the timing equipment locked-on to the master station in Italy, and stood practice watches for several days before the official on-air date and time. When the time arrived, the master went off-air briefly to reconfigure his LORAN timers, as did the other two slave stations. When the master resumed transmitting, we were ready and transferred our signals to the antenna seconds after the master signal was locked-on. We were operational! We now had a complete LORAN C “star” configuration covering the Med and surrounding areas, for use by our nuclear submarines and other DOD users. The next two weeks or so went fairly smoothly, though it was difficult for the crew to stand radio, generator and loran watches and commute to and from the leased hotel rooms several miles away. But we managed. Meanwhile, we were also engaged in calibration and adjustment of our signals by taking power and spectrum measurements at various sites in the near area

using portable equipment.

Construction proceeded rapidly. By the end of August, the signal-power building was complete and we were able to get our own generators on the line, get started with spare parts storage, etc. We all worked hard, but the crew seemed willing and in decent spirits. My major concern then was to ensure I had “healthy and rested people” on the job and on the watches. Estartit was full of tourists, mostly English, and the crew was having a ball! Combine the friendly English tourists with cheap drinks – perhaps 15 cents per rum and coke or a dime for a beer – and nightly partying certainly was in the financial reach of some of my guys. Still, there were few problems. However, I was sure anxious to see the station mess and billeting facilities finished, so we could move aboard. That part of the construction seemed to be agonizingly slowly – and in fact, we didn’t occupy the station until after Thanksgiving.

In late August, CDR H.S. Pearson came over from Naples to look things over. I was nervous, but pleased to have him come over. I thought we’d done well in getting the station operational under difficult circumstances, and was proud of our work. He spent two days with us, seemed well satisfied with our status, and complimented me and my crew for a job well done.

Sometime in September I received word from MEDSEC that the new MEDSEC commander, CAPT. E.C. Allen, would be coming over for a visit and inspection along with another captain from Third Coast Guard District in New York. I was directed to meet them at Barcelona International Airport and provide transportation to Estartit. I also arranged hotel accommodations in Estartit. For several days we worked hard on making the transmitter building and signal-power building as presentable as possible, and cleaned up around the station as best we could, given that 75 or so construction personnel were still busily working on the other two buildings. I traveled down to Barcelona a week in advance and made a call on the Spanish Navy sector commander, a kindly rear admiral whom had been helpful in the past. I made arrangements for a call on the admiral by CAPT Allen and the visiting captain, and sent a message to MEDSEC outlining the arrangements.

On the prescribed day, early in the morning, I headed for Barcelona with a sedan and driver provided by Mike the BRW supervisor. I had instructed the crew to be prepared for personnel and station inspection at about 1400, my estimate of the time when we'd arrive back at Estartit. I met the flight, greeted the captains, and after we'd retrieved their baggage – cleared through customs by me and my “magic document” – I had the driver head for the Spanish Navy headquarters. CAPT Allen then said he'd like to cancel the meeting and do a little sightseeing. I was horrified! If we “stood up” the Spanish admiral, it would be a terrible affront. I tried to convince CAPT Allen, and he finally reluctantly agreed to a brief meeting. We spent a scant 15 minutes with the Spanish admiral, CAPT Allen anxious to be on the way, and I made the excuse that my crew was standing by for inspection. The admiral was gracious. After leaving his headquarters, I told the driver to head for Estartit and told CAPT Allen I'd picked out a little restaurant in a town enroute where we could lunch. He told me we weren't going to Estartit just yet and that he and the other captain wanted to see the international village in Barcelona. I tried to dissuade him, telling him the crew would be assembled and standing by for his inspection by 1400. But he insisted, so off to the international village we went. The two captains spent nearly three hours wandering through the shops and displays as I sat fuming in the car. Eventually, I found a telephone and with some difficulty was able to get through to the station and tell them we would be delayed by an indeterminate amount of time.

We finally made it to Estartit about 1730, and CAPT Allen and the other gentleman spent a scant half hour looking the place over before I was ordered to take them to their hotel. I was frustrated, angry and had great difficulty keeping my mouth shut – but LTJGs don't often win “tiffs” with captains! I could, however, sense that the captain from New York was both embarrassed and sympathetic with my situation.

The next morning I met the two captains for breakfast, got them checked out of their hotel and their luggage loaded. They had an early afternoon flight to Madrid, as I recall, and then were going on to the LORAN A station in northwest Spain. I begged off accompanying them to the airport, and sent one of my petty officers to assist them. I could tell CAPT Allen was annoyed, but I frankly didn't care.

As construction progressed, we began to occupy the station in “bits and pieces.” The CO quarters and office building was completed next, and though I didn’t move to the station until the whole crew did, I at least had an office from which to work. As I remember, we finally occupied that station sometime just after Thanksgiving. We had held a typical American Thanksgiving dinner in the dining room of a hotel in Estarrit, prepared by the hotel owner’s family and our assigned cook. We provided most of the foodstuffs, purchased from the small U.S. Air Force commissary at Rosas. It was a pleasant and festive occasion, but many of the crew obviously missed family and friends.

Moving onboard the station was a highlight of our tour. We finally had our own mess hall, rooms of our own, etc. And we were able to start wearing Coast Guard uniforms again, at least onboard the station. We had plenty of work to do, but being “close to the job” was sure a help.

One day in January 1962, I think, I was in the office doing paperwork when a black chauffeured sedan drove up in front. A Spanish Air Force officer, a colonel, exited and I greeted him at the door and invited him in. He spoke better English than I did, thank goodness. After exchanging pleasantries and serving him coffee, I inquired as to the reason for his visit. As politely and gently as he could, it seemed to me, he informed me that he was sent from Madrid to order me to cease transmitting our LORAN signals immediately. I was shocked and speechless! The colonel waited patiently while I struggled to regain my composure and consider my options. Finally, I carefully explained to him that my operational commander was in Naples, Italy and that with all due respect, it was my position that an order to cease LORAN transmissions was needed from my operational commander. The colonel responded that he understood my situation and that his superiors would contact mine in the matter. He cautioned me that I should expect a “cease transmissions” order within a day or two. I inquired into the nature of the problem, but he declined to enlighten me, telling me that he was unsure if he was authorized to do so. Without much more conversation, he excused himself, thanked me for the hospitality, entered his vehicle and left.

I made haste down to the signal power building and sent a message to MEDSEC in Naples outline the events that had just occurred. Later in the day, a radiotelephone conversation with MEDSEC personnel yielded no new information. They were as in the dark as I was. Sure enough, two days later I was ordered to shut down LORAN transmissions and to operate only into the “dummy load” daily to keep the transmitting equipment operational. We were instructed to keep the timing equipment active and locked on the master station, and to be ready to resume live transmitting immediately on notice.

The remaining two-and-a-half months of my tour at Estartit were an anticlimax, actually. We never did resume live transmission, and I was never told why. I later learned that our signals were “clobbering” a low-frequency tactical net between France and Algiers, and the French were engaged in a desperate military action in Algeria trying to maintain control there. As history records, they lost. Eventually, though, the Coast Guard was able to install filtering equipment for the French and take other corrective equipment modifications which permitted LORAN Station Estartit to become active again. I believe this occurred in early summer 1962.

Shortly after we occupied the station I received written orders from CAPT Allen, MEDSEC commander. These orders basically instructed me that no liberty was authorized from the station, that no visitors were allowed other than official visitors, and that crew members were allowed off the station only on official business. I was astonished and angry!! Apparently, we were expected to conduct ourselves in circumstances not unlike a cloistered monastery. After some consideration, I gathered the crew and explained the “rules.” My best explanation was that we needed to do that to preserve the essence of “isolated duty”, and that compensatory leave could only be provided under these circumstances. At that time, personnel assigned to isolated LORAN duty received an extra 30 days of leave each year to compensate for isolated duty at stations where families were not permitted. However, it was totally unreasonable for anyone to expect that two dozen healthy young Coasties were going to stay confined to the station boundary. So the CPOs and I considered options to let our crew get “off the hill” without jeopardizing compensatory leave and hopefully not

submitting me to undue risk for disobeying orders! Basically, we sent “parties” of crewmen to do “official business” in town, at the Air Force station in Rosas, etc. We always sent three or more, with a responsible petty officer among them. When we needed to get supplies from the naval facility in Barcelona, I always sent four people (all who could ride in our 1-1/2 ton truck cab). I usually sent them in late afternoon, sometimes on a Friday, to ensure they needed to stay at least overnight in Barcelona.

Later on, as the end of my tour approached, I was sent another “epistle from Allen” which instructed me to compute compensatory absence for the crew only based on the time each man spent onboard the station after we occupied it – the time they were billeted in leased space in town would not count. Since the entire crew was there unaccompanied – no families allowed – I was both aghast and angry. I had no alternative but to comply, and did so – but I appealed in writing, and sent a letter to Commandant Coast Guard via the chain of command. Not trusting CAPT Allen to forward it to Headquarters, I sent a copy to the captain in New York who had accompanied CAPT Allen to the station the previous fall. This officer, whose name I unfortunately can’t recall, had let me know I could contact him if I had problems on which I might need advice. He was the Third District Aids to Navigation Officer at that time (1962). In the copy I sent him, I enclosed a personal note explaining the whole circumstance, including CAPT Allen’s instructions to “cloister” the crew onboard.

I never received a response from either MEDSEC or Headquarters, but I can tell you that before 1962 ended the policies concerning liberty and compensatory absence were redefined by Commandant Coast Guard. Basically, unaccompanied tours were required where family support facilities were inadequate – lack of housing, schools, medical, etc. Anyone assigned to a station where families were not permitted was entitled to 30 days of compensatory absence per year, over and above regular earned leave. Regardless of that, if there were opportunities for “liberty” – time away from the station for recreation, etc., this type of “freedom from duty” was to be permitted. The first Estartit crew members were the only ones “screwed over” by CAPT Allen’s orders.

I received orders to be detached upon relief and proceed to duty under instruction at

RCA Institute, New York, New York. This entailed a 24-month course of instruction in electronics technology. I was relieved by LTJG W. N. Schobert on 26 March 1962. Bill was a '59 graduate of the Academy, and retired some years later as a commander.

Sometime in the year 2000, I was contacted by Coast Guard folks from Activities Europe letting me now that LORSTA Estartit was being decommissioned and turned over to Spanish authorities. I was invited to attend the ceremony in Estartit, but declined.

In the forty years since I left Estartit, the names of most of the crewmen have drifted away from me. I remember some: ETC Jeffrey Jackman, ENCS Exley, HMC Graff BMC Holman? (He was a fine chief and functioned as station "XO") , ET1 Rosenberg EN3 Gray – an "outer banker" SN McGuire (an 18-19 year old from Boston who was always in trouble).

CHAPTER TWELVE

RCA INSTITUTE, NEW YORK, NEW YORK

May 1962 to May 1964

The Coast Guard sent a number of officers, warrant officers and a few enlisted men (mostly CPOs) to RCA Institute in the late 1950s and 60s, perhaps beyond. I reported there in May 1962 after searching for a place to live. The school itself was on lower Manhattan Island, but living nearby was either very expensive or in a less-than-attractive environment. I kept making wider swings looking for a place with trees, grass and “ordinary” houses – and finally rented a place in Hempstead, Long Island. The commute to school involved riding the Long Island Railroad into Penn Station, and then taking the subway to lower Manhattan, and finally a short walk to school. The commute took about 1-3/4 hours each way – a heavy price to pay for living in a little house with a yard – that of course needed mowing – and trees.

The school was a commercial enterprise of RCA, Inc. and was highly regarded in the electronics industry as a source of well-trained people who could function as de-facto electronics engineers. The normal course took 27 months with an additional 3-month quarter available depending on whether the student took both options to complete the course – computers, or RF (radio frequency) engineering. Most of the students were recent high school graduates, so the few Coasties who attended were usually some years older. Also, we Coast Guard students did not take the first quarter of work, shortening the course to 24 months. Classes ran year-round with a four-week summer break, a holiday from Christmas through New Year and a few other holidays off. The curriculum content consisted of math, physics, technical labs and engineering courses. It certainly contained as much “engineering” as a typical BSEE course in a college, but since there were no general education course, humanities etc. the school

was not an accredited college. No matter, it delivered some well-educated electronics specialists to both industry and the Coast Guard.

I had two Coast Guard class mates – LT Jack O'Donnell, and LTJG Bruce Lauther. Like me, they were both ex-enlisted, OCS graduates. There were several other Coasties in the school during the two years we attended, in classes ahead of us and later behind us. As I remember, new classes started each spring. The course of instruction was pretty intense and the quality of the instructors generally quite good. They seemed to demand more of the Coast Guard students, quite likely because we were a little older and more focused - and because the school officials knew they needed to deliver competent electronics specialists to the Coast Guard to keep their business.

As I remember, Jack, Bruce and I did very well – finishing as one of the top three students in our class. In my case I was able to “double up” on classes during my last six months and graduated with both the RF and Computer options. I think Lauther did the same. It was a long, hard grind, though, and the three of us were genuinely glad when graduation drew near. It was surely a different tour for us. We were administratively assigned to the Third Coast Guard District office, but rarely went there. I remember that LCDR Kermit R. Meade was the district electronics branch chief, and I spent some days in his branch offices in lieu of taking leave during our summer class breaks. He also looked in on RCA students from time to time to see how we were doing.

In May 1964 we three graduated with honors from RCA Institute, and all three of us were ordered to Coast Guard Headquarters, Electronics Engineering Division. I was assigned to the Communications Branch; Jack to the LORAN A Branch, and Bruce to the Technical Support Branch. I later learned I was the lucky one!

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

USCG HEADQUARTERS, ELECTRONICS DIVISION

May 1964 to September 1968

Before I left New York I had contacted LCDR Don Chapman who was serving in Comptroller Division at headquarters. Don had been my commanding officer during my last year on USCGC ACTIVE (WSC-125) in 1958-'59. It turns out Don and his family were being transferred to 17th District staff in Juneau, and he wanted to sell his house – so with his help, we bought it on a “no money down” G-I loan. The house was located just outside Alexandria, Virginia – a “no frills” little three bedroom place with a carport and daylight basement which had a family room. The price was \$20,750.00 which was the amount I borrowed, I think I paid about \$500 in loan fees and closing costs. Those were the days! And I sold the place four years later for \$27,900.00 I think. The house was on a cul-de-sac, had a nice large yard and was a decent place to live with nice neighbors. My son Rick was born not long after we moved there, delivered at the Ft Belvoir Army Hospital in August, 1964.

I reported to Headquarters and was assigned to the cutter electronics section of the Communications Branch. My immediate boss was LCDR Ernie Rowland (Academy '53). Communications Branch was headed up by CDR Robert Krulish ('47) who coincidentally was the head of ET School in Groton when I attended in '55-'56. More coincidentally, the assistant division chief was none other than CAPT Wesley M. Thorsson ('45) for whom I had worked for a while in Boston before I went to Estartit, Spain. Thorsson was largely responsible for my decision to try for electronics training, and I later learned he had me assigned to Communication Branch because he thought that was “where the action was.” In our section, there was LCDR Leon Dankiewicz ('55) who had the “major cutters” type desk, a warrant officer who worked on new construction projects, and a civilian engineer whose name I no longer recall. I was assigned as “minor cutter”

type desk which included medium endurance cutters, buoy tenders, WPB boats and miscellaneous cutters including EAGLE.

The first few months seemed like prolonged “on the job training.” Ernie Rowland was so busy those days, carrying the load on designing and implementing electronics outfitting for the new 210’ WMEC cutters and 378’ WHEC ships in design and being built at the time. I was more or less left to learn the job best I could, and compared to others in the section, I felt I had little work to do. The others frequently worked late, took work home, etc. I slowly evolved into the job and became much busier as time went by. We did a lot of project work with the Coast Guard Yard at Curtis Bay, Maryland – and the electronics officer there was none other than LCDR Richard F. Malm with whom I had worked briefly in Boston three years earlier.

During my four plus years in Headquarters I served with some fine people, and it became an assignment that was both exciting and very demanding. I later served as major cutter type desk, new construction type desk and then as section chief. CDR Krulish retired a year later and LCDR Dick Malm replaced him as our branch chief. In 1965, I think, LT William G. Walker (‘59) reported in fresh from post graduate school at MIT. Perhaps a year later, LT Tom Braithwaite (‘61) reported in. Both were fine officers and outstanding engineers. CWO Jack Peterson, with whom I attended LORAN C School, graduated from RCA Institute in spring of ‘67, and I was successful in getting him assigned to the section.

Besides our section type desk duties we routinely served as technical controllers of various electronics procurement contracts, and of various developmental contracts. It was demanding, but heady work at times. In addition, we served on new ship acceptance boards, did liaison work with ship building companies and the Coast Guard resident inspector staffs assigned to them. We also directed

electronics work at Coast Guard Yard and to a lesser extent at the electronics facility at Brooklyn Supply Center.

From time to time we were involved in coordination and liaison with U.S. Navy people at the Pentagon, and with NAVSHIPS and other Navy support activities. I recall once – when I was just a lieutenant – I was assigned as the Coast Guard representative to a Navy panel which was determining the future of the Coast Guard ASW role in the Navy's overall ASW plan. Heady work! The lowest ranking Navy officer on the board was a LCDR, and he was the recorder. Mostly populated by captains, the chairman was a vice admiral. I never understood why I was assigned as the sole Coast Guard member, and in retrospect suspect that some of the Navy folk were somewhat affronted that the only Coastie there was a wet-behind-the-ears O-3-electronics-type. But the panel went well. I was able to answer the questions posed to me or able to provide them the next day at convening. After several days, the panel concluded that the USCG ASW role would continue, being defined as an "inshore ASW" mission, and that WHEC cutters would be provided with upgraded ASW equipment including new SONARs. As a result, the 378' WHEC cutters received AN/SQS-3336 equipment, new to the Navy arsenal. All WHECs were upgraded from MK-44 ASW torpedoes to more sophisticated MK-46 devices.

For perhaps four months I served on an ad hoc icebreaker design team whose mission, as the name implies, was to deliver plans for a new icebreaker. We had a few Coast Guard officers woven into a civilian contractor design team who had offices in a commercial building in downtown Washington, D.C. I was the electronics rep. In the early weeks, we were asked to deliver a profile of both a nuclear powered and conventional powered ship, including cost estimates of both versions. Ultimately, the Coast Guard chose a conventional power plant for the ship and these preliminary plans eventually evolved into the "POLAR Class" icebreaker, built in the 1970s. The months I served on this design team were demanding, but interesting, and also somewhat confusing. I was not detached

from my duties as major ship “type desk,” so I commuted back and forth from my headquarters office to the office of the design team, spending perhaps half my time on each “job.” Eventually the team dissolved and the plans were “filed.” As I remember it, we failed to get funding for the new icebreaker that year, so the project was put on “hold.” Later on, I worked on communications antenna design plans for POLAR-class icebreaker while I served as electronics branch chief in Eleventh Coast Guard District.

In those days – the mid 1960s – the Coast Guard really did not have a functional, well-funded research and development organization. There was a testing and development detachment in existence, but I am not aware that they did any particular work in development of electronics equipment or systems. In Headquarters electronics engineering division, we embarked on a whole series of developmental projects, often funded by “new construction” AC&I (Acquisition, Construction & Improvement) funds. Sometimes we simply wrote detailed technical specifications for equipment we needed – radars, radio direction finders, communications equipment – receivers, transmitters, antenna couplers, switching devices, etc. and awarded development and production contracts together as a single contract. Sometimes it worked out – sometimes it didn’t! By the time I was near the end of my tour, I was eager to tell newly assigned or hired people that only as a last resort should we ever write that type of contract. We should instead, if possible, find existing equipment that would suit our needs or could be adapted to our use. Nonetheless, we did some interesting developmental work.

Perhaps the most sophisticated was our first attempt to automate a WHEC CIC function. I can’t recall who started the project, but it may have been LCDR Ernie Rowland. We let a contract to LTV Industries, I think, whose job it was to design and build a prototype system to be installed aboard a new 378’ cutter. We called the system “TACNAV.” The contract started delivering results in 1967, I think. By then, CDR Richard Malm was the communications branch chief, my direct

superior, and I was the cutter section chief. LT William G. Walker ('59) had been there over a year and was handling major cutters. As a collateral duty, he was the TACNAV project officer, but I also worked on the project. In fact, it is now difficult to remember just who did what in that office! We all had more work than we could handle. In any event, we constructed a full scale mockup of a 378' WHEC CIC in a building at the Coast Guard yard at Curtis Bay and installed the TACNAV prototype. For its time it was pretty sophisticated. The system's "heart" was a digital computer, a UNIVAC model 1218 if I remember right. It was integrated into a system that included input data from surface search and air search radars, the ship's SONAR system, and from the ship's gyro and pit log system. It was interfaced to the ASW fire control system and to a display system which included two large data screens projected from a pair of slide projectors. The slide projectors were equipped with inscribing devices that were driven by the computer system, and provided track lines of surface targets, aircraft and subsurface targets. In addition, geographic navigational charts could be displayed, and real-time radar fixes could be displayed. Surface, air and subsurface target data was entered into the computer system by the respective radar and sonar operators whose equipment was modified to permit them to place an electronic "bug" on the target on their display, then press a button to transfer the data to the computer. The computer generated track lines and displayed them on the visual displays. In addition, the computer would, on request, provided target information – course, speed, CPA; and it could generate tactical data such as intercept courses, vector data to direct (for instance) an aircraft to a surface target location. It also had the capability to direct an ASW attack using ASW torpedoes. We had the system designed to try and make it compatible with the Navy's developing NTDS system, which was intended to computer-link various ships and aircraft during combat scenarios. We operated the system for demonstrations after getting some of the "bugs" out of it. I learned how to be the system "operator" – the keyboard guy who told the system what we wanted it to do – perform radar navigation, vector search aircraft, provide ASW firing solutions etc. We used mostly volunteers to serve as radar and sonar

operators, and volunteer CIC officers from ships at the Coast Guard Yard for maintenance. We could operate a full-fledged WHEC CIC operation with five people, whereas the “ordinary” CIC team consisted of as many as 18 in a “general quarters” setting. For its time, this was a technologically “cutting edge” system. For a time, we had a prototype system in operation onboard one of the new 378’ WHEC cutters, with only mixed success, partly because the prototype system wasn’t really engineered for shipboard use. Still, it was an interesting project, and the forerunner to automated systems in later years such as COMDAC, an integrated ship control and tactical information system woven into the 270’ WMEC cutters.

In 1966 I was recorder on the acceptance and trial board for USCGC CONFIDENCE (WEC-619). This ship was constructed “in house” at the Coast Guard Yard. Others were built in two different commercial shipyards, and I served on several trial boards for 210’ and 378’ cutters. As recorder on the CONFIDENCE board, I was particularly zealous about recording every discrepancy, fault, or deviation from specifications that we were able to observe. My motive, as I explained to the board’s chairman (a captain whom I can’t remember now), was to provide a detailed “punch list” to the Coast Guard Yard for corrective action before the ship was commissioned and deployed to Alaska. I drafted the cover letter recommending that Commandant Coast Guard accepted the ship from the builder and put it in commission, noting the attached list of discrepancies. We board members signed it, and we sent copies to Commander, Seventeenth Coast Guard District and others.

A few days later, back at the office at Coast Guard Headquarters, I was summoned by our branch secretary and told I’d been summoned to go up to the assistant commandant’s office. That was shocking! I was a lieutenant, he was a vice admiral, and I had perhaps seen him two or three times in the hallways in the two years I’d been in headquarters. With considerable apprehension, I headed up to his office and was told by his secretary to go right in and see him.

His name was VADM “Doc” Shields, a tall and distinguished fellow who at a previous assignment had been chief of staff of First Coast Guard District when I served there. VADM Shields handed me a piece of paper – a message from Commander 17th Coast Guard District. The message referred to the CONFIDENCE acceptance board letter I had drafted and mailed a few days earlier. Its content stated in no uncertain terms that the 17th District commander (a rear admiral I can’t recall) objected to acceptance of CONFIDENCE in view of the serious discrepancies outlined in our acceptance board report. After I read it, VADM Shields let me know that I was the only board member he could locate that day, albeit the junior one. He asked me several questions about the board and about CONFIDENCE, each of which I answered as best I could. He asked some about my experience, and among other things I told him that this was my third 210’ cutter acceptance board assignment. He asked me my opinion on how CONFIDENCE compared to the other two, and without hesitation I told him it was the best of the three. With no further comment, he pulled a blank message form from his desk drawer and scribbled briefly on it. Smiling, he said “Mr. Wight, please deliver this to the communications center for me.” I nearly “bowed and scraped” on my hasty retreat from his office. In the hall, I read his handwritten message. It said:

“ From: Commandant U.S. Coast Guard
To: Commander, 17th Coast Guard District

Commander Seventeenth Coast Guard District is in no position to question the decisions of Commandant with regard to acceptance of USCGC CONFIDENCE.

VADM Shields, acting.”

I delivered the message to the communications center and walked with some satisfaction back to my office.

In spring 1966 I was encountered in the hall by a pleasant fellow, also a LT, who was in Communications Division of Operations. I think his name was Malone,

but not certain. He was smiling ear to ear and congratulated me on my pending promotion to LCDR. I was surprised – no, shocked! I don't think I was even aware I was in the zone for promotion. He led me to the communications center, where an ALDIST was posted a promotion board listing. Sure enough, in June I received notification of promotion to LCDR effective 1 July 1966. Coincidentally, LCDR Malm was promoted to CDR effective the same date. As I recall, CDR Malm and eight others of us being promoted that same date had a BIG “wetting down” party blast at a restaurant across the street from the Headquarters building.

During my third and fourth years in Headquarters all of us in my section of electronics engineering were just overwhelmingly swamped with work. We were procuring new ships, singing an icebreaker; outfitting and sending 82' WPB cutters to Vietnam; buying a large variety of electronics equipment including radars, communications equipment, LORAN receivers; shipboard direction finders, etc.; redesigning and modernizing communications configurations on WHEC and WMEC cutters including “secure communications” cryptographic systems and so on. It was demanding, but exciting, work. As did others, I took work home many evenings and in my fourth year worked at least part of most Saturdays and an occasional Sunday. One Saturday I was walking from the parking lot into the headquarters building when I encountered Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Willard Smith entering the building, packing a big brief case (as I was). I greeted him and he responded pleasantly, and asked who I was. I introduced myself – LCDR Wight, electronics engineering. I observed, with an attempt at humor, that it was OK for LCDRs to work on Saturdays, but seeing the commandant head into work under similar circumstances wasn't all that encouraging, from a career perspective. He laughed wryly. “Son”, he said, “this job isn't all what it's cracked up to be!”

But I must say that the work at Headquarters was rewarding in many ways. It was interesting to see that the communications configurations I designed for WHEC and WMEC cutters was still in use nearly 20 years later.

In spring 1968 I started looking forward to my next assignment – and sea duty was what I wanted. I submitted an assignment request form to the personnel office asking to be assigned as an executive officer on a WMEC or those WHEC's which rated a LCDR as XO. Not long later, CDR John Steinmetz, also in electronics engineering, dropped by my desk and commented he was getting orders to be commanding officer of USCGC VENTUROUS, a new 210' cutter being sent to San Diego, California for duty. He asked if I'd like to go along as his exec – and I responded with all the enthusiasm I could! "Give me 30 minutes to clean out my desk, commander!" was my response. He laughed, and said he'd ask for me. I was on Cloud-9! Several days later, the "afloats assignment" officer in personnel called me and confirmed that he was cutting orders for my assignment to VENTUROUS as executive officer.

A few days later the assignments officer called back and, with apologies, said I would not be assigned to the ship as he'd told me. He explained that the rear admiral in charge of personnel had decided he didn't want to send CDR Steinmetz and I – both of whom who had been in shore assignments for a number of years – to one of the Coast Guard's new ships simultaneously. In fact, he informed me, it looked unlikely I'd be going back to sea at all as the admiral had noted I hadn't been to sea in almost nine years. I was devastated. With 16 years of service behind me, I knew that sea duty was to my liking. I wasn't inclined to stay in if I couldn't go back to sea. In fact, I came near to submitting my resignation then and there. I had coincidentally in the recent past been offered two different positions with electronics manufacturing firms with whom I had done business, both of whom offered a lot more money than I earned as a Coast Guard officer.

I must have been obviously dejected, because a day or two later CDR Richard Malm, my immediate superior, asked me what was bothering me. I told him. He suggested I get an appointment with Chief, Officer Assignments Branch and candidly discuss my concerns and ask about my options. I did so, and two days later had a long conversation with a commander in Personnel. I wish I could recall his name, but no longer can. In any event, he seemed sympathetic and agreed to try and find me an “at sea” assignment.

Sure enough, a week later he summoned me to his office. I was to be assigned as executive officer on USCGC MINNETONKA (WHEC-65), a 255' cutter homeported in Long Beach, California. The ship was currently deployed to Vietnam and would return to Long Beach in early September, when I would report aboard. The commander explained that he had contacted the ship's commanding officer (CDR Horace “Hoagie” Holmgren '50) and asked if he was willing to accept a “stale electronics type” as his exec. Coincidentally, Holmgren was the officer who tested me on practical factors for promotion to permanent Chief Radioman in 1960 in Boston. Holmgren had no objections – the Chief of Personnel went along – and I was the happiest LCDR in the Coast Guard, quite likely!

The summer passed quickly in spite of my anticipation and eagerness, because the “pace of business” was unabated and the work was interesting. I think Bill Walker ('59) relieved me as section chief, and CDR Dick Malm ('51) “worked me hard” right out the door! But Malm was an officer I liked a great deal and respected even more, so I didn't mind at all.

I detached around Labor Day 1968 and headed west, with great anticipation and just a little apprehension.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

USCGC MINNETONKA (WHEC 67)

September 1968 to July 1970

We traveled from Washington, D.C. to Long Beach, California with little extra time en route as I was scheduled to attend “CO-XO ASW Refresher School” at the Navy fleet training center in San Diego before I reported to MINNETONKA. I had asked for the course, since all our WHEC cutters were still equipped for antisubmarine warfare, and maintained training for that mission. I had no ASW experience, so felt I needed some training.

With some difficulty, we found a house in Orange County that we bought. I just couldn't find a decent rental house. It was a place bigger than our needs – four bedrooms, family room, two-car garage – and the cost was \$30,000! I bought it with 10-percent down and was chagrined to find the best loan I could get was 5-1/4 percent interest. Ha! Those were the days!

At the Fleet Training Center in San Diego I attended the “CO-XO refresher” course for two weeks. It was a mixed-bag experience – but I learned one thing. I needed more training than just a “refresher.” Our final exercises were in a sophisticated training facility that consisted of two destroyer-type CIC (combat information center) mockups, with stimulated radar and sonar sensors, radio links, etc. We were paired up as two ships trying to protect a convoy from an attacking submarine, and the enlisted personnel manning the CIC came from various sources – ships in training, permanent staff, etc. I was assigned as the CIC “boss” of one team, and a pretty sharp Navy CDR – PCO of a destroyer – headed the other CIC team. I did a miserable job of trying to deter the attacking sub, and the Navy fellow and his team did an excellent job. During our final exercise, I noted a Coast Guard lieutenant observing our actions. After we finished, I met him – LT Stan Bork, an ex-Navy sonarman who joined the Coast

Guard, then attended OCS, and was assigned to Fleet Training Group as an instructor. Stan had orders to MINNETONKA as operations officer, and we were both to report the following week. I am sure Stan was less than impressed with my ASW prowess!

MINNETONKA was returning from an 11-month deployment to Southeast Asia, part of the Market Time operation patrolling the waters off Vietnam. I reported aboard the day they returned to Long Beach. I briefly met the CO – CDR Horace G. Holmgren (Academy '50), and the exec I was to relieve, LCDR Robert Tuneski '58. They understandably wanted – and needed – some time off. I had a few days to get acquainted with the ship before I settled in to relieve Bob. We completed our relief process in a couple days, and Tuneski left for an assignment at the Coast Guard Academy.

Not long after Tuneski left, we had to move the ship from one berth to another for some reason. I was hanging around on the bridge trying to look like I knew what I was doing. CDR Holmgren greeted me when he came to the bridge and invited me to “take the conn” to move the ship to our assigned berth. I gulped, asked if perhaps I could just watch the first time – and he smiled and agreed. A LT (the departing OPS officer - Hans Slade, I think) took the conn and moved the ship with no difficulties. I tried hard to watch his every move and command.

Perhaps a week later, we had to take the ship down to the Navy Ammunition Depot at Seal Beach to offload ammunition in preparation for a shipyard repair period. I was pretty sure the captain would tell me to “take the conn”, so I studied the charts of the area, reviewed my role as conning officer, and was prepared as I could be. Sure enough, CDR Holmgren told me to take the ship out. With my heart in my throat, I got the ship underway with no mishaps and my pride somewhat intact, conned us out of the Long Beach inner harbor and on down to the Navy's Seal Beach facility. I rather expected Holmgren to relieve me to dock the ship, as the Seal Beach harbor was small and approach to the pier was

difficult for a balky single screw ship like MINNETONKA. Moreover, I hadn't docked a ship since 1959 – nearly nine years ago – and that little vessel was less than half the length of MINNETONKA! But Holmgren didn't relieve me, so I just kept the conn and did my best to get the ship into the small harbor and alongside the dock. I had a tough time – the wind wasn't cooperating at all, off-dock, and it was difficult to “horse” the ship alongside close enough to get mooring lines over. I fought with it for what seemed an eternity, sweating and heart pounding, but finally succeeded. After we were safely moored, Holmgren – who had said nothing at all to me during my ordeal – spoke to me for the first time. “You're a determined fellow, aren't you!” he said, smiling. I stammered some inane reply, wondering just what he meant. He invited my attention to the Navy tug hovering near our stern, available to assist us. I had noticed the tug, but it had never occurred to me to ask for its help. But my re-baptism into the art of ship handling had gone OK – my confidence was restored – and I was immensely grateful to “Hoagie” for “letting me swing in the wind” so-to-speak.

It has been many years since I served in “MINNIE” and I have real problems remembering many names of the fine officers and men with whom I served. Ships' complement was approximately 15 officers and warrant officers, and 130 enlisted men. LT Stan Bork reported shortly after I did, assigned as operations officer. He was a fine officer – well-organized, a good ship handler, and an excellent navigator. He was particularly skilled at celestial navigation, and of course was well-trained in ASW. The engineering officer was a LCDR, a reserve officer I think, whose name escapes me. He was a really serious, hardworking fellow – but difficult to know very well, and seemed somewhat estranged from his subordinates. The assistant EO was LTJG Paul J. Pluta (Academy '67) who also served as damage control assistant. He was a fine young officer, and later in his career attained the rank of rear admiral. One of the class of '68 officers I served with was Dennis R. Erlandson, a bright and fun-loving young fellow with plenty of talent, but a propensity to get into trouble from time to time! Another was Steven Hungness (Academy '69). Both of those young men were career officers who

retired after attaining the rank of commander. ENS Ed Steve was another ex-enlisted officer fresh from OCS, and an all-around good man. ENS Chris Desmond ('70) reported before I left the ship. The supply officer and pay clerk was Robert Sinclair, a CWO-2 who was an enlisted cook on NORTHWIND when I served there 14 years earlier. Bob was a no-nonsense fellow, a capable officer, and had become a qualified underway OOD and boarding officer while the ship was deployed to Vietnam. This is unusual for a warrant officer not in a "deck" specialty such as Boatswain. But Bob was, in my opinion, "all Coast Guard" in his performance of duties. Unfortunately, he retired in 1970, a year or so after he was convicted of funds misappropriation by a general court martial. More of that later.

In the late fall 1968, MINNETONKA was assigned to underway training with the Navy at Fleet Training Group San Diego, for a typical three-week period of training and evaluation. Much of the training was operational – gunnery exercises, antisubmarine warfare, underway navigation, precision anchoring and so on. Engineering and damage control readiness were also important parts of the training and evaluation.

In my position as executive officer my assigned duty in most special conditions – general quarters (battle stations), etc. was "in charge, Combat Information Center." I wish I could remember the name of the chief radarman assigned onboard – he was a capable chief, excellent in most tactical situations, particularly in ASW. As a part of the training, our CIC crew - radarmen, sonarmen, several other enlisted men and a couple officers were assigned to the ASW training facility that I had attended several months before. I was surprised – and apprehensive – when on the final day in the trainer we were matched up with a Navy CIC crew from a destroyer, headed up by none other than the Navy commander who had left me feeling foolish and inadequate that past fall. After he had finished training, he assumed command of his ship, and in typical Navy fashion, was the CIC "boss" on his ship during any battle scenarios. With serious

apprehension, we started the dual-ship ASW exercise, which was a scenario where the two assigned ASW ships were protecting a convoy and required to deter or destroy an attacking submarine. My crew acquired the attacking sub first, and we launched a defensive attack, successfully turning back the sub. Then again, and again! Toward the end of the exercise – which as I remember lasted about an hour – I handed off the attacks on the sub to the Navy commander and his crew simply as a token of good will. My crew and I had done exceptionally well, in tactical control throughout the exercise – thanks largely to the professionalism of the chief radarman who “guided my hand” during the exercise, and had trained the CIC crew very well indeed! When the two CIC crews left their respective CIC mockup trainers, I encountered the Navy commander – who shook my hand and congratulated me and my crew for a job well done. It was a fine moment – and it was a gentlemanly gesture on his part!

MINNETONKA's main duty was performance of Ocean Station patrols. This consisted of manning a position in the Pacific Ocean for a period of 21 days, providing radar tracking services for commercial and civil aviation; and launching weather observation balloons every six hours. The latter event included radar tracking of the balloons until out of range to collect upper wind data, often to 100,000 feet or so. The balloons were equipped with transponders and radio telemetry equipment which sent back upper atmospheric information - temperature, humidity etc. We embarked U.S. Weather Service employees, I think two of them, before each patrol, and they analyzed and compiled the weather data for transmission to the U.S. Weather Service.

In those days, this information was perhaps the most important information available for weather forecasting in the western U.S. In addition to these two main duties, we did other services, some of them on a voluntary basis. We did, for instance, deep ocean water sampling - called Nansen casts - which took water samples at various depths. We lowered Nansen bottles, perhaps 12-16 of them, on a wire cable and took water samples along with recording depth and

water temperature. This information – depth, water salinity and temperature – was transmitted to the U.S. Navy Hydrographic Office which used the information to predict antisubmarine warfare data, such as temperature inversion layers under which submarines could potentially hide from standard sonar searches. We also took rain samples, which were used to catalog Strontium 90 concentrations in the rainfall – a measure of nuclear detonation debris in the atmosphere, as I recall.

The Ocean Station patrols – weather patrols, we called them – were routine and often boring. Most often, we were assigned to Station “November”, roughly midway between San Francisco and Honolulu. Most commercial flights to and from Los Angeles and San Francisco, enroute or returning from Hawaii and other destination further west, passed overhead. We identified them from specific transponder signals, tracked them, and provided them true ground speed and position information. These functions, and the four-times daily weather balloon launches, kept the ship’s CIC crew heavily occupied for the 21 days on station. Counting transit time to and from Long Beach, the patrols were about 30 days in length. Since the Coast Guard kept a vessel on Station November (and others in the Pacific and Atlantic) 365 days per year, a rigid schedule was imposed on the ships. We were required to relieve another ship during daylight on the prescribed “relief” day, and expected to be relieved by another ship precisely 21 days later. On relief day, if sea conditions permitted, we performed a replenishment at sea evolution which had the two ships on close-in parallel courses (100’ or so) where we passed lines and cables between the ships, passing cargo back and forth between them. Usually we passed fresh foods to the departing ship, gave them our outgoing mail, and exchanged a few movies. On rare occasions we actually passed personnel across – usually someone who needed medical care or was being sent on emergency leave. But personnel transfers were dangerous and seldom done. Sometimes sea and weather conditions were too extreme and “highline” cargo transfers were not feasible. On occasion we used small boats to

transfer goods or personnel, and in really bad weather scenarios made no transfers at all.

Maintaining our assigned position in the middle of the Pacific Ocean was something of a challenge – and LT Stan Bork, as ops officer and navigator, was in charge of that ongoing effort. We used whatever information we could get – celestial observation of stars, longitude data using observations of the sun, depth sounder readings (not worth a lot), dead reckoning, computation of set and drift and so on. We were known to use the radar tracks of the commercial aviation passing overhead, at least to validate our navigational findings. The aircraft, in all honesty, probably knew better than we just what their positions were. Most of them had early-generation inertial navigation equipment on them, and their east-to-west and west-to-east radar track lines were pretty consistently identical as the various aircraft passed by. Those tracks gave us a pretty good north-south orientation but our mainstay was celestial navigation. LT Bork was a whiz at it. He could identify and single out various stars with great accuracy, and seemed to have the knack of finding stars in difficult weather when no one else could. I sometimes shot stars with him, as did other deck officers, but none was his match in finding stars and computing lines of position.

Part of our patrol assignment was to perform a number of Nansen casts when en route from station to Long Beach, making the casts at a number of locations some miles apart on our track line homeward bound. On my first two Ocean Station patrols we did not fully complete the casts because of fuel shortages, generally, or sometimes adverse weather. In fact, we seemed chronically short of fuel at the end of each patrol. I became interested in this problem and began to spend time watching our engineering performance and other “on station” steaming practices, etc. After gathering some information, I discussed the problem with CDR Holmgren. He gave me permission to see if I can improve fuel economy.

I discovered a number of things. In our boiler room we had two steam propulsion boilers, both of which were lit off all the time. With both boilers, the ship could steam at about 18 knots and run two electrical generators. With one boiler, we could cruise at perhaps 9 knots with one electrical generator – or steam a little slower with two generators. And obviously, the more propulsion and generator equipment we ran, the more fuel we burned. We could also adjust boiler steam output (and fuel consumption) by the size of the burner tips installed; the smaller, less steam – the largest, the most steam. It seemed we routinely had the large tips installed. I worked with the engineering officer to see if we could find ways to limit fuel use, and on the next patrol we set some practices into use. We used both boilers en route station, but used slightly smaller burner tips in the boilers – just large enough to maintain 15 knots or so underway. On station, we went on single boiler operation – but periodically fired up the “standby” boiler to keep it “hot” so it could be brought online without a long delay. When drifting on station, we used the smallest burner tips. The EO and chief boiler tender confirmed that we could change boiler burner tips in the “online” boiler by quickly withdrawing the tips, changing them, and “refiring” the boiler off the hot bricks in the firebox. We began to routinely do that, after I set up a procedure where the underway OOD informed the engineer of the watch that we were going to drift, or get underway for some reason or another. At night, after “lights out”, we reduced lighting and other electrical loads and operated with one electrical generator. Fuel consumption on a daily basis plummeted.

I noted that our periods of highest fuel consumption, naturally, were when we launched and tracked the weather observation balloons. We would get underway before the launch, steaming into the wind as fast as we could, launch the balloon and “run away” from it until we had air search contact with the balloon. If it was directly overhead or in a “dead zone” cone overhead, we’d never be able to track it. I spent some time in CIC and on the bridge during a number of balloon launches, and finally noticed that our longest “runs” to keep

radar contact occurred during heavier surface wind situations. Sometimes we'd "steam hard" for an hour or so! I was puzzled. So one day I discussed this with the senior Weather Service man assigned onboard, and he told me that quite often upper air wind direction shifted up to 180 degrees from the surface wind. Hmmmmmm!!!! So on the next balloon launch when we had significant wind, we launched as before – steaming hard into the wind – but I had the ship change course first by 45 degrees for awhile and then another 45 degrees until we were steaming perpendicular to the downwind direction (or "launch" course). It worked. We consistently acquired the balloon on radar earlier in the run, and were able to stop and drift right away as the balloon ran away from us instead of chasing us! We saved all kinds of fuel. To this day it puzzles me that the ship (and all Ocean Station vessels) hadn't developed this as a standard practice long before I started looking at the problem. I can only attribute my success to luck, curiosity and perhaps some boredom at trying to keep occupied underway. Executive officers are not nearly so engulfed in paperwork, unit logistics, etc. while at sea.

The downside of all this (as far as some crewmen were concerned) is that we now had plenty of fuel to complete our series of Nansen casts when en route home. I was determined that we complete these assignments, and CDR Holmgren agreed and supported me. This usually added at least a day or two to our patrol length. I suspect there were crew members who didn't appreciate the extra days at sea.

When I relieved LCDR Bob Tuneski as Exec, he left a well-oiled administrative "machine,:" with a well-documented chart he had prepared which outlined all reporting requirements of the vessel. And there were plenty of them. One of the required reports was the surprise audit of the ship's disbursing officer (the supply officer). As I remember, this report was required 4 times yearly, and was to be "sprung" on the disbursing officer without notice. It was the exec's job to call for this audit at uneven intervals, to convene an ad hoc audit team of (I think) three

officers. It was their job to approach the disbursing officer, announce the audit, and without delay count all cash on hand in the supply officer's safe, examine current disbursing documents such as payrolls and payments for supplies, etc., and resolve that the disbursing officer's cash ledger was in balance with documentation. Since, in those days, personnel were paid in cash and much of the ship's purchasing was done the same way, the supply officer frequently had large sums of cash. Once the ad hoc audit team was finished, the rough report was to be delivered to the exec for smooth typing and submission to Headquarters via the district commander. Tuneski had performed an audit shortly before I relieved him, so the next one wasn't due until the following quarter (starting in January 1969 in this case). In February, I think, I set the quarterly surprise audit in motion and without incident accepted the rough report from the audit team. Bob Sinclair, our supply officer, offered to have the report typed up for me, but I declined and said I'd do it myself. In retrospect, he seemed chagrined when I kept the report, but I made nothing of it. I liked Bob a great deal and respected him as well, but I just felt duty bound to follow prescribed procedure. I sent the finished report "up the chain of command". A few days later, we were scheduled to have a visit by the district comptroller's office for a routine examination of our supply department. On the appointed day, when the district reps arrived, Bob Sinclair wasn't present aboard. The CO generally came aboard later than I did, and when he arrived he told me that CWO Sinclair had called him at home. Bob had asked for the day off for some reason or another, and CDR Holmgren had agreed. So I did the best I could showing the District reps what they wanted to see. Later that day I had a long conversation with the warrant officer who was part of the District team. He knew Sinclair fairly well, shared my high regard for him, but went on to tell me that he felt something was amiss with Bob's department. Among other things, he told me that almost a year had passed since they'd had a surprise audit report from the ship. I was shocked! I produced a copy of the one prepared just a few days ago. He took it with him back to the office.

The next morning, when CDR Holmgren arrived – unusually early, I think. He called me immediately to the cabin. Sinclair was with him. CDR Holmgren informed me that Sinclair told him he was short about \$2,000 in cash. I questioned Bob as to the circumstances, and he said he just didn't know how he came up short – but that it had occurred about a year ago while the ship was deployed to Southeast Asia. He admitted that he had covered up the shortage during that time, had managed to keep the surprise audit reports from being sent in, and had altered his cash ledger to make it balance with cash assets. Bob claimed he was unable to explain the shortage, but told me that he had frequently made cash disbursements to TAD personnel, even men from other services. He told me he thought he may have just somehow lost a transmittal document that would have been submitted to have the funds replaced in his cash assets. I reviewed the "Comptroller Manual" procedures to be followed, and we did the following:

- a. I notified the local FBI office of the funds shortage.
- b. CDR Holmgren relieved Bob of his disbursing officer duties pending investigation.
- c. I had the ship's engineer seal Bob's safe with metal bands pending an audit team arrival from the district office.
- d. I charged Bob Sinclair formally with (1) misappropriation of government funds, (2) falsifying government documents (his ledger), and (3) destruction of documents, specifically the missing surprise audit reports.

In due course Bob was transferred to the District office awaiting court martial, and a new supply officer was assigned, a fellow named Jerry Furey, as I remember. A general court martial was later ordered. As accusing officer, the prosecutor asked me to change one of the charges to "theft of government funds" rather than "misappropriation", but I refused. I had difficulty with believing that Bob actually took the money. The whole process took some months, but eventually Bob was convicted. The sentence, while perhaps light, was devastating to Bob. He was dropped to the bottom of the CWO promotion list,

was stripped of his ACO (disbursing officer) designation, fined, and ordered to make restitution of the missing money. He was then transferred to the district office in Cleveland to an administrative job and allowed to complete another year or so of service so he could retire. Long after Sinclair had left, one of the crewmen was cleaning his vacated stateroom and found something. He called me to the stateroom, and showed me some ledger pages stuck behind a drawer, along with some sheets of figures. It looked to me as though Bob had been trying to locate his book keeping error or funds shortage. To this day, I feel he did not take the money, but made the grave error of covering up the shortage. I never saw him again after the court martial, and he died in 2004. Many of us who served with him thought he was a fine Coast Guardsman, hard-working and willing to do more than was asked of him.

In the summer of 1969, CDR Holmgren finished his tour of duty and was relieved by CDR David F. Lauth (Academy '49; he retired as a RADM). I hated to see "Hoagie" leave, as we affectionately called him behind his back. He was a competent and gentlemanly fellow with great patience, who gave me the opportunity to "flap my wings" as a shipboard officer, supported me unflinchingly, guided my duties gently - and was a friend as well. Having said that, my year serving under Lauth's command was perhaps the best learning experience of my career, and a thoroughly enjoyable time. But it didn't really start out that way!

Not long after CDR Lauth had assumed command – perhaps a couple weeks – I was approached en masse by three of the ship's department heads – operations officer, engineer, first lieutenant. LT Stan Bork was their spokesman. They asked me to talk with the CO, as they were very frustrated about the CO's "interference" in the prosecution of their day-to-day work lists in particular in the area of maintenance such as painting, cleaning etc. I was puzzled. I questioned the three officers for details, and what emerged was an interesting story. CDR Lauth had been, for perhaps two weeks, doing a lot of casual inspecting and otherwise looking over the ship, speaking to the personnel he encountered,

discussing various aspects of the work individuals were doing. I am sure it was his way of becoming intimately familiar with the ship and its personnel, and also demonstrated his sincere interest in both the ship and its people. The results, however, were sometimes what he probably did not expect nor intend. For instance, he talked with one seaman who was “chasing rust” on watertight doors, stanchions and railings. During the discussion he told the young sailor he liked the “fancy work” done with small line on the door handles. So the young fellow went down and got some cotton braided line and was renewing “fancy work” instead of “chasing rust.” When his supervising petty officer upbraided the seaman for not doing the work he was assigned, the young fellow told his boss that the new CO told him to do it. Several similar instances had happened around the ship in recent days. CDR Lauth had perhaps misjudged – or didn’t consider – the impact of his “discussions” with the younger crew members. To them, the CO’s “suggestions” were de facto “orders”!

I was really unsure how to handle this. I procrastinated a couple days, then one morning brought the subject up while having coffee with the captain in his cabin. My recollection is that I handled the discussion very poorly, with great embarrassment and reluctance. Being critical of my commanding officer to his face was not my cup of tea. But the net result was actually marvelous. CDR Lauth had great intuition, excellent leadership skills, and a genuine desire to develop the initiative, confidence and skills of his subordinates. In due course of time, maybe a few days later, he called me to his cabin one day and we had a long discussion about his role as CO and mine as executive officer. In essence, he set the tone for what he was willing to delegate to me and others, and what specific roles and duties he reserved for himself. He outlined how he wanted to develop a pattern of individual and unit pride, to recognize good performance when warranted; who was to play the “heavy” in certain circumstances and so on. For the remainder of my tour with him, we were, I believe, extremely successful in engendering a high level of performance – and pride – in MINNETONKA’s crew. For instance: we entered the Coast Guard-wide “Major

Cutter Small Arms” competition, and with the aid of a “master gunner” chief gunner’s mate on the District staff, won the competition handily. As an ocean station cutter, we compiled a great record – our statistics were the best in PACAREA (Pacific Area) in terms of successful weather balloon launches, navigational aid to commercial and civil aircraft. We completed virtually all our deep water sampling (Nansen) casts, both on station and returning to port. We did volunteer “trolling” for tuna fish for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (but caught none – which was a statistic in itself!) We collected rain water samples on Ocean Station for EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) use in its search for airborne radiation traces. I started a physical fitness effort of jogging around the ship’s deck each morning, and urged others to do it. We soon had a regular group jogging each morning – weather permitting – kept track of our distances (about 14 laps around the ship’s main deck per mile), and reported our “miles jogged on station” statistics to COMPACAREA. And so on. And we consistently made the crew aware that they were the ones doing it, making us the best OSV afloat! These efforts paid off. The appearance of the ship improved, both in upkeep and in cleanliness. I can tell you that it sure is a lot more fun serving on a ship with great unit pride than in one without. I suspect that peer pressure helps keep some of the “foul-ups” in line. Our performance in Navy Refresher Training in fall 1969 was very good – we earned several “E” awards – gunnery, operations, engineering. That year taught me a lot, and was, I think, the most enjoyable of my career in many respects.

The tour of duty (9-68 to 9-70) passed quickly. I recall a few other incidents, not necessarily in the order they occurred, but interesting memories.

- On our first patrol after CDR Lauth assumed command, we were doing an underway transfer (highline) with the ship that relieved us. We were the “receiving” ship, which meant that we approached the “delivering” ship from astern, maneuvered alongside at a nominal 100’ distance until they were able to pass the various lines to us, to secure at our end. One of the lines passed was

the “bridge-to-bridge” line which included a sound-power phone line to talk bridge-to-bridge. This line also had markers every 20 feet which when stretched taut measured the distance between the ships, for use by the “receiving” ship conning officer. On this particular day I had the conn as CDR Lauth observed. His last ship had been a 180’ buoy tender, and it had been years since he was on a WHEC that routinely did highline operations. I made my approach at about 16 knots – the delivering ship was maintaining 10 knots on the selected course. I more or less charged into a position abeam the other ship, turned to the established base course, gave a brief “back one-third” order to slow us and then ordered the ahead shaft RPM for 10 knots. I was lucky, as it went smoothly and quickly, and we had all lines delivered without delay or “jockeying.” After we settled into our position I passed the ship’s conn to one of the young officers for experience for him. CDR Lauth complimented me on the smooth approach and hookup, and then asked me what I used to judge my distance from the other ship as I approached it. I didn’t quite know how to answer as I guess I just did it instinctively, trying to visualize my approximately distance intuitively. So I said, “Captain, I clutch my binoculars firmly with both hands in front of me. When my hands get so sweaty they tend to slip from my grasp, I know I’m close enough!” CDR Lauth responded with a wry smile, but I don’t think he was really amused.

- One morning at breakfast in the wardroom, while in San Diego participating in underway training with the Navy, ENS (or maybe by then LTJG) Dennie Erlandson came into the wardroom looking pretty bedraggled and with some cuts and bruises on his face. I inquired what happened, and he mumbled something about “a little altercation” in Tijuana the night before. Later a story made the rounds that he and another crewman got into some sort of a big disagreement with the proprietor of a “house of ill repute” there in Tijuana, resulting in the two being ejected from the premises forcibly. The story went that Dennie and the other fellow got retribution by setting fire to the place! True??? Who knows?????

- In summer 1969 we had ten new SA/FA crewmen report aboard at one time, all fresh from boot camp. All ten were black, most of them recruited in Watts and other sections of the Los Angeles area. We had only a few black men onboard, just one or two career petty officers, and perhaps 8-10 Philippine nationals serving as stewards and cooks. The crew was predominately white, and race relations were just not much of an issue – until then. On our next patrol, we had a near-riot on the mess deck during the noon meal. I was called, interceded, and learned one of the young black kids – age 18 – had taken high exception to being called “boy” by a white petty officer. The young black had the 12-4 bridge watch as lookout/messenger, had responded to the PA announcement calling for the noon meal with watch-standers to the head of the line. He made the mistake of “jumping” the line ahead of other watch-standers, and the petty officer he tried to cut in front of said something like “Hey, boy, this IS the watch stander line. Get behind the other watch standers!” The young black took the “Hey boy” to be a racial slur and responded in a pushing/shoving mode. Luckily, I was really nearby, got there before punches were thrown and defused the situation with some loud shouting on my part. I investigated the incident, learned what had happened, and managed to “smooth it over” without resorting to UCMJ (Uniform Code of Military Justice) charges against anyone. As a result, we had some two-way “race relations” dialogue which seemed to solve most of these potential conflicts. But it had been a frightening few minutes, and pointed out that we Coast Guard folk had not yet learned to deal with racial issues to any extent.

- We made a “Double Victor” patrol in late ‘69, I think, which entailed 21 days on station south of Russia, a mid-patrol break in Yokosuka, Japan, and a second 21 days on station. We routinely refueled at Midway Island en route to station. During the first half of the patrol we developed a leak in a boiler tube, called a “downcomer tube”. Our EO, on perhaps his first assignment on a steam-powered vessel, was LT Don Moore, a warrant-to lieutenant officer. He was a fine EO, with a great can-do attitude. After exchanging messages with the 11th District naval engineering staff, he and his men sawed out the defective section

of the tube and plugged it. We were advised to run the boiler at reduced capacity, though we never did quite figure what that specifically meant. Reduced volume? Pressure? Heat? In any event, we finished the first half of the patrol and meanwhile 11th District folk were trying to get the correct alloy tubing delivered to Naval Base Yokosuka for use in repairing the boiler during our mid patrol layover. But the effort failed, and the correct tubing never arrived. So shipyard folk there in Japan welded plugs into the defective tube and we sailed with instructions from 11th District to operate the boiler “at half capacity”. Again, Don Moore and the other engineering personnel didn’t know precisely what that meant. Coincidentally we had received a recent Coast Guard message instruction stating that COMFIRSTFLEET U.S. Navy was willing to refuel PACAREA ocean station vessels on-station or en route to or from, if a Navy replenishment ship was available. Coincidentally again, CDR Lauth mentioned it in conversation with a Navy officer he met at the Yokosuka officers club. As a result, I went to the COMSERVPAC office there in Yokosuka and discussed it with a Navy commander. He instructed me to send a message requesting an underway replenishment on Ocean Station Victor, and the dates that would work for us. We sent the message right away, several weeks before we’d need the fuel for our trip home to Long Beach. As our second 21-day on-station period began to near its end, sure enough, we got a classified message saying an UNREP ship would rendezvous our last day on station – and it did. I think we received perhaps 90,000 gallons of NSFO under marginal sea conditions, but were able to “top off.” So we skipped our refueling stop at Midway and sailed great circle route direct to Long beach. The subject of operating our defective boiler came up again, and it was the opinion of Don Moore and his boiler techs that the boiler was perfectly safe to operate at full capacity. Apparently there were more than enough downcomer tubes to “fully ventilate” the boiler (whatever THAT means!). So Don and I urged CDR Lauth to go “full bore” for Long beach - and we did. Flank shaft RPM for the 255 class ship was published at 180 RPM, as I remember. We routinely cruised at 182-184 shaft RPM most all the way to Long Beach, and quite likely set some sort of speed record for sustained sailing

by a “255.” As I remember, the district naval engineer was less than thrilled about our rapid transit!

- At some time during his first year onboard, CDR Lauth was promoted to captain. He had been deep-selected, relatively unusual in those years. We had an appropriate ceremony on deck and presented him with some GIGANTIC shoulder boards fashioned of plywood by one of the crew members. He dutifully put them on for us for at least awhile!

I regretted seeing my tour come to an end. My relief was to be LCDR Frank Peasely, coming for Far East Section in Japan. Frank was an earlier acquaintance, an electronics specialist like me, also ex-enlisted. He was going to be late in reporting – September, 1970 I think. I had orders to be electronics branch chief in 11th District, there in Long Beach. The fellow I was to relieve left in July, so for perhaps seven to eight weeks CAPT Lauth permitted me to divide my time between the ship and the District office, mornings on the ship, then a few hours at the district office each afternoon. It was a busy time for me, but it worked OK. I don’t recall the reason, but we got the ship underway one day shortly before Frank relieved me as XO. CAPT Lauth gave me my last opportunity to handle the ship. I fancied myself a really proficient “255” ship handler, so with some bravado headed toward the dock – and made one of the worst “landings” of my tour!!!! Frank Peasely wasn’t impressed, I was embarrassed – and I think CAPT Lauth was amused. Incidentally, he gave me my rough final fitness report to see and to type up. I was astonished. It was a outstanding report, certifying me qualified for WHEC command, lauding me for fine administrative performance, particularly commenting on my success with personnel affairs onboard and recommending me for assignments in the Personnel field. I was – and still am – grateful. Two years later I was assigned to WMEC command, and I am positive that report made the difference.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

ELEVENTH DISTRICT STAFF

September 1970 to June 1972

I was pleased to be assigned to an electronics branch chief billet, and particularly happy to be able to stay in the Long Beach area. I had purchased a house in Orange County in 1968, as rental homes were very scarce. Moreover, my son, age six, had finished kindergarten and started grade school. And finally, though I was still a LCDR, I was assigned to an O-5 (CDR) billet.

Having said that, the assignment there in Long Beach wasn't particularly challenging. Eleventh District was small geographically, had a relatively few number of shore installations and not all that many vessels and small boats – two WHECs, an icebreaker, a LORAN A station, a primary radio station, etc. Once I learned the duties, I seemed to have more than enough time on my hands. The assistant branch chief was LT Lynald Hendricks – we called him Lynn – a capable and serious-minded fellow. Lynn was ex-enlisted as well, I think, almost my age, and no doubt quite capable of running the branch without me. We jokingly “fought” over the incoming mail most every day, looking for meaningful work to do. Lynn was a native of the Yakima Valley in Washington, and retired in 1978 to take over the family orchard business. I saw him once or twice in the late 80s/early 90s. He died in 2003, I think, of a rare ailment. I just don't remember the names of others I served with in the branch except CWO (RELE) Ed Monson, a affable and also quite cable fellow. There was another warrant officer and a LTJG. There were three civilian employees, a branch secretary, a GS-7 or 8 technician and a GS-11 or GS-12 engineer who really was not all that competent. The officer I relieved had told me earlier that he had more or less set things in motion to fire the fellow, or force him into retirement, but had not succeeded. I tried to pick up where he left off, but eventually found that the “system” had no stomach for it – a civilian personnel officer not inclined to help

much, and my division chief not particularly interested in backing my hand. So I eventually just assigned the fellow what project work I could that he was capable of handling. He was nearing retirement in any event, but I always felt I had “short changed” the Coast Guard by not finishing the job.

The Coast Guard still had LORAN A in operation, though it was in its twilight as a useful navigational system, long overtaken by LORAN C. One was located at San Clemente, south of Long Beach about 40 miles. Our president at that time was Richard M. Nixon, and he had his “Summer White House” facility co-located and adjacent to the LORAN station. This led to a few conflicts with GSA (General Services Administration), the Secret Service, etc. The station CO was a LTJG named Hertzberg, I think, who was likely selected in part for his “diplomatic” and social skills. He interfaced well with the president’s staff, and did what he could to “protect our turf”. I recall he arranged a meeting with GSA and Secret Service folks who had some security measures they wanted to implement. One of their schemes was to dig up portions of our LORAN transmitting antenna ground field (wires laid out in the ground radially from the antenna) so that they might install pressure sensors in the ground to detect intruders. I was able to convince them that other alternatives might work as well – motion sensors, infrared cameras – without “messing up” our transmitting antenna system.

In spring of 1971 I was pleasantly surprised when I was selected for promotion to CDR (O-5). Three of my OCS classmates were also in the area – Bob Janecek, Theotis “Woody” Wood and one other I just can’t identify! We four held a big “wetting down” shin-dig at the Los Alamitos Naval Air Station officers’ club on 1 September 1971.

In summer of 1971, CDR Irv Lindemuth (Academy ‘55) was transferred in as the naval engineering branch chief. Irv and I got along well, and have been casual friends ever since. All branch chiefs attended a weekly staff meeting chaired by

the District chief of staff, who at that time was CAPT Henry Pearce (Academy '42, I think – he retired in '72). Sometime that fall, I believe, the Commandant (ADM Chester Bender) issued an ALCOAST directive that modified grooming standards, and for the first time in decades allowed Coast Guard personnel to grow beards, under certain standards and with some restrictions. That was of no interest to me. I had a mustache, grown while serving on MINNETONKA, but that was a much facial hair as I wanted. About two weeks after the new grooming standards were published, I happened to step into the elevator at the district office with two young officers from one of the ships. Each had a neatly trimmed beard. CAPT Pearce also stepped into the elevator. We greeted him, and as he nodded a response he looked intently at the two young officers. Whereupon he pushed the elevator door open button, held the door open and told the two young men to return to their unit. He told them to instruct their commanding officer that only clean-shaven officers would be allowed in the District office premises. They left hastily, obviously embarrassed and perhaps confused.

Not many days later, I observed a similar incident when CAPT Pearce ordered a LT, headed for our rescue coordination center, to shave off his newly-grown beard before reporting for his watch. These incidents were troubling to me. One day I discussed them with Irv Lindemuth, and he said he had seen a similar occurrence and was likewise troubled. We both felt CAPT Pearce was “out of bounds” and should not be negating a standard established by the commandant. I’m unsure who goaded who into it, but it seems we were both going on leave for a week or so. We agreed to grow beards while on leave. Mine emerged as a somewhat scraggly goatee, and when I returned to the office and first saw Irv, he had the start of a luxurious beard. We both managed to avoid CAPT Pearce until the weekly staff meeting. On that morning, with some apprehension, we selected seats at the staff’s “long green table” adjacent to the head of the table where the chief of staff was seated. CAPT Pearce entered the conference room when we were all present, said “Good morning, gentlemen!” As we all stood at attention

and responded respectfully. “Be seated”, he said. And as we sat he looked first at Irv, then at me, then at Irv again – his face reddening. My heart must have stood still, and I no doubt had a flash of remorse at my fool-hardness. Then CAPT Pearce’s face and neck lost the red look of anger, and a faintly perplexed expression emerged. He muttered, “Oh, well...what the hell!” And as best Irv and I know, he never mentioned beards again.

CAPT Pearce was actually a very pleasant man, and good to work for. And he was not a “grudge carrier.” He treated us both well, and made nice remarks on my last fitness report when I was transferred the following spring. Some years later we were both at a Coast Guard function in the Seattle area and he and I discussed the incident with amusement.

By January or so in 1972, the lack of challenge in my job reached a bothersome level and I contemplated retiring when I had two years in grade, as the rules then required. But I thought it might be exciting to be a ship commanding officer, and saw no apparent harm in asking for a CO assignment. So I submitted a reassignment request to Headquarters, with a cover letter giving my reasons. I asked for command of any ship in the Pacific Area that rated an O-5 as CO. Not two weeks later I was talking with LCDR Bruce Lauther in Headquarters (EEE). In conversation, he mentioned that it was interesting that the (EEE) division chief had made no objection to me being “short toured” and sent to sea. It was news to me! So I quickly called an assignment officer in HQ(PO) who told me that orders were “in the mail” transferring me to USCGC CONFIDENCE (WMEC-619), homeported in Kodiak, Alaska. I was both thrilled and just a little apprehensive. CONFIDENCE had been performing a pretty complex mission – foreign fisheries law and treaty enforcement – and several “high performers” had been assigned as CO. CDR Carmen Blondin (Academy ‘55) was one of them, and I was scheduled to relieve CDR Dore’ Hunter (Academy ‘56) who was another. I wasn’t sure I had the “right stuff” - but I was willing to try. I finished my tour with high anticipation and was transferred in late May 1972.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

USCGC CONFIDENCE (WMEC 619)

June 1972 to July 1974

The transfer to Alaska made changes in my life – my first wife preferred not to accompany me, and I found that acceptable. We dissolved our marriage within the year. With an eight-year old son, the decision was difficult, but in retrospect – over 30 years later – it was likely the best decision for all concerned.

I proceeded from Long Beach, California to Juneau, Alaska for TAD and the 17th District office, for some briefing on the missions of CONFIDENCE. I spent time with CAPT Warren G. “Mitch” Mitchell who was astride a transition from Chief, Operations Division to Chief of Staff; and with CDR Ted Deming, who was the District’s law enforcement branch chief. It was an interesting few days, and both of these fine officers were helpful in spite of being very busy. I then proceeded on to Kodiak and reported to the ship on 6-13-72,

Seeing the ship again was an interesting experience. I had been the junior member on CONFIDENCE’s trial and acceptance board in 1966 at Coast Guard Yard in Baltimore. Having served on several WMEC acceptance boards, I thought CONFIDENCE was one of the better built. However, I found her to look “well-used” when I looked her over – in need of some exterior maintenance in particular. However, in defense of those serving aboard her, the ship was operating in a tough environment and carried a heavy schedule. CDR Dore’ Hunter (Academy ‘56), whom I was to relieve, had invited me to report about two weeks earlier than necessary, so that I could sail a ten-day patrol as an observer before I relieved him. I was grateful. I settled into a stateroom that had been temporarily vacated for me. The familiarization patrol was interesting and busy, and gave me a good exposure to the ship, its crew and its mission.

We returned to Kodiak in late June and I relieved CDR Hunter on 1 July 1972. That same day, a few hours after I relieved him, the crew and I suited up in formal dress blue uniforms and participated in the relief of command ceremony when the Coast Guard relieved the U.S. Navy command at Base Kodiak and established Coast Guard Support Center Kodiak. At that time, tenant commands were USCGC CONFIDENCE, USCGC STORIS, USCGC CITRUS (I think - a 180-foot buoy tender, in any event), USCG Air Station Kodiak, and USCG Communications Station Kodiak. In addition, the Support Center had an Aids to Navigation team and did support and maintenance functions for LORAN stations, light and radio beacon stations, etc. throughout western Alaska including the Aleutians. Support Center's first commanding officer was CAPT Ray Parks (Academy '45) who along with his charming wife Jo were excellent people to know. The Support Center exec was CDR Art Ladley (Academy '54), and the public works officer was CDR Ted Gerkin (Academy '55). The Center's comptroller and supply officer was LCDR Jack McCarty (Academy '60). These key players and their staffs had an awesome task - to take over and manage a large base that included an airport, docks and moorings for cutters, housing for personnel including family housing, an electrical generating plant and a heating plant, fuel facilities for ships and aircraft, a commissary and exchange and myriad other internal facilities. The problems were compounded by the fact the Navy had apparently slowly wound down on doing long-term maintenance and repair, and much of the base's infrastructure and facilities were in pretty bad shape. The next two years were interesting, for sure!

After the Support Center/Navy relief of command ceremony, I took the crew back to the ship, set the special sea detail and moved CONFIDENCE from one pier to another - to the ship's regular mooring where shore ties were available. It was my first time to handle the ship underway, and the bridge and main deck seemed crowded with extra people who apparently wanted to see if I knew what I was doing. One of the observers was a warrant officer (machinist), CWO Curvin Haggert whom I observed watching me from the rear of the pilot house. As I

backed the ship away from the pier, I walked over and asked him if there was plenty of water depth in this part of the bay. He looked perplexed and stammered an answer admitting he didn't know. I smiled and suggested he go to the engine room and assume his special sea detail station, as there wasn't much he could do for me on the bridge. He got the message and headed below. I managed to get the ship moored at her regular berth without incident, and (I hoped!) with a display of confidence and adequate professionalism. But I can tell you I was nervous, and was aided a great deal by the ease with which a 210 could be maneuvered – twin screw, two rudders, variable pitch props, pilot house control. Maneuvering a single-screw 255 WHEC like MINNETONKA was much more difficult!

In the few days after I relieved CDR Hunter as CO, I had the luxury of a uneventful time to look the ship over carefully. The ship had assumed a 30-day maintenance period, and in the first part of it many officers and men were on leave. The assigned engineering officer was departing, having been relieved by a young reserve officer named LTJG Wayne Kronke. The Exec, LCDR Charles "Chuck" Morgan was also on leave for ten days or so. The Ops officer, LT Rozumni (perhaps misspelled) was being relieved by another ex-enlisted officer, LT Al Hudson. So counting me, three of the top four in the wardroom were new. Among others in the wardroom were ENS Tom Gemmel (Academy '71) and ENS Jon Thulin, an ex-enlisted engineering student. Thulin and I have been lifelong friends since, for something better than 40 years. Also reporting aboard about the same time I did were ENS Tom Meisenzahl (Academy '72), ENS Tim Canby (OCS reserve officer who spoke Japanese) and, later in the fall, ENS Rocco Capetto, an OCS graduate recently out of the University of California. The new Chief Boatswains Mate was an Outer Banker named Daniels, whom had the unlikely nickname of "Apple."

While the ship was in "Charlie" status, in mid July, I arranged to take an ALPAT (Alaska Patrol) surveillance flight on a C-130. Kodiak AIRSTA usually flew at

least two sorties per week depending on the level of foreign fisheries activity, so I asked the AIRSTA CO for permission to go on a flight to get familiarized with that facet of the foreign fisheries enforcement mission. I reported to the AIRSTA early one morning and boarded a C-130. The aircraft commander was LT "Val" Valenchenko whose background I know little of. He was retiring soon, and may have been one of the old enlisted or warrant pilots that the Coast Guard had post-World War II. A National Marine Fisheries agent was also onboard, as was the usual practice. This fellow was named Mil Zahn, and he later sailed at least one patrol with me on CONFIDENCE. The flight turned out to be more than I bargained for! Several hours into the mission, we happened upon three Japanese fishing vessels in the western Gulf of Alaska, and as we made low altitude passes over them, they abruptly got underway headed west, obviously abandoning a large array of gill nets. In addition, they attempted to cover their vessel names and hull numbers with canvass sheets, would not reply to radio calls, and did not respond to Aldis Light (blinker light) international signals. Zahn, the pilots and I all agreed, after several low passes, that the vessels were fishing for salmon and had deployed some miles of gill nets. Problem was, they were in violation of a U.S.-Japanese treaty in which Japan had agreed not to salmon fish anywhere east of the 180th meridian. They were hundreds of miles east of there!

The next few hours were pretty exciting. I operated the blinker light, sending the international signal to "heave to," as I was the only one onboard who really knew Morse code. When that didn't work, LT Valenchenko made a number of low altitude passes over the three fishing vessels with the C-130's stern ramp partially open, a crewman harnessed on the ramp attempting to drop message blocks on the vessels' decks. The messages on the blocks ordered the vessels to heave to and await U.S. vessels. We succeeded in dropping these block on at least two of the vessels, no mean feat! We had a series of radio phone patches with Kodiak SAR CORD at the air station, with the OPS folks at 17th District in Juneau, and with the CO, USCGC WINONA. We had over-flown his ship earlier in our flight. The CO, CDR Neal Armstrong, agreed to head toward the scene, as

he and I were both certain that 17th District Ops would concur. In the meantime, LT Valenchenko shut down one engine to conserve fuel – and I was less than enthusiastic when we continued to make low altitude passes over the three Japanese vessels. It was a necessity, though – we had to maintain “hot pursuit” to make a legal case against the three vessels.

Later that afternoon, a USCG HH-3 helicopter arrived on scene from Kodiak, and made several attempts at putting a boarding party on deck on one of the vessels – without success. The fishing vessel either aimed directly at the helo, as though to ram it in mid flight, or took evasive action to preclude lowering personnel to its deck. While I was onboard the C-130 as only an observer, I participated in the operation, held radio conversations with 17th District and Kodiak AIRSTA folks etc. as I was the senior officer present – albeit the most inexperienced! In late afternoon, another C-130 from Kodiak arrived on scene and relieved us, since our aircraft’s fuel state was becoming critical. We had an uneventful flight back to Kodiak, and when I left the aircraft I was tempted to get down on all fours and kiss the tarmac. Flying low over the ocean with only three of the four engines operating, with the low altitude alarm (or whatever it was!) going off all the time was a scary thing for this fellow.

I did learn a lot that day. The ALPAT flights had a lot of value, gathered a lot of info and were indispensable to the ships employed in the mission. There is an incredible vast area of ocean in the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea, and without air coverage the ships would often not know where to direct their efforts. I also learned, however, that fixed wing aircraft – and even helicopters – might not intimidate a foreign fishing vessel enough to stop and be boarded without some show of deadly force. And that wasn’t part of the ALPAT mission, which was mostly regulatory and treaty enforcement. The next day the three Japanese fishing vessels were apprehended somewhere beyond the Shumagin Islands, still steaming west toward Japan. Our icebreaker USCGC GLACIER was fortunately to the west of them headed for the Arctic, was directed back to the

east to intercept them, and Neal Armstrong onboard WINONA also closed in on them from the east. WINONA put boarding parties onboard and then escorted the vessels back to Kodiak. In the days to follow, several of the nets the Japanese abandoned were still engaged in netting and killing migrating salmon. WINONA and CITRUS, I think, were deployed to haul in the nets. Eventually a Japanese government enforcement vessel arrived in Kodiak, took custody of the three Japanese fishing vessels and took them back to Japan. We later learned that the three vessel skippers were heavily fined, and lost their jobs as fishing ship skippers.

As I became acquainted with the ship and its crew, I began to feel increasing concerns. In terms of the operational mission, no one seemed to have any particular information to discuss or volunteer. In discussions with LCDR Morgan, when he returned from leave, I learned that CDR Hunter apparently ran the patrols almost entirely himself from start to finish, basically directing all ship movements day and night, and delegating little. There is little doubt that he was effective, prosecuted aggressive patrols, and had a fine record in achieving good results. But I felt equally sure that I wasn't up to functioning that way. He apparently directed most ship's movements on patrol without consulting his subordinates, and took the ship's conn during most of the close-in work when observing or boarding foreign fishing vessels. He apparently did not regularly inform his officers and men concerning his planning for a patrol, the ship's itinerary and so on. As a result, the officers and crew seemed to be somewhat disconnected from the mission and in general were waiting on the CO to tell them precisely what to do. I felt pretty lonely and inadequate in that role!

So I assembled the ship's officers and senior petty officers and told them that the mission was one in which we all needed to be involved. I told them I would share my thinking and planning as best I could, that I would listen to – and appreciate – suggestions, comments, etc. I also adopted the procedure of involving the exec and ops officer in discussions with the local National Marine

Fisheries Service (NMFS) people and in helping me plan objectives for each patrol. Then, on the morning we were to depart on a patrol, just before we set sail, I invited crew members' families to join us on an "all hands" briefing during which I outlined where I thought we might be headed for the next 15 days or so, what we expected to do, what intelligence we were basing our actions on, where we might stop for fuel or water, etc. Over a relatively short period of time, I began to see a certain enthusiasm spreading through the crew. As best I could, for a new ship CO spreading his wings cautiously, I made it a point to delegate specific mission-oriented duties to the other officers. I involved LCDR Morgan and LT Hudson in handling the ship during close-in surveillance work and in boardings. I had all the line officers involved in ship-handling – docking and mooring, transiting restricted waters, etc. Our unit professionalism and teamwork began to grow. After several patrols, the senior agent at the local National Marine Fisheries Detachment told me he saw no real need for me to embark a fisheries agent each patrol, because of our professionalism and understanding of the mission, and during most of my last 18 months onboard, none went with us.

The ship had other problems. The engineering officer assigned about the time I reported was a definite "Peter Principle" example. He was a reserve officer, LTJG Wayne Kronke, who had served as the damage control officer on a polar icebreaker preceding this assignment. He just plain wasn't up to the EO job, did not have a handle on his duties, and definitely didn't have the confidence of his subordinates. Luckily for us, ENS Jon Thulin and CWO Curvin Hagert, along with a talented CPO, MMCS Ed King, took up the slack and kept us running – albeit sometimes in tenuous fashion. It seems that the engineering department was woefully low on spare parts, a situation that must have been developing over some time. I believe the previous engineering officer was part of the problem. Nearly every time we had an equipment failure – main engine turbocharger, evaporator failure, boiler failure, etc. we were sending priority messages to get replacement parts airlifted to us. It also seemed to me that preventive

maintenance efforts were lacking, but LTJG Kronke was really unable (or unwilling) to get anything going. However, in defense of him and his department, we had a really high equipment failure rate, some of which was inherent in the ship's original machinery. The Clayton boilers – essential to heat the ship and to provide steam for making fresh water – were pieces of equipment not really suitable for the shipboard environment. They failed over and over again, sometimes both at the same time! I often was forced to take the ship into places such as King Cove, Dutch Harbor etc. to hook up to a water source! And we had some cold days that first winter, in particular.

The ship's main propulsion system was complex for that day and age - two Cooper -Bessemer diesel engines of 1500 HP each, and two gas turbines engines of 1000 HP each. The two propeller shafts could be powered in CODAG mode – combined operation diesel and gas – for total of 2500 shaft horsepower. Or a diesel could be powering one shaft, a turbine the other. Or vice versa. A complex reduction gear and clutching system made this possible. The ship's main propulsion was automatically controlled from the bridge, with a complicated electrical and air-hydraulic control system which was not really reliable, and a constant maintenance and adjustment problem. With two electrical generators, four main engines, two cranky steam boilers, two motor lifeboats, hydraulic boat davits and so on and so on, the engineering department folks were constantly in a “repair and fix” mode that seemed to put any effective preventive maintenance program out of reach. Coupled with a paucity of spare parts, it was a grim scenario.

The District naval engineering officer in Juneau was LCDR Robert (Bob) Kramek, who later achieved the rank of admiral, and was Coast Guard commandant for four years. Kramek had a good sense of what “ills” CONFIDENCE had, and as outstanding in his willingness to provide support – and funds – to help remedy the situation. Then the ship profited from the arrival of a new engineering officer, LT Ray Mattson. When LTJG Kronke's reserve contract approached renewal or

extension – which he sought – I told him frankly that his performance was substandard, that I would recommend against his retention, and that he should seek a career elsewhere. While that was difficult for me, Kronke did not seem all that surprised. He returned to civilian life in early summer 1973, and ENS Jon Thulin served as acting EO until Kronke's relief arrived. LT Mattson, who reported on board in August 1973, proved to be a fine engineering department head – capable, willing to work hard, and quickly had the willing support of his personnel. He was a career officer who has remained my friend over the years, and retired at rank of captain.

The problems in keeping CONFIDENCE operational didn't end then, of course, but we coped better. I suspect some of the high-failure rate equipment continued to plague follow on COs, EOs and engineering department personnel chronically until the ship went through its midlife overhaul and modification in the late 1980s. Quite by accident, in January 2006 I came across CONFIDENCE in Mayport, Florida and was permitted to visit the ship. She looked quite good for a ship at age 40, having weathered the past 30-odd years more gracefully than I had. It was unsettling to have the ship's executive officer confess that he was born about the time I completed my tour on the ship in 1974.

The chronology of my two year tour is difficult to remember with accuracy, but was full of interesting, amusing, and sometimes stressful and exciting events. We sailed several patrols in summer/fall 1972, and then headed to Seattle in October for shipyard work, drydocking, and electronics modernization at Coast Guard Base Seattle. LCDR Kramek came to Seattle to help get us started in overhaul, and was both effective and supportive. And he was a pleasant man to be around, as well. He and some of the ship's officers, me included, enjoyed some dinners out and some Seattle night life. After we left the South Seattle shipyard we were moored at Base Seattle while the electronics shop did a complete rebuild of the radio room and secure communications room. I took high interest in the project, since I had been the designer of the modifications during

my Headquarters tour some five years earlier. I managed to wheedle a second surface search radar from HQ (EEE) before we headed to the overhaul in Seattle, and it also was installed. Since a surface radar was literally essential to our mission, I felt strongly that a backup was needed. The Base Seattle electronics shop installed it while doing our communications revamp.

Here are sketches of some of the experiences we had during my two years onboard:

In August , 1972 the Coast Guard folks at Support Center Kodiak were grappling with the awesome task of taking over the facilities that were previously Naval Station Kodiak and Naval COMMSTA Kodiak. The physical plant was pretty run down – housing units often substandard, heating and power plant in need of upgrading, station utilities infrastructure in dire need of maintenance. The place was just run down. CDR Ted Gerken (Academy '55; now deceased) was the base maintenance officer, and up to his neck in urgent problems. One he had to deal with was what to do with some recreation cabins on nearby Afognak Island. He needed to haul equipment and supplies to and from the recreation site, but had only an inherited LCVP landing craft in bad shape, with engines in sore need of overhaul. He asked me if CONFIDENCE could help – and, new on the job, etc., I was eager to please.

One day I towed Ted's LCVP to Afognak. Dense fog engulfed us by late morning as we approached the cove where the cabins were located. I cautiously got as near as I could to the beach using radar and depth sounder info, anchored, and then we vectored Ted and his shore party toward the site using our radar. It took some hours for Gerken and his folk to do the jobs ashore. Evening fell before we weighed anchor, got the LCVP in tow, and headed back to SUPCEN Kodiak. It was perhaps nearing midnight as we approached the pier. Gerken – trying to be helpful, I think, tried to maneuver his LCVP close astern the ship as we retrieved the towing hawser. As a result, he bumped our stern – nothing serious, a little

scared paint – but as he turned the hawser loose, it disappeared under our stern. I had the propeller shaft declutched as fast as I could. I feared the hawser was wrapped around one of our propeller shafts! No amount of tugging and jerking and cautious use of a power capstan could retrieve it. I was certainly devastated! First time I left the dock with the ship – except on change of command day – and I had a crippled ship. To make things worse, we were on SAR standby status – Bravo 2, I think, which meant we were supposed to be able to respond to a search and rescue case in two hours or less. I got the ship alongside the dock with one propeller, and had a message sent to Kodiak SARCORDER and to CCGD17(O) confessing my plight. After mooring, ENS Tom Gemmell (I think) and LT Al Hudson, the new OPS officer, volunteered to don their own personal SCUBA gear and investigate. I was hesitant, because they surely weren't qualified official divers – but they convinced me they would be very cautious, watch each other and only be under the ship's stern for a very few minutes. So we lowered a boat to tend them, got them waterproof flash lights, and into the water they went. Sure enough, in just three to four minutes they both surfaced safely. They promptly reported that the hawser thimble – a metal eye on the end – was wedged atop the port rudder. They thought, and the BMC agreed, that a determined pull with the power capstan would work. We gave it a try. The hawser was promptly freed and recovered. I just as promptly sent a message to SARCORDER and the District reporting we were untangled and back in status Bravo Two. I felt I had averted a career-bending incident!

In late fall 1972 we sailed to Seattle for about two months of routine drydocking, maintenance, some minor SHIPALT revisions and electronics modifications (described earlier in this writing). I thought the crew might enjoy a stop in Vancouver, B.C. en route. My operations boss had no objection, and I sent a message asking Canadian officials for permission. We sailed down through inside Canadian waters east of Vancouver Island, received a docking assignment that turned out to be very close to downtown urban Vancouver, found the pier and moored. No one was present, so I wandered off and found a pay telephone and

managed to call in to the customs officials for clearance. The kind gentleman to whom spoke said, Sir, consider your port clearance approved. Enjoy your stay! I remember we needed water, found none nearby our moorage, so we ran hundreds of feet of fire hose to the nearest hydrant and watered up, hoping it was potable! We stayed two days, and the crew by all accounts enjoyed themselves tremendously. Vancouver's reputation as being a friendly place for visiting sailors was apparently well founded.

In early December '72 (I think), after completing our overhaul period in Seattle, we got underway early one morning headed back to Kodiak. I recall vividly that LCDR Chuck Morgan had the conn as we started backing away from our moorage at Base Seattle. We heard an unexpected "thump!" and a submerged log popped to the surface from under the ship's stern, gash marks from our propeller easily seen! Base Seattle was located along the canal between Puget Sound and Lake Washington, above the Ballard Locks, in fresh water. Logs rafted in from salt water apparently sometimes sank in the fresh water, I later learned. I had Chuck try the propeller shaft we figured had caught the log - ahead and astern functions seemed normal, as best I could tell. With some misgivings, we maneuvered into the lock to be lowered to sea level - and then the lock operator could not close the upstream lock door. It was jammed. So there we sat, and within perhaps 30 minutes a diver arrived. He dove, returned to the surface and reported another pair of sunken logs had jammed the lock. The diver and dock hands worked to pull several sunken logs out - a relatively common occurrence, they told me. I asked the diver to inspect our props. He dove, returned, and reported that there was a dent in one blade, covering maybe 24-30 square inches, the blade tip bent an inch or two out of alignment. I called the naval engineering people in Juneau - LCDR Kramek's branch - and reported the incident informally. Kramek was out of the office temporarily, so I said once we were out in Puget Sound we'd investigate further, testing for vibrations, etc. Once the lock was in operation, we descended to salt water and got underway. We had a number of observers go to the aft compartments of the ship and

compare noise, vibration, etc., between the two propeller shafts at various shaft RPM's both ahead and astern, and could detect no difference. I reported this to Kramek by message, and then we discussed it by voice phone patch. At first, Kramek favored returned to the shipyard for inspection and possible drydocking to repair the propeller, but after discussion agreed to support my belief that we were fully functional. We received a message permitting us to head for Alaska as planned, and we continued on, en route Juneau so that District personnel could visit the ship to inspect, among other things, our electronics modernization. Later that afternoon the OOD called me and reported that our PIT log, an electronic device that resembled a sword blade when lowered down through a hull fitting, had apparently been sheared off by a log, branch or something that we had passed over. The PIT log measures speed through the water, and had just been repaired in the recent drydocking. It had probably suffered a similar fate some time back, before I reported aboard. It was my policy in standing orders that the PIT log should not ever be lowered without my direction or consent. In underway situations where good radar navigation was available, it was easy to determine our actual speed and the PIT log wasn't really needed. I found it useful in only open-ocean steaming. So I was less than happy. It appears the senior radarman wanted to test its operation and the OOD let them lower it without consulting me. So.....less than 8 hours underway, already with a dinged propeller blade and a newly-repaired PIT log broken again. Not a favorable start!

Then maybe an hour later I heard one diesel engine shutting down, my cabin phoned rang, and the OOD reported that we had blown a turbocharger on the starboard main engine. Guess what! No spare onboard. So off went a CASREP message requesting air shipment of a spare to Kodiak, knowing it was unlikely one would reach Juneau within two days or so. On we continued to Juneau, using a gas turbine on the starboard shaft and a diesel on the port.

On arrival Juneau I was disappointed - and somewhat affronted - that the only 17th District staff member there to greet us, at perhaps 1530 local time, was LCDR Bob Kramek. He himself was chagrined, saying he had talked with people in Operations and elsewhere on the staff. He said some people would be down the next day to see our modifications, but a greeting committee of any kind had not been formed, nor even thought of. But no fear, said Bob – he was our welcome committee, and he invited the whole wardroom to his home for dinner! He returned perhaps 1-1/2 hours later, hauled all five or six of us to his home where we had a delightful time – some of us rode around on his snowmobile, we enjoyed before dinner drinks in front of a wood fire, and had a really nice meal with he and his wife. Such was the persona of Bob Kramek – a caring, hard working and friendly man of high character. These traits testify in part to why he “went to the top” and became commandant of the Coast Guard. The last time I saw Kramek – by then a rear admiral – was at a Coast Guard Day picnic in Seattle (early 1990?), after I had retired and he was serving as 13th District commander. We talked of the Alaska days, trials and tribulations of CONFIDENCE, dinners at 13 Coins Restaurants and nights out in Seattle.

We spent the next day dockside in Juneau. A few district staff people came down – Kramek and some of his naval engineering staff, some folks from electronics engineering. I went up to the federal building, paid a courtesy call on RADM Palmer (District commander) visited a couple people in Operations, most notably CDR Ted Deming, district law enforcement officer, who was really the tactical boss for our foreign fisheries enforcement mission. Then at 1630 or so, we got underway and headed for Kodiak. Many in the ship’s crew, particularly those married and with families, were anxious to return home. Weather was bitter cold and blustery, with stormy forecasts, so we were anticipating a rough trip across the Gulf of Alaska. It took some hours to go from Juneau to the open ocean, and we beat our way through inland waters in high winds. In mid-evening, the OOD informed me we were losing power on the starboard turbine, and that the engineers were investigating but didn’t know yet what was

happening! I was instantly concerned. If the turbine failed, we were down to power on one propeller shaft only – not a good situation for a vessel that had such an inherent machinery failure rate.

Thinking it might be best to find some sort of safe anchorage and try and fix things, I rushed to the bridge, poured over charts and studied the “Coast Pilot,” looking for somewhere to hole up. There just didn’t seem to be anything safe nearby! As I pondered my next move, CWO Curv Haggert came to the bridge and reported they had located the problem. The gas turbines required a large amount of combustion air, and the air intakes were located on the main deck, a rectangular vent ducted to the engine room, with the vent opening covered with heavy metal screening to prevent debris from being sucked into the turbines. We were experiencing heavy winds and very cold weather, with salt water spray blowing onboard. It was freezing on the vent screens and reducing air intake! During the rest of the night we sent the BMOW (Boatswain Mate Of the Watch) down to knock the ice free every 20-30 minutes. The remainder of our voyage to Kodiak was uneventful albeit uncomfortable because of heavy seas. No more machinery failed, and in Kodiak we replaced the starboard main diesel engine turbocharger before our next deployment.

Our next ALPAT deployment was, I believe, in early January – a shortened day scouting mission out toward the Aleutian Islands to check on Russian and Japanese trawlers supposedly fishing for bottom fish (hake, flounder, etc.). Weather was pretty abysmal, not unusual for that time of year. Not long out of Kodiak, perhaps within a day or two, the EO reported that we apparently had a leaking stern tube seal on the starboard propeller shaft. The engineers had been adding lubricating oil (a vegetable-based biodegradable lubricant) at an alarming rate, and if use continued at that level we would soon be out of the special oil. The problem did not fix itself and there was nothing else we could do. We reported the problem by message, and later followed up with phone patch discussions with Bob Kramek and his naval engineers, who in turn had been in

contact with the South Seattle shipyard where we were drydocked a couple months earlier. Both propeller shafts had been pulled in drydock, and the propeller shaft seals – called Cederval seals, as I recall, had been replaced. Apparently the starboard seal had failed. Without continued lubrication, serious problems could arise – perhaps severe damage to the propeller shaft and/or its housing.

The decision was made to abort our patrol and return to Kodiak while the District arranged for emergency drydocking. Out of the lubricant (type 4250???) we locked the starboard shaft and limped home at reduced speed (9-10 knots, I think). Once in Kodiak, Kramek let us know we were to sail back to Seattle as soon as possible. So, we refueled and replenished and rounded up all the 4250 lube oil available at Support Center Kodiak, then deployed for Seattle. Stormy weather prevailed over much of the North Pacific, but a direct open-ocean route was shorter. I requested weather routing predictions from U.S. Navy Fleet Weather Center, and off we went – on one shaft at first. We were pummeled for 48 hours by high winds and seas, with Fleet Weather Center recommending various courses to avoid the worst. Many in the crew were seasick to various degrees, and all of us were feeling the fatigue of just holding on and fighting the ship's motions - heavy rolling and pitching. I found sleep elusive at best, even when wedged in my bunk with extra pillows and a rolled-up blanket to lessen my rolling to and fro! I gave up on the direct route – unlocked the defective shaft and we started pouring 4250 lube oil into the shaft seal lubricating tank.

On twin shaft power we headed toward Queen Charlotte Sound and the so-called Inland Passage from Seattle to Alaska. We finished our trip to Seattle in the relative calm of inside waters. Our emergency drydocking was handled quickly, and in 10 days we were ready to sail again. Back to Kodiak we headed, up the Inside Passage to Queen Charlottle Sound and then across the open gulf toward Kodiak. Again, weather was abysmal. We had a deck load of 55 gallon drums of precious 4250 lube oil to replenish the dockside supply in Kodiak, and on our first

night in to the open waters of the Gulf, the drums – or at least some of them – slipped their lashings and were rolling wildly around the fantail. I had LT Al Hudson take the ship's conn and search for a course/speed to stabilize the ship as much as he could. The chief boatswain mate and I and two others started the attempt to capture the wildly rolling drums. It was dangerous, maybe even foolhardy – but we needed the lubricant! We succeeded with no injuries besides a few bruises and scrapes. The remainder of the trip back to Kodiak was routine.

While on the round trip to Seattle for emergency drydocking, I vividly remember a humorous incident. We had two private vehicles on deck, I think, one of which was a Jeep that belonged to CWO Curvin Haggert. On one of those rough-weather days we were steaming doggedly SE toward Puget Sound in heavy seas and reduced visibility. Rain and salt spray splashed all over the ship, but we had a lookout posted on one of the bridge wings as was customary in poor visibility. I was sitting in my chair inside the bridge pilothouse, and the lookout stuck his head in the door. This young fellow was something of a character – not a bad person at all in my judgment, but not exactly the prototype for a squared-away Coastie! I wish I could recall his name. He said, “Hey, captain - I hear something funny out here!” I asked him what it sounded like. He replied, “Well, it sounds like a Volkswagen trying to pass us on the left.” I jumped to my feet and went out on the bridge wing with him, as did the OOD. We listened intently. Sure enough, we began to make out the faint sound of a “beep.....beep.....beep.” It turned out to be the horn on Mr. Haggert's Jeep, which apparently had a loose wire or something, and each time the ship rolled to port, the horn honked!

On that same return trip, I loaded my finance Ruth's relatively new Dodge Charger on the flight deck and took it back to Kodiak. In order to make it legal, I had her execute a bill of sale giving the vehicle to me for the price of \$1.00, and let her know that in an emergency it might be possible we'd be forced to jettison

the car overboard. As you might guess, she had some reservations – but she sold me the car anyhow!

The emergency drydock trip to Seattle had pretty much upset the ship's operating schedule for 1973. My attitude toward ships was that they don't earn any money at the dock. So I really wanted to make up for lost patrol time, and drafted up a revised schedule that I mailed in a personal letter to CDR Ted Deming in Juneau, asking him to consider it. The suggested schedule deployed us pretty heavily, but would achieve the suggested operational deployment standard for the class – 180 operational days at sea, not counting training and maintenance needs that took the ship away from home port. Deming adopted my suggested schedule, much to my satisfaction. I appreciated his enthusiasm for and expertise in the foreign fisheries enforcement mission, and perhaps the feeling was mutual. I usually discussed each patrol with him in advance. Our patrol orders always included assignment to specific operating areas of the Gulf of Alaska, Aleutians and Bering Sea. I always felt our more productive patrol efforts could be achieved west of Kodiak, along the peninsula and the waters north and south of the Aleutians. I always asked for those patrol sectors. Ted often would counter with the need to send a ship east of Kodiak, to perhaps Forrester Island and the border with Canada, and to observe foreign long-liner fishing vessels taking black cod in deeper waters of the east Alaskan gulf. I would agree to go to those areas, and asked him to also give me the western sectors as well. So, often our patrols included a fast run through the eastern gulf to the Canadian border, rapid transit back to Kodiak for fuel (usually a thour stop), and then a run to the Aleutians and Bering Sea. We covered lots of territory!

On one of those typical patrols, I decided to pay a brief visit to the cannery at Salmon Cove, located west of Kodiak on the Alaskan peninsula. The cannery managers often had useful information about such things as conflicts between foreign and U.S. fishing vessels, sightings of foreign ships in illegal waters, etc.

The day we stopped at Salmon Cove was a nice summer day, no wind, calm. We launched a small boat, and I took the exec, LCDR Chuck Morgan, ashore with me. That left LT Al Hudson, the ops officer, in temporary command. Hudson was, I think, flattered that I trusted him – but Al was a good officer and sailor, and one with whom I had good rapport. As Chuck and I headed toward the cannery, I picked up my portable VHF radio, clicked the mike on and said, “Mr. Hudson, you¹ are in charge of the ship – but stay out of the captain’s chair!” I was joking, of course, but later learned that Hudson had at that moment been lounging, leaning up against the CO’s chair. He jumped like a scalded hound, and later asked how I KNEW he was leaning on my chair. It was a funny coincidence, over which we all were amused.

On another patrol we paid a brief port call to Sitka, Alaska. The Sitka inner harbor is small, with a narrow channel leading in from the north. But I perceived to be no real problem for a ship of CONFIDENCE’s size and maneuverability. I had LCDR Chuck Morgan take the conn as we entered Sitka harbor, trying to give him as much operational experience as I could, as I believed he aspired to command a ship himself. I was observing from my chair on the bridge – Chuck was conning the ship and using the engine controls located on the port bridge wing. We were to moor alongside the Coast Guard 180’ buoy tender stationed in Sitka – can’t recall the name, nor can I dredge up the CO’s name though I had known him for some time. Anyhow, Chuck was doing a good job of turning the ship around in the tight harbor and making his approach to the starboard side of the buoy tender. Her CO was on the buoy tender’s bridge watching and greeting us, as were others in his crew. Line handlers were on deck. As we approached to moor, it seemed to me that we might be going a little fast! I slipped from my chair and went out on the bridge wing, and saw that Chuck had the engine control handles pulled all the back to full astern, his knuckles white as he gripped the controls – but we were still moving ahead, and a glance astern showed prop wash still propelling us forward! I eased Chuck aside – pushed the handles to neutral (stop) – eased the starboard one back a bit – did the same to the port

shaft control – saw a little astern prop wash – eased them both back a little more I could see alarm on the face of the buoy tender's skipper – saw some line handlers on his ship's bow scrambling away from the side of the buoy deck as our bow bore down on them. I then tried a little more starboard back on the engine control and we eased alongside the other ship in a perfect landing, with not even a scratch on either ship's hull. I stopped the engines, turned to Chuck and said "nice landing!" He grimaced, and I laughed in relief. That pesky engine control system almost caused a calamity. Later the buoy tender skipper commented on our "snappy approach" and I didn't tell him of the near collision – I just told him Morgan was a good ship handler (and he was!)

In spring of '73 I received a phone call from Stan Bork, now a LCDR. Stan was OPS officer on MINNETONKA during my two years as XO (1968-70). Stan was hunting for a job, and asked if I was willing to have him aboard as XO. I was delighted at the prospect, told Stan so, and subsequently called the appropriate Headquarter's assignment officer. I asked specifically that Stan be assigned to CONFIDENCE. Much to my pleasure, he was ordered onboard as XO and relieved Chuck Morgan in July '73. We had a fine year serving together. It took some adjustment for Stan – he was a hard-nosed no nonsense guy, and MY vision of an executive officer was in some ways difficult for him, particularly the role of personnel counselor and mediator of problems between departments, etc. But Stan was a fine, professional and hard-working officer who enjoyed great respect and admiration from most subordinates. He was an outstanding exec. and a man whom I trusted a great deal, including his judgment in vessel operations, etc. With he and Ray Mattson onboard, and a crew that in general seemed to have enthusiasm for the ship and its missions, my second year was quite a lot of fun, in many respects.

On several patrols we embarked an aviation detachment onboard with their HH-52 helicopter. The detachment consisted of two officers and perhaps six enlisted aviation personnel. We would utilize the aircraft as an extension of our "eyes" in

searching out and identifying foreign fishing vessels, gathering intelligence on their fisheries activities, and trying to detect if they were fishing in violation of U.S. laws or treaties with the U.S. While we never seized a foreign vessel during my tour onboard, the helicopter operations greatly enhanced our patrol effectiveness. However, flight operations from a 210 were a little dicey at best – small flight deck, no hanger for the helicopter, and a ship prone to pitch and roll quite actively in even moderate seas. From time to time, I authorized helo launches and recoveries in marginal conditions as outlined in our flight ops instructions. However, I was always more conservative than the pilots, who seemed willing to fly under nearly ANY circumstances. I think the pilots who volunteered for shipboard helo deployments were by nature predominantly dare devils. None more epitomized this characteristic than LCDR Daved Priddy, who commanded one of the AVDETS that deployed on CONFIDENCE.

Priddy had been a USAF pilot, in fighters, but demoted to B-52s after some prank or another. He found that duty boring – like flying a computer terminal he once told me. He left the Air Force, found his way into Coast Guard aviation, but was sorely disappointed when offshore water landings in UF-2G Grumman amphibians were struck from Coast Guard flight procedures. He ended up in C-130s, to his mind not much better than flying B-52s.

He took a look at helicopters, particularly those embarked on icebreakers and other cutters. That seemed more exciting, and that led to his duty on CONFIDENCE and other ships. On patrol with he and his detachment embarked, we encountered a SAR situation involving a helicopter stranded on an uninhabited island southwest of Kodiak Island - out of fuel, and the helo crew unable to be retrieved by a support vessel that was nearby. Sea conditions precluded getting a boat ashore to either provide fuel to the helo or get the personnel off the beach. They had no food nor shelter, darkness was not far away, and the helo itself might be effectively destroyed in salt water as the tide came in. After consulting with Priddy, I decided to launch he and his H-52 - even though ship motion was outside allowable limits. There was a sheltered

bay about 20 miles NE of us where we could safely recover the helo, and that failing Priddy would have fuel range enough to fly to Old Harbor airport on Kodiak. We launched him successfully, with instructions to rescue the people on the beach, lower them to the nearby support vessel if feasible , or return with them. After launching him, we headed at maximum speed for the nearby bay. Priddy deviated from his instructions, as I later learned, and engaged in lightering cans of aviation fuel from the support vessel to the beach where the helo was stranded. He made – I think – two of these fuel lightering flights, avoided mishap, saved the stranded helo, and made it safely back on board CONFIDENCE. When I learned the full story, I was less than pleased. I think he hazarded his aircraft and crew, exceeded his orders, and was less than forthcoming in telling me what he was up to. However, the outcome was a success. The stranded helo and crew engaged in survey work for the State of Alaska, I think, safely returned to their support vessel. I probably should have reported the whole incident to Priddy's commanding officer at Mobile, Alabama, but I didn't. We received "well done" messages from 17th District, and subsequent words of appreciation from State of Alaska officials.

The ship's electronics technician for most of my tour was a fine fellow by the name of ET1 Rich Tochtrop. He was a good technician, an enthusiastic crew member and an all around good petty officer who performed many duties outside of his ET rate. One day he – with my permission – played some music over the ship's PA system as we prepared to get underway. The reaction of most of the crew and families gathered onboard and dockside was favorable. Playing some pre-deployment music became a habit. I recall on a port visit to Vancouver B.C. we sailed close in shore past Stanley Park and parts of the city's waterfront, playing bagpipe music such as "Amazing Grace" over our exterior speakers. People waved and cheered from ashore. One day Tochtrop engaged me in a discussion of playing music, and said there were members of the crew who wanted to play a theme song both on deploying on and arriving from a patrol. I agreed. He told me they had selected the song "Burning Bridges" from the movie

“Kelly’s Heroes,” a movie set in World War II starring Clint Eastwood and others. The song, performed (I think) by the Mike Curb Congregation, was a rousing number that seemed to recall the “derring-do” feats of Eastwood and his cohorts in the movie. Somehow a number of the crew thought that an appropriate theme for the CONFIDENCE crew. I could scarce object! We took to playing it each time we entered or left port. From time to time as we approached our mooring at Support Center Kodiak, conditions were such that the music was clearly audible clear into the Support Center for a mile or so, and sometimes alerted people of our approach.

Not long after I reported onboard, I was on deck walking around the fantail area. I observed the ship’s chief boatwain mate, BMC Gurla, I think – or perhaps it was his assistant, BM1 Christian. He was leaning over the stern, muttering. I asked what the problem was, and he told me he was just fed up with trying to keep the ship’s stern clean. Painted white like the rest of the hull, it was always streaked with black from the diesel and turbine engine exhausts which were carried aft in tubes that exited the hull just above the waterline. Keeping the stern white was a constant problem. I told him to paint it black. He grinned and asked if I meant it. I said I did. So two days later we had a black stern, and some wag at the Air Station dubbed me “Black Ass Wight.” I followed up by sending a letter to Headquarters asking that the “Paint and Color Manual” be amended by making that permissible. In due course – and these things moved slowly – I learned maybe a year or more later that the request had been denied, even though the CCD17(e) recommendation had been for approval. As I remember, Bob Kramek pigeonholed the negative response for some months before sending it to me. I later dutifully delivered it to my relief in July 1974. Our stern was black for nearly two years, in any event!

During my tour, RADM G.O. Thompson relieved RADM James Palmer as Commander 17th District. RADM Thompson visited the ship for a brief informal visit when we happened to be making a brief port stop in Ketchikan. I had never

met the gentleman before, perhaps because he was an aviator, and this was his first flag assignment. He looked the ship over and inquired about our deployments with an aviation detachment onboard. I told him it leveraged our capabilities considerably, and asked his support for more of the same, as often we did NOT have an AVDET and helo onboard.

RADM Thompson subsequently made an official visit to Kodiak, his first, as a stop in his swing out to the LORAN C stations in the Aleutians and at St. Paul Island. At a party in Kodiak hosted by CAPT Ray Parks and his wife Jo, my fiancé Ruth Lockhart and I were present. Thompson was gregarious and friendly, and seemed to enjoy chatting with Ruth and others. At some point in the party, he singled me out and asked me to step outside for a minute – he said he had lost a cufflink on the front lawn. As it turned out, he wanted to discuss a personnel matter. It seems that my ops officer, LT Al Hudson, was living with the estranged wife Barbara of a CWO named Richard Trevallee, who was stationed at Kodiak AIRSTA. I was well aware of the situation, observed it developing, knew that the Trevallee had sought a legal separation and was in the midst of a divorce. Al Hudson was in the midst of a divorce as well, and had come to Kodiak unaccompanied. Thompson questioned me over the matter and asked me what I was doing about it! I was taken aback – the military community at Support Center Kodiak reminded me of Peyton Place – all kinds of affairs, questionable parties, etc. were going on! The relationship between Barbara Trevallee and Al Hudson seemed much more legitimate than other liaisons going on. Moreover, they intended to marry when legal proceedings permitted them to. In fact, my situation and Ruth's was similar – she had been divorced a year earlier, and my divorce was soon to be finalized, the legal separation awaiting the six-month waiting period demanded by the California court system before final decree was issued. Not only was I taken aback by Thompson's query, I was highly aggravated that he brought it up in the midst of a social gathering. Moreover, it was unseasonably chilly, and I was cold! So I told him so: that I thought the time and place for this discussion was not appropriate, and I was

cold! Not a good move on my part! RADM Thompson was visibly angry – but he took a deep breath and then said, “OK. Call me after I finish this TAD trip and am back in Juneau.”

The next day I summoned Barb Trevallee and Al Hudson to a meeting and discussed the situation with them. They vowed they intended to marry, and were really quite indignant that Thompson would see fit to involve himself in the matter. Then I had quite a conversation with Dick Trevallee, who was apologetic and contrite, and who confirmed that he and Barbara were indeed proceeding with the final divorce. He said he had been drinking, and in a fit of self-pity, had confided in Thompson about his separation, and Barbara’s involvement with Hudson. After thought, I drafted a personal letter to RADM Thompson.

Basically, I told him that officially, I felt my duty was to be supportive of the people involved, to ensure that they had support and advice as needed, and that that their performance of official duties were preserved as best as possible. “Ole Honest Abe” Wight (me) then confessed that my situation with Ruth was similar, that we had indeed lived together for some weeks, but that we were to be married soon. I felt obligated to relate that to him as a factor in his ability to assess my own judgment. I did not mention any of the other “he-ing and she-ing” conduct going on between Coast Guard officers in Kodiak. I mailed the letter forthwith. Some days later, when Thompson was back in his office, I called and discussed the letter with him. The conversation went something like this:

“Good morning, Admiral. Commander Wight here. Did you receive my letter on the Trevallee-Hudson situation?”

“Yes, commander I did,” he responded.

“Well, what did you think of my response?” I asked – with obvious apprehension.

“Not much,” he answered.

RADM Thompson then proceeded to tell me that he intended to have Al Hudson transferred as soon as possible, within two weeks if he could. He went on to say he had considered having me relieved of command and transferred as well, but decided that since Ruth and I were to be married soon, he'd let that pass. I told him transferring Hudson wouldn't solve anything – Barbara would leave with him, the Trevalle marriage was over with, and that my ship would suffer the loss of a valuable officer, quite likely without suitable relief for some time. He responded that he felt duty-bound to proceed. Then he changed the subject, and started to discuss my next patrol when we were scheduled to embark an aviation detachment and HH-52 helo. He asked me to employ caution in using the aircraft. I made no response, and there was an awkward silence. He then said that I should disregard that comment, that it wasn't appropriate, and signaled an end to the conversation.

To say the least, I was unsettled and alarmed. I'd never had such a run-in with a superior, and certainly not a flag officer! Thompson followed through – Hudson received message orders detaching him in 14 days and transferring him to a Gulf Coast shore station. Barbara went with him and they were later married. We kept in touch with them for years and visited them once in our RV travels after I retired.

Within the next week I received two letters from RADM Thompson. One was an official letter of admonition, describing my performance in the Hudson-Trevalle matter as not up to the fine moral standards of the service. I was somewhat relieved to note that this type of letter was a personal correspondence and was not placed in my personnel file – but nonetheless, I felt it a damaging document. The other letter I received was a nice personal note on flag stationery thanking me for hosting a courtesy cruise for Kodiak Naval League members, and describing the day-cruise as very effective in serving a valuable group in our local community, of being an effective host and so on.....Go figure!

Later on I sent away for a copy of my next fitness report. It was the first I'd ever seen, other than one CAPT Dave Lauth handed me on MINNETONKA several years earlier. Thompson had marked up the back side of the report in pen, lowering a couple of marks having to do with integrity et. al., and had lowered my overall score down to 28. Those who remember the fitness reports used in those days will recall that many believed an officer had to score 30 or above to have a chance for promotion. I figured I was likely in trouble for promotion to captain (O-6).

When Commander Pacific Area published the PACAREA ships' deployment schedules for 1973, I was surprised to find CONFIDENCE listed. Our operational commander had always been CCGD17, who established our operating schedule to augment a mesh in with the PACAREA deployments of WHEC cutters to the ALPAT mission. The only entry on the PACAREA schedule for CONFIDENCE was assigning us to refresher training with the Navy for three weeks in November '73. It was more the surprise since the ship hadn't gone to REFTRA since a shakedown visit in 1966, just after she was commissioned. Still, it sounded like a good idea – even though I personally felt chasing bad guys – Russians, Koreans and Japanese fishing vessels – was more important. But the upside was that our training was to be at Pearl Harbor, and a deployment to Hawaii was pretty attractive to the whole crew. As time to deploy approached, I had received no movement or operations order from CCGD17, that I believed was necessary for me to leave 17th District operational control. I called my boss one day not long before we needed to sail to meet our training schedule. His name was CAPT Mathieu, and I am confused over his first name. Two brothers by that name were Coast Guard captains. Anyhow, CAPT Mathieu listened politely to my query about whether or not a movement order was forthcoming, which I asked about as tactfully as I knew how. He response was, "CDR Wight, you know how to get there, don't you?" I quite likely stammered an affirmative response, and he – with obvious good humor – bid me a smooth voyage. I had polled the crew about

staying an extra week in Honolulu if I could obtain permission, and the response was overwhelmingly in favor of staying the extra time. So I asked CAPT Mathieu if that would be permissible. He said it was.

A few days before we sailed, I mentioned to Stan Bork that I thought a great circle route to Hawaii would be indicated and asked him to set it up. He said he would. We subsequently got underway on the appointed day, and after we cleared Kodiak Island and headed south, I ask him what the first course would be. "Course 179 degrees, sir," he responded with a smile. A little later I looked at a large area chart and realized that Kodiak was almost precisely due north of Hawaii! The course was 179 degrees the whole way! I felt stupid. As any navigator knows, north-south course ARE great circle¹ routes!

The trip from Kodiak to Honolulu was pretty routine – mostly! My father, Milt Wight, had just recently retired from his position as the Richland, Washington municipal fire chief and I had invited him to sail the trip from Kodiak to Hawaii. He was thrilled, and I was pumped up about it as well. He had really disapproved of me enlisting in the Coast Guard at age 17, and here we were 21 years later – I an O-5 and commanding my own ship, "strutting my stuff" so to speak. He was obviously pleased with how my career had gone so far, and we were quite at peace with each other.

The trip south started out routinely – typical late fall/early winter nasty weather, cold, windy, high seas. As we headed south for a few days, weather moderated and temperatures began to rise. We all started shedding winter clothing, we able to open weather deck doors and otherwise enjoy the improving conditions. Early one morning I was lounging in my cabin talking with my father when I heard one of the main diesel engines shut down....then the second one! As I sprinted for the bridge, electrical power wound down and quit, and we were a dead ship. Shortly, LT Mattson called the bridge on the sound powered phone. "Dead ship" he said. "We ran the main engines and generators out of fuel." As it turns out,

one of the night time underway engineering watches had failed to transfer fuel to the day tank, the specific fuel tank from which fuel was drawn for the main engines, turbines and generators. Everything had shut down. Fuel lines were sucked dry and full of air. We had a problem! It was not long before we had the emergency electrical generator going, though it seemed forever to me! There may be no stranger feeling than floating on a dead ship - no machinery or ventilation systems running, no radar or other sensors in operation, no radio communications with anyone! I remember later wondering what it would have been like back in the 18th century, on, say, a British Navy vessel, in some part of the world becalmed with no wind for days on end. LT Mattson and his engineers had a real problem - the diesel engines needed to be primed. Fuel pumps were mechanically run by the engines. So turning the engines over with compressed air was the only way to pump fuel to them. The starting air would run down, they'd have to wait 45 minutes for the compressor to pump the starting tank air up, then re-spin an engine and then do it all over again! We couldn't light off a turbine, because we didn't have sufficient air pressure to pump up the big air bags which were the heart of the friction clutches connecting them to the propeller shafts. It was a LONG day! Eventually, Mattson and his men got one engine going....cross-connected a fuel line to the other engine...used ITS fuel pump to prime the second diesel engine. I made many visits to the engine room, and JP-5 fuel was EVERYWHERE! As they bled the engine fuel lines and racks of air, fuel spurted all over, down the engines, into the bilges and so on!

We were in the drifting mode for six to seven hours! I struggled mightily with my anxiety over the situation, and over the dilemma of what kind of CASREP message I should send to COMPACAREA and others. I finally did nothing. We had no prognosis of how long it would take to get an engine going....there wasn't much anyone could do to help us - and the cause of the failure was a considerable embarrassment to all of us involved. So I sent no CASREP, and I don't think I ever told Bob Kramek or anyone else of the problem. By 1600 we were underway again, most of the spilled fuel cleaned away. I remember trying

to reassure my dad that this was just one of those incidents that happens, but I doubt he was convinced. I never asked Ray Mattson who was responsible for the error, nor did I demand any disciplinary action. I felt pretty sure that the culprit(s) suffered mightily one way or the other, at the hands of LT Mattson and the other engineering crew!

The rest of our transit was routine. The trip took seven days, weather increasing warm and benign seas as we approached Hawaii. There was some trouble getting their conditioning system going – it may not have been run in years. And we developed a number of salt water leaks as various hull fittings reacted to the much warmer sea water temperatures. In fact, when we pulled into Pearl Harbor, we were still accumulating salt water into the bilges from some unknown source. I think we moored on a Friday afternoon. We were assigned a berth just adjacent to Hickham Air Force Base, with the broad lawns and waving palm trees of the Officer's Club in easy view. We granted liberty to as many of the crew as we could, and my father and I headed to downtown Honolulu where he settled into a Waikiki hotel for a few days before he flew home to Washington State.

I think it was the next night – Saturday – that Dad and I went to a nice restaurant for dinner, then were strolling down the main boulevard when we encountered two attractive young women who engaged us in conversation – .and then propositioned us! Turns out they were prostitutes who had flown in recently from Las Vegas to ply their trade in Honolulu. Dad and I respectfully declined, conversed a few minutes with them before they headed off to look for another set of customers. Dad and I remained highly amused by the situation – a father-son being offered the services of two “ladies of the night.”

Mattson and his engineers were still searching for the pesky water leak, and were constantly pumping bilges. Since we couldn't dump bilge water into the harbor, he'd obtained a couple of floating waste-water “doughnuts” from the Navy. They were full by Saturday night, and by Sunday morning Ray and his

men were pumping bilge water onto the parking lot adjacent to the pier. He briefed me on the persistent problem, and I asked what he needed. Ray figured if we could get underway, get offshore where we could pump the bilges dry, his men could find and repair the leak. So I got Stan Bork, the XO, and told him to scrape up as many crewmen as he could and prepare to get underway. Turns out the majority of the crew was onboard I called the Navy OOD and told him we wanted to get underway and requested clearance to leave the harbor. I'm sure he wondered what THAT was all about, and he asked me why we were departing. So I told him that it was a really nice day and my crew and I wanted to do a little sightseeing. I'm sure he thought we were nuts! But we sailed, got 35-40 miles offshore, pumped the bilges dry. Ray's men found a salt water gauge line nestled below other lines in the bilge that was leaking badly. They fixed it. We actually did sail close to one of the other islands, Moloka'i, I think.

On Monday our refresher training started, and I must say we needed "refreshing"! The ship had not trained with the Navy since 1966, seven years earlier. The first few days were engaged in what was called a training readiness evaluation – "TRE" - in which literally dozens of Navy inspectors examined the ship, our equipment and machinery, our logs and manuals, our weaponry and so on. We really hadn't done a lot of preparation because our operating schedule just didn't permit it. The Navy inspectors documented perhaps hundreds of discrepancies, some of which were perhaps trivial, but some of which were major. For instance, they discovered we had operating restrictions of the gas turbine propulsion engines having to do with over-speed sensors that sometimes didn't work right. We had an ongoing debate over that for a couple days, as they were making noises about cancelling our underway training because of the so-called main propulsion equipment restrictions. Incidentally, we had operated that way for some years – just limited the turbines to 90% power or something like that. I can't recall how we cleared that hurdle, but it seems to me we sent in an official CASREP on the turbine engines – the Navy was somehow satisfied – and they let us continue with training.

I think it was on a Wednesday or Thursday afternoon of that first week, when the senior Navy inspector - a commander like me - presented me with the TRE discrepancy list. It was massive! He suggested we try and cure as many as possible over the next few days. I called a meeting of officers and key senior petty officers. We were engaged in a laborious review of the TRE lists that evening when the duty radioman ran into the wardroom, informing us that the Navy COMMCEN had called – and had a “flash” message for us! Now, I had been in the Coast Guard for close to 24 years at the time – and I had never SEEN a “flash” message. That was the highest priority available, and I figured it was only used in urgent wartime situations! The message priority system had classifications of ROUTINE, PRIORITY, OPERATION IMMEDIATE, URGENT (I think) and FLASH. I had never USED any classification above OPERATIONAL IMMEDIATE. Anyhow, we sent the radioman off with the vehicle to fetch the message, and as he departed I asked LCDR Bork to call the COMMCEN and ask if the message was encrypted. He did so - got a reply that the message was plain text. So he had the COMMCEN clerk read the message. It was from Commander, 17th Coast Guard District (our HQ in Juneau, AK) to All USCG Units in the district. It said simply: COMPLY WITH GENERAL WAR PLAN CHAPT _____ PARA. _____. Bork scrambled to the safe of classified pubs in his office, retrieved the General War Plan and read the appropriate paragraph. It said, “SET DEFCON TWO” and then defined the defense condition setting, which directed us to immediately replenish, refuel and prepare to deploy to our wartime assignment per the listed appendix. We looked that up and discovered our wartime assignment was to deploy to Subic Bay, Philippine Islands. So, I directed department heads to quickly prepare me information on what we’d need to have before we sailed to the Philippines, directed Stan Bork to send a shore party to downtown Honolulu to find as many of the crew as they could. Mattson reported that we were at 40% fuel and would need to top off our JP-5 before sailing. Otherwise, it turned out we had enough provisions and supplies to depart. I called the Navy OOD. It was perhaps 8 in the evening. I told him I

need to refuel. He said he'd put me down for early next morning. I told him I wanted to refuel within the hour, and would be moving the ship to the fuel pier shortly. He responded that it would take longer than that - they'd have to call in employees and/or military personnel to perform the refueling. I told him it was urgent, to call us as soon as he knew when we could be refueled. He reluctantly agreed. Next, I called the 14th District Rescue Coordination Center and asked the duty officer if he knew anything about the revised DEFCON setting. Normal peacetime condition was called DEFCON Five. DEFCON Two was "prepare for war!" He knew nothing. So we turned on a local radio station and listened for news. It was kind of eerie! Here we were moored in Pearl Harbor, adjacent to the Hickham Officers Club with music drifting across the lawns, tiki torches wavering tranquilly along the walkways. It was enough to have us looking upward for approaching aircraft reminiscent of 7 December 1941! Shortly, though, we heard a news broadcast saying that the Israelis had mounted a massive attack into the Sinai Desert against the Arabs, and that the President of the United States had decided to have all our military forces assume DEFCON Two as a precautionary measure. With that information in hand, I decided that the risk of imminent deployment to Subic Bay was probably small. I called the Navy OOD and told him to stand down from my immediate refueling request and schedule me for 0830 in the morning. He agreed, and seemed relieved. I asked him if there were other ships requesting refueling, and he said there were none. So I asked if he knew of an increased DEFCON setting. He did not!

So I drafted a response to the flash message, addressed the response to COMFIRSTFLEET U.S. NAVY, COMMANDER FLEET TRAINING GROUP PEARL HARBOR, to COMMANDER 17TH COAST GUARD DISTRICT and to the Coast Guard Area Commander in San Francisco. Since I have no operations order to even BE in Hawaii, I wasn't sure who my operational commander really was. The message said we had set DEFCON Two except that we needed refueling and would do so within 15 hours. We sent the message "Operational Immediate" classification.

The next morning we sortied to the fuel pier before 0830 and topped off with fuel. I was amused to see several Navy ships cued up behind us, waiting their turns.

Shortly after lunch, we were somewhat startled by an unannounced visit from a Navy rear admiral, the officer commanding the Fleet Training Group. I took him to my cabin, served him coffee. We made some relative small talk and he officially welcomed us to training. Then he produced a copy of the message I'd sent the night before. He admitted to me, somewhat wryly, that he received my "set DEFCON TWO" response message shortly before he had even received the Navy notification that they were to assume the increased readiness posture. With some concern, he asked how I got my orders so quickly. I responded "Well, Admiral, just good Coast Guard communications, I guess." I don't think he was amused.

The rest of refresher training went fairly well, all considered. One other Coast Guard ship was in training simultaneously – USCGC GLACIER, at that time the Coast Guard's largest icebreaker. One day we were teamed up with them to do various joint exercises – helicopter operations with a Coast Guard HH-52 embarked on GLACIER, some formation steaming, and a towing exercise. We passed lines to GLACIER and towed her, then vice-versa. When GLACIER approached us as we drifted, it seemed they were going to be very, very close! Since she displaced perhaps 8500 tons and we were at a scant 1000 tons, we didn't relish even a slight brush with her hull! Stan Bork had the con, and we were trading conversation about how close GLACIER might come. Stan suggested clutching in a propeller shaft and backing up just a little. I told him to go ahead, and we eased astern a few yards hoping no one would notice! GLACIER was still mighty close when they passed a messenger line to us, but there was no collision of any sort!

The next evening I and several other officers were attending a social function at the Coast Guard Base at Sand Island, an event scheduled in part to greet

GLACIER and CONFIDENCE officers. CAPT James West, GLACER's CO, was there. We were passing some idle conversation, and he mentioned the towing exercise. He asked if I thought his ship was going to collide with us as they approached, as he had noted we backed down a little. I was embarrassed! He laughed it off, admitting they WERE a little close! Also at the function was CAPT Ben Stabile, whom I'd known for some years. CAPT Ben later reached the rank of vice admiral, and was assistant commandant in the early 1980s. At the time (1973) he was CO of USCGC JARVIS, a high endurance cutter. While in Honolulu, I was invited to a cookout and cocktail party at his home in Coast Guard housing on Red Hill. We reminisced about the time we flew to San Juan Puerto Rico on a C-130 to meet an icebreaker returning from Antarctica to plan a shipyard availability. CAPT Stabile was at the time, Chief of 5th District Engineering Division. On the trip I rented two cars on my Hertz car rental card and provided one of them to him, the other for the rest of us in the TAD party. After that 1967 TAD trip I had some explaining to do to our EEE Division "money man."

In the wee hours of the morning we were to sortie out for our final battle problem exercise, I went to Honolulu International airport at about 2 a.m. and met an incoming flight from Anchorage, surprising my wife Ruth. I had told her to go directly to the Royal Hawaiian Hotel where we had reservations, as I was to sail at 0730 for our final exercise. She and a couple other wives had from Kodiak for our R&R week in Honolulu. I got her to the hotel and checked into a lovely ground floor room, headed back to the ship and we sailed as scheduled. The final battle problem went well. We were debriefed by our Navy REFTRA team leader and awarded two training Excellence awards. Can't remember the categories now, but it wasn't bad for a ship that hadn't trained for war in over six years!

After our debriefing we moved the ship to Base Sand Island and moored there for a week. I sent a message to CCGD17 requesting 5 days regular leave, but

never got a response. So I told Stan Bork he was pretty much in charge. I'd check in daily by phone, if not in person, and told him to give holiday routine liberty to all hands for the week.

Ruth and I had a wonderful time, exploring Oahu in the little rental car we had, lounging on the beach, enjoying the Waikiki night life along Hotel Row. Ruth had lived on Oahu some years earlier, and it was a nice experience for her to revisit familiar places as well. We truly enjoyed our Royal Hawaiian Hotel stay, at the time still the "crown jewel" spot on Waikiki. It was all the more enjoyable since we were in a spacious honeymoon suite, paying military R&R rates of only \$20.00 a night - perhaps 1/4 the going rate even back in the early '70s!

When it came time to sail back to Kodiak, Ruth had to stay another two days as her flight to Anchorage was cancelled, and they let her stay at the same rate. Once back in Kodiak after a routine seven-day trip north, I called my boss, CAPT Mathieu, and briefed him on our trip. I also inquired carefully about the message I sent requesting leave in Honolulu. He chuckled, mumbled something about him forgetting to answer it, and observed that he supposed I worked it out OK! He saved me five days leave.

In those years, Commander Pacific area scheduled an annual ALPAT Alaska fisheries patrol conference, usually held in the Seattle area. Attendees included COMPACAREA staff, operations folks from the PACAREA Coast Guard Districts, COs of participating cutters (PACAREA WHEC's, STORIS, CONFIDENCE), COs of some Air Stations. I attended one in the winter of '73-'74, I think. CDR Ted Deming, the law enforcement branch chief in Juneau, asked me to present a paper on patrol planning, as he liked the way we did our work. By then I was thought of by some as being one of the most experienced and successful cutter COs performing the ALPAT mission. That may or may not be so, but one thing I wasn't good at was formal public speaking – particularly to a houseful of Coast Guard officers who were nearly all my seniors. In any event, I prepared a

relatively short paper I titled “Dynamic Patrol Scheduling” or some such thing. Over the years I’d served on ships, I had seen that most Coast Guard cutter COs placed great emphasis on schedules, meeting them on time and so on. I recall many times on return from patrols the CO would often slow down or nearly drift so as to sail into the harbor precisely on time. That type of mindset was often contradictory to ALPAT performance, which was better served by flexibility, since the mission dynamics were changing all the time – weather factors, recent intelligence from C-130 ALPAT flights, unpredicted movements of foreign fishing vessels, chance encounters during patrols and so on. My intention was to present an attitude of flexibility, impart some flavor of the constantly-changing mission, and to foster a less structured attitude toward the patrol deployments. So, when I got up to the lecture podium and started my speech, I said, the title of my paper was “Dynamic Patrol Scheduling.” A number of O-6 ship COs (and others) laughed at my title. In retrospect, my choice of the word “Dynamic” was the wrong one. I didn’t specifically mean “forceful, purposeful” or something like that. I meant “ever-changing.” Anyhow, the laughter completing flustered me. I stammered something about what I was trying to say ...pretty much gave up, as I’d lost my audience. So I suggested they keep an open mind, read my paper, and left the stage in total retreat. It was not my finest hour!

During one patrol in spring of 1974, I think, we were inspecting a fleet of Japanese trawlers and their mother ship, a large vessel capable of processing fish right onboard the ship, including flash-freezing, the production of surimi (fish meal) and so on. I had put a boarding party onboard the factory ship, and we were “lying to” while the party did its work. ENS “Bud” Schneeweis (Academy ‘73) was the senior boarding officer. While drifting near the factory ship, some pancake ice drifted down on us and surrounded the ship. It looked just like we were in pack ice. So I radioed over to ENS Schneeweis and asked if he could step out on deck and take a picture of the ship in the ice. He did so, a pretty good photo considering it was taken with a Kodak Instamatic, I think. We later enlarged a couple prints, and I still have a copy hanging on the wall.

On one deployment, we sailed in lousy weather - cold, windy. Just before sailing, just after I'd asked LCDR Stan Bork to order the crew to underway stations I was still in my quarters preparing to head to the bridge. A young seaman by name of Tomasini knocked on my door, entered and in a state of obvious emotional distress told me he just COULD NOT sail with the ship. Tomasini hated underway time on the ship, and was one of the unfortunate fellows who really did seem to suffer motion sickness more than most. But we also had him pegged as a malingerer. He'd tried several ploys to be declared unfit for sea duty, including putting soap in his ears to feign hearing and inner-ear problems. A few days earlier, we'd had him examined at Base Kodiak hospital and he was declared fit for sea duty. I told Tomasini he had no real choice in the matter, along with the other 65 of us onboard, and offered him to his special sea detail station. He was sobbing a little, I think, but responded "yes sir" and headed down to the main deck.

We sailed as scheduled. Perhaps 15 minutes later, as we steamed out the channel from Woman's Bay, the cry "MAN OVERBOARD!" was heard. We looked aft - sure enough, a man in the water astern of the ship. Tomasini, of course! He had donned a life preserver and jumped off the stern. The wind was blowing hard and we were in a really narrow part of the channel - as maneuverable as the ship was, I couldn't risk turning around at the location we were in. I took the conn, ordered a boat lowered, and started backing down in the channel. Water temperature was likely below 40 degrees, and Tomasini might die of exposure in short order! I shouted to BMC Daniels that I'd like to launch the boat with some sternway on if he thought he could do it safely. He shouted back an affirmative, and we got the boat away safely. The boat crew retrieved Tomasini quickly and we got him back onboard. He was suffering from exposure and his body temperature was well below normal. I turned the ship around in a safe spot, steamed back to Base Kodiak and radioed ahead to get an emergency vehicle to pick up Tomasini. He didn't sail with us after all. And he

apparently suffered no long term problems from his cold water bath. In an investigation of the incident after the patrol, we learned he had bragged to others in our crew and to others at Base Kodiak that he would not sail with us on the patrol. That information and other info I had prompted me to order a summary court martial. The court reduced him in rank to seaman recruit and ordered a bad conduct discharge. I approved the sentence and executed it at an all hands formation. Tomasini was humiliated and in tears when I last saw him. Somehow I wasn't too sympathetic, as I recalled the hazards to the other crew members as we launched a boat – in terrible conditions – to save his life.

In spring of 1974, an at-sea conference was arranged with the commander of the Russian fishing operations in the Bering Sea and North Pacific. The conference was arranged by state department officials, with representation from an Alaska commercial fisheries group, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. State Department. CDR Ted Deming, 17th District law enforcement branch chief, was a delegation member as well. CONFIDENCE was selected as the host ship, and the meeting was to be held in international waters off Kodiak Island. The arranged date was May 1st, which I thought was odd since that was a big Russian holiday celebrating the fall of the Russian monarchy in the Russian Revolution. In any event, I prepared as best I could, making arrangements to have a suitable luncheon in the wardroom etc. The purpose of the meeting was to try and improve lines of communication with the Russian fishing fleets to resolve gear conflicts with U.S. fishermen, establish emergency medical evacuation procedures, and otherwise improve the cooperation between the Russians and Coast Guard ships in the enforcement of U.S. laws and the various negotiated treaties between our nations. On the appointed day I embarked the participants from the U.S. and we sailed to meet the Russian ship. We made the rendezvous without difficulty, but sea conditions were perhaps a little dicey for the Russian contingent to come aboard CONFIDENCE. We determined that the Russian fleet commander declined to risk the boat transfer. I conferred with the state department fellow and the NMFS official, and suggested we just go ahead

and sail into a nearby bay, inside U.S. territorial waters. They agreed, and the Russians concurred. Once both vessels were in sheltered waters, several Russians came over by small boat, including the fleet commander, his interpreter, and the master of the ship which had brought him to the meeting. The Russian fleet commander certainly wasn't what I expected. He was a youngish fellow, perhaps late thirties, a slim and trim fellow sharply dressed in a well-tailored suit, with expensive looking shoes and accessories. I really wondered to myself if he really KNEW anything about fishing! One of the fellows in the U.S. delegation was actually fluent in Russian, but was not introduced as bilingual. He was actually a CIA man, I think.

We had a fairly lively meeting in the ship's wardroom, discussing issues such as big Russian trawlers dragging nets through U.S. fishing boat set gear such as halibut long lines. The Russians claimed they would like to be more cooperative, but unless they were notified of U.S. fishing activities, they had little way of knowing there was gear in the water. They claimed most U.S. gear was poorly marked, sometimes with no lighting on the buoys at all, and difficult to avoid. I silently concurred with the Russians, and believed nothing constructive would result from the discussions on that subject. U.S. commercial fishermen tended to be pretty secretive about where they intended to fish, to avoid competition from other fishing boats. We discussed medical emergencies in some detail, with we Coast Guard people promising prompt response when needed. But I complained about difficulties in communicating and with the Russians' propensity for secretiveness. I asked the fleet commander, through his interpreter, if we could get permission to visit some of his large fishing ships just to inform ourselves a little more about the ships and their capabilities. He responded that we could visit one at any time - all we needed to do was seek his approval. I responded that we really didn't know where he was nor how to reach him. He smiled and acknowledged that this was a problem. In other words, forget the courtesy visits, fellows! Nonetheless, it was an interesting meeting.

When our business was mostly completed, we served a pretty decent meal in the wardroom. The cooks and stewards had done a pretty good job. During the meal, even though it was in violation of Coast Guard regulations, we served glasses of domestic wine. At meal's end, the fleet commander, through his interpreter, asked if he could send his small boat over with a little more substantial form of libation in order to appropriately toast the occasion. He pointed out that May 1st was their most significant national holiday. I conferred quickly with Ted Demming and the State Department representative, and we reluctantly agreed. Perhaps 15 minutes later the small boat laid alongside and offloaded two large canvas bags - each filled with half-liter bottles of vodka. With that, we embarked on a series of toasts. I sipped daintily at my vodka. Once we worked our way through that social event, I took the Russians on a tour of the ship. They were most interested, and in particular took note of our 3" cannon on the bow. They also seemed much impressed with our engine room and combination diesel-gas turbine propulsion system. The fleet commander asked how fast the ship would go, and I responded I wasn't allowed to tell (not true!) but our flank speed was somewhat in excess of 20 knots (also not true! CONFIDENCE might make 18.5 knots with conditions ideal.) After the tour we took some group photos, then bade the Russians farewell. Once their party was back onboard their vessel, we escorted them back into international waters. It was an interesting day - but I doubt much as accomplished.

My CONFIDENCE tour ended in early July 1974. I was relieved by CDR Carl A. Gruel. The officer officiating at my transfer was the new CO of Support Center Kodiak, CAPT James West, who had recently been CO of GLACIER. CAPT West was a nice man, but I was offended and disappointed that no one came from the District office to officiate. I felt I was being damned with faint praise. I'd worked HARD over the two years onboard, brought the ship up to a much-improved physical condition, and had created an atmosphere which had the officers and men enthusiastically involved in the ship's mission. By contrast, the District commander himself officiated at the Air Station change of command, and

hung a medal on the departing CO. Not one to leave well enough alone, I wrote a personal letter to RADM Glenn Thompson, told him I felt affronted and suggested he just didn't appreciate the CONFIDENCE's level of performance, which I described in great detail in my letter. I didn't get a reply from him. But I felt better! I felt pretty sure I wouldn't be selected for promotion to captain, so - why not be honest about the way I felt?

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

SEVENTH DISTRICT ELECTRONICS ENGINEERING BRANCH

July 1974 to June 1977

When I detached from USCGC CONFIDENCE, we left Kodiak en route Miami, Florida. I think I left heel marks in the dirt all the way across the country. Miami was pretty close to the last place we wanted to go. I had asked for assignments in any of the west coast districts. Go figure! But I was assigned as Chief, Seventh District Electronics Engineering Branch, which was actually a pretty responsible assignment. The District covered Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Puerto Rico. We had electronics shops in San Juan, Base Miami, Base Charleston and St. Petersburg. There was a primary communications station at Miami, which also functioned as a data collection facility for the National Data Buoy System, a LORAN C station at Jupiter, Florida, and ships in a number of ports throughout the District. There was plenty of electronics work to do, unlike the Eleventh District branch in Long Beach, California where I had been assigned four years ago.

An oddity of mine is that when serving on shore (administrative/engineering) assignments I have great difficulty remembering many of the people with whom I worked. I guess the office environment just doesn't lend itself to knowing a great deal about the folks with whom you work – kind of the “8 to 5” then leave it at work mentality, I guess. In the electronics branch, we had a typical mix of civilian and military engineers and technicians. There were, I remember, two GS-12 civilians, both fairly decently qualified fellows who were competent at their work. A lieutenant was assigned as assistant branch chief, and there were four other officers – two LTJGs and two commissioned warrant officers. As I recall, we also had a chief petty officer and a civilian secretary. The two warrant officers were Chuck Dieroff and Donald Boyd. Don was an ex-telephone technician chief promoted to CWO (ELC), and was an exceptional fellow in many ways – he was extremely competent – smart, well organized, fast to

learn and had a very positive outlook. He was assigned to the ship electronics section, which at first I thought an odd assignment for him, given his background. But Don was more than up to the job. In fact, I am sure he was “under-challenged” in many ways. A young ensign out of OCS – Kenneth M. “Mike” Hay, an ex-enlisted ET, was another eager and quite competent young man. The engineering division chief was a kindly fellow, CAPT Robert F. Goebel (Academy ‘46), and the chief of staff was CAPT Martin Flesh (Academy ‘46). The Seventh District commander was RADM Austin C. “Red” Wagner, whom just about no one will disagree was something of a character. (Wagner was an ensign on USCGC CAMPBELL in World War II, when they encountered a German U-boat [U-606], depth charged it to the surface, and sank it with gunfire. CAMPBELL nearly sank during the encounter, trying to ram the sub on the surface – but somehow missed. The sub hit CAMPBELL amidships and flooded the engineering spaces, but she was towed to Newfoundland and repaired.)

While Ruth and I didn’t like Miami at all, the tour of duty was at least fairly interesting and busy. During my tour, we replaced many of the old Coast Guard-owned landlines and submerged cable in the district in favor of microwave links and leased telephone lines, which reduced maintenance costs a bit. We also completed the coastal VHF-FM system, attaining (as best we could) good coverage to detect low power signals at least 20 miles offshore. That was a tough task - there aren’t a lot of high places in Florida! I and my staff spent a lot of time searching for towers and tall buildings all along the Florida and South Carolina coasts. We also upgraded Radio Station Miami to a communications station, which really made good sense. Until we improved the station’s remote receiving and transmitting sites, we had communications problems throughout the adjacent Caribbean waters. The operations folks seemed content to “live with it,” and we self-started the improvement program, eventually getting support from Headquarters (O).

In the summer of 1975, CAPT Flesh and CAPT Goebel both retired, and for a time I was acting engineering division chief until CAPT Lou Zumstein (Academy ‘51) arrived to take Goebel’s place. CAPT Charles E. Larkin (Academy ‘49) assumed duties of chief of

staff. Larkin was a particularly fine gentleman to work for, and Zumstein was fun as well. Both were aviators, which made Zumstein an odd pick for his engineering position, but he was easy to work for and very supportive. Larkin was selected for flag rank spring of 1976, and was “short toured” and went to Headquarters as Chief, Office of Personnel. At the same time, Zumstein was shifted to District Operations, and I again became acting engineering division chief for several months. RADM Robert Durfey (Academy ‘47??) relieved Wagner as district commander.

A few “situations” come to mind. In 1975 when I was acting division chief, I went to one of the weekly staff meetings chaired by RADM Wagner. Division chiefs gathered in his outer office, fairly spacious, enough chairs for all. I breezed in, selected a chair and sat down. One of the captains (I was still a commander) informed me I was sitting in a chair usually occupied by Chief, Operations Division – so I said “oops,” got up, and selected another chair. “No, no” the same captain exclaimed. “That’s the Chief Marine Safety Division’s chair.” So I stood in the center of the room, awaiting the admiral’s entrance. He came in. “Commander,” he said, “why are you standing there like that?” I smiled and let him know I had run afoul of the seating “pecking order” and would take an available chair when everyone else was seated. He smiled as well. “OK,” he said “but remember in the future that I am the guy who tells the jokes around here!” Everyone laughed. I sat down.

In those days Ruth and I were struggling a little financially. We’d bought a house that was a little over our heads, we’d been in a motel for over a month searching for and then awaiting closing on a house, and the move from Kodiak had cost us dearly. So one Saturday I decided to do my own brake job on Ruth’s 1968 Dodge Charger. I had a manual on how to do it, bought all the parts, and got the car up on jack stands and tore down both front wheels – took the drums and had them turned – and in late afternoon set out to put it all back together. Manual or no, I couldn’t make things fit! I was panicked. I finally called Don Boyd, who lived within a few miles. Luckily he was home, came over and helped me reassemble the brakes. He was very talented mechanically, while I was – and still am “mechanically challenged!”

During the spring of 1976, the Coast Guard convened its first formal Command at Sea selection board. The rules said you had to have completed (by transfer time) two years in current assignment, so I applied for selection submitted a letter that CAPT Larkin graciously endorsed with favorable remarks. When I wasn't selected, I was really disappointed – and wondered if my “dust ups” with RADM Glen Thompson in Alaska had caused me to lose that opportunity. I was not a “happy camper.” Not long after the board had published its selections, I had sent young Mike Hays to the Coast Guard Yard Curtis Bay on TAD to do some liaison on some electronics work being done on one of our district cutters. Mike was asked to join CAPT Ben Stabile (Academy '50) for lunch. Stabile was CO of the Yard, and was a notoriously hospitable gentleman, and wanted Ensign Hays to feel at home on his TAD visit. Turns out Stabile had been chairman of the command selection board, and on hearing Hays say that I was his boss, Stabile told him to let me know that they had found me well-qualified, but that the board members thought Ruth and I were no doubt enjoying a “tour in the sun” after duty in Kodiak. Stabile felt I was a shoe-in to be picked by the 1977 board. I recall relaying the conversation to CAPT Larkin before he was promoted and transferred to HQ.

Spring '77 finally arrived! I waited on tenterhooks for the command board to meet. One day my secretary came looking for me, with instructions to promptly return a call from RADM Larkin. I fairly ran to my office and placed the call, my mind racing. Was Larkin calling me to let me know I HAD NOT been selected by the command board? It wasn't usual procedure for the admiral to inform folks – it was usually done by a branch chief in personnel. Anyhow, I got him on the line and he greeted me, then said, “if I tell you something, can you keep it confidential for a few days?” I responded that if he told me “what I hoped he was going to, that there was NO CHANCE I could keep it quiet.” He laughed, and told me I'd been selected for command at sea. He was a thoughtful man, and had remembered our conversations a year earlier. When a Personnel branch chief called the next day to officially inform me, I told him I already knew – much to his surprise. He at first offered me assignment to a WAVP in Portland, Maine. I told him I wanted CAMPBELL, home-ported in Port Angeles, Washington. After a little discussion in which I cited that all my sea duty to-date had been in PACAREA and Alaska, and that

I knew the missions and the territory. He agreed. CAMPBELL it was. I was literally dancing and hopping around the hallway.

In early 1977, the civil engineering branch chief – CDR Robert R Wells ('59) – sought a private conversation with me. He was really frustrated. It seems he had been directed by HQ (ECV) to do an extensive repair and remodel on an old Coast Guard house located near the casinos in San Juan, Puerto Rico. It seems the old quarters were to be brought up to standards for use as a flag officer's retreat down there. Wells didn't mind doing the job, but he was hard-pressed for maintenance funds and had all kinds of backlogged work needed on enlisted housing both in the San Juan area and at AIRSTA Borinquen, at the other end of the main island. He wanted my help. I suggested we meet with RADM Durfey and discuss it, and Bob agreed. I set up the meeting with RADM Durfey about two days in the future. At the appointed time, Wells and I met with RADM Durfey in his office, and I carefully explained the problem to Durfey. He listened attentively. At the conclusion of my remarks, I added something about how I wasn't sure it was proper use of funds to spend appropriated maintenance funds on a flag retreat. He kind of nodded absently when I said that. After I finished, he cleared his throat, looking uneasy and hesitant. He then informed us that the work on the flag retreat was to continue, and that Wells was to do his best to control costs and lessen the impact on other repair needs.

He admitted he knew that wasn't the answer we wanted. As he dismissed us, he asked me to stay. He informed me that he had held several conversations with "headquarters people" on the subject, before we met. He made it clear that we were to continue with the project, and that while he personally might not be in favor of it, we had no choice. We had our "marching orders." I never learned who was behind the project, but I feel pretty sure that Durfey, a "boot" admiral at that time, had been told to not get in the way of the project. That always stuck in my craw.

Towards the end of my tour, CAPT Irvin Lindemuth (Academy '55) arrived and assumed duties as engineering division chief. Lindemuth and I had served together in Long

Beach several years earlier, and it was he and I that grew the “protest beards” in 1971 or so as described earlier in this narrative. I was glad my double duty was over with. A few days before my transfer, Irv called me in and let me know he had written me up for a commendation medal at chief of staff’s request. I was flattered, but compared to other work I had done in other assignments, I didn’t see much reason for it. I just did my job for three years.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

USCGC CAMPBELL (WHEC 32)

June 1977 to July 1979

I was ordered to report to USCGC CAMPBELL in late June, 1977. The officer I was to relieve, CDR James Shanower (Academy '61) had orders to be Coast Guard liaison at the Fleet Training Group in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba – and for some reason a “sight relief” in “GITMO” was required of him. That was OK with Ruth and I. We were MORE than ready to flee Miami! We headed for Port Angeles, Washington with much anticipation – visited family en route as we could – the transit across country was interrupted by my step-father Fred Hamilton’s unexpected death of heart failure in Sacramento, the night before we were to arrive. We lingered there in Sacramento to help my mother with funeral arrangements and Fred’s decedent affairs, then on up to Washington. Sight unseen, we had rented Jim Shanower’s house in Port Angeles. Shanower had served three years on CAMPBELL, two as executive officer and then he fleeted up to CO for his final year.

I reported aboard the ship in Portland, Oregon where CAMPBELL was representing the Coast Guard at the Portland Rose Festival, a big annual event. I learned that after leaving Portland, the ship had to go to West Seattle directly, as there was a leak in a fuel tank that needed repair, and an emergency dry-docking was scheduled.

As we departed Portland, I went to the bridge to observe. Shanower gave the ship’s “conn” to a Columbia River pilot, who got us underway and then began to have all kinds of trouble turning the ship around in the river channel to get headed downstream. The situation became critical – the pilot was using so many “ahead full” and “astern full” bells that the boilers couldn’t keep up with the demands for steam! LCDR Chad Doherty (EO, Academy '67) was shouting over the intercom that they would be “sucking water into the turbines” if the demand didn’t stop! I was really frustrated, fearing that the ship was about to be seriously disabled. And THAT might have meant a decision to decommission her, as I doubted there were any replacement steam turbines anywhere

(CAMPBELL had her original 1936 main propulsion turbines, still functioning fine). Shanower took the conn back from the pilot, slowed to bare steerage way pointed upstream, and “waited it out” until steam pressure was restored. He successfully got the ship headed downstream, and our transit to Puget Sound was routine.

I relieved Shanower on July 1st 1977, the ship high and dry in dry dock at a shipyard in West Seattle. RADM Chet Richmond (Academy ‘41), 13th District Commander, presided. Incidentally, he retired soon thereafter, unexpectedly as I recall. He was relieved by RADM Glen Thompson, with whom I’d had troubles in Alaska three years earlier. I was pretty darned apprehensive!!!

CAMPBELL was the lead-ship of the Secretary-class cutters built by Philadelphia Navy Shipyard in 1936-37. These venerable old ships had stood the test of time. They were 327-feet in overall length, powered by a steam plant that consisted of two boilers and two reversible steam turbines. Designed to achieve 20 knots maximum speed, the remaining ships of the class were still able to do that some 40 years later! These ships served ably in World War II and beyond, as ASW convoy escorts, communications ships, offshore gun fire support ships and other duties in peacetime that included ocean station patrols, oceanographic work, and foreign and domestic fisheries law enforcement. Since the ships were past 40 years of age (CAMPBELL was 41 – and I was 43! – the last CO older than the ship!), they required a fairly large crew to maintain and operate them, and CAMPBELL had about 145 officers and men assigned to it. While I had visited onboard a number of ships of the class over the years, this was my first assignment to one of them. I was happy to have the chance to serve on one of these famous old ships.

But I had scant time to really settle in and acquaint myself with the ship. A couple days after I assumed command, we refueled at Manchester, then headed to our homeport at Port Angeles. A few days later, we steamed across the Straits of Juan de Fuca to Esquimalt Canadian Naval Base (just outside of Victoria, B.C.) and competed for several days in a Canadian Navy event that featured a number of naval “arts and skills.” No thanks to me – I hardly knew the ship’s stern from her bow – we competed well in a

number of the games. Chad Doherty and his wife Joan, for instance, won a sailing race. It was a real treat for me to accept that trophy from the Canadian Forces admiral, letting him know that our ship's engineer and wife had won the race!

I served with some fine people on that ship. The exec the first year was LCDR William Rohrer, an ex-enlisted OCS product like myself. Bill was a man of many talents, hardworking and serious-minded. The EO, LCDR Chad Doherty (Academy '67) was a very positive "can do" sort of fellow, well-liked and respected by all. The OPS officer was LT Rex Buddenburg (Academy '72). While Rex was something of a "different kinda' guy", I found him to be an effective and willing officer on the whole. During my first year onboard, I served with ENS (later LTJG) Jeff McDannold (Academy 76) and CWO Charles (Chuck) Carlson (Supply Officer). Rohrer, McDannold and Carlson remain friends to this day. Among the Academy class of '77 "brand new ensigns" reporting that month were Hank Teuton, Rob "Chow" Lachowski (a student engineer), Dave Davidson and Doug Whitmer. Also reporting was ENS Vic Pounds, a recent OCS grad, whom I came to label as "super ensign" because he was gung ho and capable. Four of these five became career officers, and I remain acquainted with Lachowski to this day.

Of the many chiefs I served with, several remain in my memory – EMCM "Barney" Barnell, a towering fellow of good skills – MKCS Carl Pulease, a truly outstanding man who could repair just about anything, and contributed greatly to keeping CAMPBELL'S main propulsion system functioning, in spite of her age. DCC Harder was another fine chief. RMC Boyd Jewett a "new" chief, did a good job and also published a lively ship's newspaper on a regular basis. YNC Dick Stevens was another hard-working and capable fellow. There were others as well, but their names slip away. Midway in my tour Doherty was relieved as engineer officer by LT Bob Dorfler, a likable and capable fellow (except he hated paper work!). Rohrer was relieved by LCDR Bill Hain, an Academy officer and a lawyer. Haine was exceptionally hard-working, but was perhaps too engrossed in fine details, and just couldn't get the "hang" of ship handling. I suspect he was glad when his tour was over. One of the class of '78 officers who reported in summer '78 was ENS Steven Ratti, son of RADM "Rick" Ratti. Steve was a fine officer

from the “get-go”, poised and capable. At this writing (Fall 2010), Steve is a rear admiral (like his father) and still on active duty.

Since CAMPBELL was my second command, I think I felt more comfortable in the role of CO early-on than I had on CONFIDENCE – but somehow it wasn't quite as exciting. Still, the tour was interesting and often fun, performing a variety of missions. Just a few days after our deployment over to Esquimalt Canadian Naval Base, we completed preparations to sail to San Francisco to embark Coast Guard Academy cadets on the second half of their summer cruise. The cadets had sailed from the east coast via the Panama Canal onboard a “378” high endurance cutter, the specific one I can't remember. We sailed from Port Angeles with a “short” crew to make room to accommodate about a dozen first classmen and perhaps 40 third classmen. With them was CDR Lou Bragaw (Academy '57, a permanent teaching staff officer) and another Academy training officer.

Our trip to San Francisco was uneventful, and I had the opportunity to “prowl” the ship and learn more about her. For instance, we had a main shaft reduction gear that was noisy and a matter of some concern, though it had been recently inspected and worked on. It seems some gear teeth had more wear than others, as I understand it. In reading through old night order books, I learned that for many years the ship steamed at 210 shaft RPM as an economical “cruising” speed, and used 270 shaft rpm as a “full ahead” speed. I fiddled with these speeds, and when I could spare the time, we routinely steamed at 190 shaft RPM which proved to quiet the noisy reduction gear and was also efficient from a fuel consumption standpoint. Use of either 260 rpm or 280 rpm seemed quieter when faster transit speeds were needed. There was an administrative restriction on the ship ordered by 13th District Engineering Division limiting operating above 270 shaft rpm, but I came to more or less ignore that restriction after some months. Chad Doherty and his main propulsion CWO, along with MKCM Pulease, felt confident that the reduction gear was indeed safe and functional. At one point later on, we did an unofficial full speed trial, were able to achieve 300 shaft RPM and a nominal speed of 20 knots – as the ship was designed to do in 1936! Luckily we didn't break anything.

When we entered San Francisco Bay, we tried to time our arrival for slack water. I knew from my tour on ACTIVE in the late 1950s that San Francisco Bay tidal currents were a big problem. Bill Rohrer had some experience as well, when CAMPBELL sailed into San Francisco after a long ocean search some months earlier. When we approached our assigned berth not far from the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, we were dismayed to find that our berth was well into a long slip, directly forward of the 378 with the cadets onboard – and there was already some tidal current, and increasing! Rohrer had the “conn”, and I asked if he’d like to give it a try. He agreed, but I thought there was some reluctance. And I shared it with him – it looked tough! We tried slipping past the 378 but aborted the attempt in a panic, as we were being set down on her at what seemed an alarming rate. I directed a voice radio call to the Navy Station at Yerba Buena Island and asked if a tug was available to assist, and they agreed to sortie one over in a few minutes. This caused a major “ding” to my pride, since use of a tug was something I’d never felt I needed – but we obviously did, in this case. The tug arrived, and I took the conn and asked the tug to “latch on” to our port bow and help us get on by the 378. The tug skipper didn’t seem to like that scenario, so he and I were discussing the issue when we received a call on VHF from a San Francisco harbor pilot who happened to be passing by on a large commercial tug. The pilot asked if we could use some help – so with another gulp of ebbing personal pride, I invited him aboard. As the big tug delivered him, the tug skipper – a young fellow from Portland, Oregon, offered to help as well. I readily agreed! We laced the Navy tug on our starboard stern, the commercial tug on the port bow, and with good way on, “shot the gap” into the slip. The pilot was whispering suggestions in my ear, which I accepted without pause. We “dropped” the Navy tug as we came abeam the 378 – held the commercial tug a little further into the slip to help keep our bow up, then released him as well – then dropped the port anchor to help keep the bow “up” and to help us slow down. We made it without a scratch! But I was admittedly scared as hell by the whole thing, and could scarcely talk by the time we were safely moored. To my surprise, awaiting us on the dock were CAPT Ray Parks and LT Howard Tarr, both now retired. They had been good friends in Kodiak several years earlier. Later CAPT Parks told me he just didn’t believe we’d make it safely into that berth without mishap. And if it weren’t for that pilot

and that civilian tug skipper – well, anyhow, the episode gave me some important lessons: “327s” don’t maneuver like “210s”; “ego doesn’t dock a ship safely” – among them. And maybe tugs aren’t always to be disdained after all!

I neglected to mention that my 13-year old son Rick was a passenger on that trip from Puget Sound to San Francisco, and then flew home to his mother in Orange County. He apparently had a great time on that voyage, and I later learned he got his first exposures to “Playboy Magazine” and the like while onboard. In those years, he and his skateboard were inseparable, and I later also learned he was skateboarding all around the ship’s main deck when he was fairly certain I wouldn’t spot him. He really worried some of the crew – they thought a “man overboard” might occur at any time! Thankfully, not. Bill Rohrer’s father also sailed with us from Port Angeles, and I recall he took Bill and I to dinner at a really great Greek restaurant on the San Francisco waterfront.

We embarked the 50-some odd cadets and their instructors and headed north, en route Vancouver, British Columbia. CDR Bragaw briefed me on his desires concerning training for the cadets, and I offered to give them just a much “hands on” training as I could safely provide – and on discussion, he agreed that it might be OK to slip in some recreational activities when we could. To that end, Lou had the first classmen set up to be cadet OOD’s and cadet CIC supervisors. In the spirit of my agreement, I had the cadet OOD assume the conn immediately after we backed away from the dock, and the young fellow did just fine, after overcoming his initial surprise. He safely conned us out of San Francisco Bay and to the open sea. I can’t recall this young man’s name – Class of ‘78 – but I ran into some years later and he still expressed gratitude for the training opportunities he had onboard CAMPBELL. The cadet cruise lasted about four weeks, and except for the prearranged visit to Vancouver, the itinerary was mine to set as long as we got back to Seattle on a specific date. In Vancouver, we were one of several vessels representing the United States at the annual Vancouver Sea Festival. With Bragaw’s OK, I had the cadets march in the Sea Festival parade, among other things.

During the next weeks we sailed up the inside passage to Juneau, for a port visit. One of the 378' WHECs was there as well – can't recall which one – and we sortied out of Juneau the same day. Their skipper, CAPT Bennie Bacon, perhaps, agreed to do a replenishment at sea exercise with us, as a training exercise for the cadets. Steaming south along Admiralty Island, we conducted the UNREP with the cadets handling the deck functions under our BMC's guidance. I had a cadet conning the ship, and a second one controlling shaft RPM to keep us "on station." During the maneuver, a fishing boat chugging up from the south seemed intent on aiming directly for us, so we did a little "formation steaming", changing course in two degree increments, to avoid a close encounter. Finally, we did an "emergency breakaway", not necessary, but for training purposes. It went well, and was a good training experience. While in Alaskan waters I located a few foreign fishing ships and held tutorials for the cadets on how they fished, what species they were after, and what the laws were regarding regulating their fishing. Though we weren't deployed on a fisheries patrol, I sent a boarding party to inspect one of the Japanese vessels and sent a couple first classmen along.

We anchored in a bay close to Sitka and let cadets and crew fish. They caught a few salmon and loads of red sebasti, often called red snapper by locals (though they really weren't). We had an awesome fish fry that evening! And I cleaned lots of fish!

We allowed the cadets as much hands-on opportunity as we could, and for the most part it seemed successful. I felt reasonably satisfied with the cruise when we debarked the young men in Port Angeles. CDR DeGraw seemed satisfied as well, and was the apparent originator of an official "letter of appreciation" to CAMPBELL from the Academy commandant, citing our efforts to give the cadets "unprecedented opportunities" for training and seagoing experience. I hope that was true!

CAMPBELL's next deployment was one for which the crew likely had little enthusiasm. We performed an ocean current study in the Gulf of Alaska over a 30-day period, making deep-ocean Nansen casts in a preset pattern across the Gulf. It was tough work, conditions often less than optimum, streaming sets of Nansen bottles into the deep ocean to take water samples at various depths. The bottles measured salinity and

temperature, and the samples perhaps rendered other useful data. We had a detachment from the Coast Guard Oceanographic Unit at Woods Hole, Massachusetts, who monitored our work, collected the samples, prepared the Nansen bottles, etc. Those poor folk worked day and night, I think. But we completed very close to 100% of the scheduled casts, and were again cited for outstanding performance. It was a grueling four weeks.

CAMPBELL at that time was not being deployed on Alaskan foreign fisheries patrols (ALPATS) because of the perception that there were no places to refuel her in Alaska – we burned NSFO (Navy special fuel oil) which is closer to old Navy “bunker C” fuel than it is to diesel. Navy steamships used that fuel at the time. However, I knew that the fuel used in the heating/electrical plant at Kodiak was perhaps identical or close to it. LCDR Doherty researched it, and agreed we could refuel in Kodiak without problems. Discussions with the folk at COMPACAREA in San Francisco still yielded reluctance on sending CAMPBELL up there. We were assigned to foreign fisheries deployments along the west coast – Washington, Oregon and northern California. While those patrols surely had importance and value, I really wanted to get back into the ALPAT business in the Aleutians area. VADM Austin (Red) Wagner was the PACAREA commander, and I had served on his staff in Miami two years earlier. I also knew he had sailed on CAMPBELL during World War II as an ensign, and was aboard during the ramming and sinking of a U-boat during his tour. I wrote him an official letter asking for a “trial” deployment on ALPAT of 30 day duration to see how we performed. Later in my tour, he and his staff agreed.

In late summer/fall 1977, a federal judge in Seattle (Judge Boldt) made a court ruling that Native Americans of the Pacific Northwest were entitled to and guaranteed certain shares of traditional fisheries and seafood – salmon, steelhead, etc., as well as shellfish – as an implied right from their traditional lifestyles, etc. It was an unpopular ruling, and created great stress between Native American and non-native fishermen. Coast Guard units became involved in domestic fisheries matters for the first time that I know of.

During one of those patrols off the Pacific Northwest coast we boarded a number of Russian fishing ships and inspected their logs, processed fish in their freezers, etc. By 1977-78, the U.S. had adopted its own 200-mile economic zone in the waters adjacent to our states and territories, and foreign vessel fisheries in these zones was heavily controlled. The foreign ships were licensed specifically for certain species of fish, and had quotas assigned. Some of the Russian ships were also “partnered” with U.S. trawlers, and the U.S. vessels delivered fresh catches directly to the Russian vessels while at sea. Patrolling these fisheries was tedious and time-consuming, and our boarding parties spent a lot of time inspecting catches and reviewing catch records. While I felt our work was effective, I also felt the foreign vessels off the west coast were over-regulated – boarded too often in some cases, and there was no apparent liaison between the Coast Guard cutters performing the mission. I adopted the process of sending a detailed summary of our patrol activity to COMPACAREA and to whatever cutter was “next up” to be on scene. I called it the “passing the baton” report, and it was well-received.

We were preparing for one of these PAC NW two-week patrols in the spring of 1978. My father had just undergone surgery for a blood clot in his leg, and I had returned from visiting him in the hospital in eastern Washington. My wife remained there to look after Dad when he was released. The day before the patrol, my wife Ruth reached me by phone and told me Dad had unexpectedly died in the hospital. I conferred with Bill Rohrer and asked him if he was OK with taking the ship on patrol as acting CO. He assured me that he was, so I called CAPT Al Manning, 13th District Operations Officer, and asked for leave, letting him know that Rohrer was, in my opinion, qualified for acting command. Manning gave the OK, and I left for eastern Washington. Bill took the ship out for a week, returned and picked me up midway through the patrol. When Rohrer was transferred, I was pleased to recommend him for WMEC/WHEC command in a subsequent assignment.

About three years later, when I was serving on the 17th District staff, Bill called me one day. He was then serving as the senior Coast Guard rep. At El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC). He had applied for consideration by the “command at sea” selection

board and had not been selected, he said. Bill asked if I thought it might help to apply for XO duty on a WHEC or icebreaker, in order to get a second shot at command at sea. I told him I thought it was worth a try, if he had the “stomach” to be a major cutter XO again. He said that he might give it a try. The next day, he called me again. He had called his detailer in HQ to discuss an XO afloat assignment. His detailer asked him if he wasn’t interested in a CO assignment! Apparently they had failed to notify him that he had been selected for afloat command. He was then assigned to USCGC CONFIDENCE still home-ported in Kodiak, -- an assignment that he was well suited to.

During one of those patrols – fall of 1978, I think, a severe and unexpected storm raged down on the Oregon coast. The Coast Guard ultimately deployed just about all our vessels, boats and helicopters to assist vessels of various size caught out in the storm, most of them commercial fishing boats. CAMPBELL was detached from fisheries patrol and directed to assist. We located a disabled fishing vessel well off-shore, and took it in tow toward the coast. En route, we encountered a 44-foot motor lifeboat from one of the Oregon SAR stations also towing a disabled boat. The young coxswain of the MLB was having a tough time of it, one of his propellers disabled by having a towline wrapped in it. But we kept an eye on them and escorted them as well. About dusk, we heard a radio distress call from a fishing boat somewhat to the south of us – vessel taking on water and the sole man onboard said he was abandoning the boat and going into the water. Other USCG units responded to locate the man, but by dark hadn’t found him. We delivered our disabled vessel to another 44-foot MLB off one of the central Oregon river bars, and it was safely towed across the bar by the 44-foot MLB and an old 36-foot MLB acting as a stern “drag.” It was remarkable seamanship displayed by these MLBs and the SAR station’s BMC, who was directing the timing of the bar crossings – directing his boat crews to “shoot the bar” between breaking swells on the bar. It was quite a night!

By daylight, seas had calmed somewhat as we were released from SAR duty to resume our fisheries patrol. As we steamed south, we encountered USCGC VENTUROUS, a 210-foot WMEC, setting up to conduct a search for the man who had abandoned his vessel the night before. I called the VENTUROUS CO and offered to join in the search,

telling him to retain on-scene command (I was the senior officer) and to use us as a search asset. He agreed, and we set up a dual ship search pattern aided by a HH-3 helo from Astoria Air Station. As we commenced our portion of the search, I was pleased to note we had perhaps 10-15 volunteer sets of eyes on the bridge and flying bridge, using every set of binoculars on the ship. I inwardly thought we were likely on a “body search”, even though the missing fisherman had reported he had donned a survival suit before abandoning his sinking boat. Perhaps 45 minutes into the search, one of our lookouts spotted something in the water – we headed closer – and sure enough, it was a man in the water, waving at us! We maneuvered alongside, dropped a scramble net, deployed a swimmer to help the man get out of the water. I was astonished to see him clamber up the scramble net without assistance!

After his condition was assessed by our corpsman, I spoke with the man and offered him a hoist to the HH-3 and a quick airlift back to Astoria, where he was from. He let me know in no uncertain terms he had no intention of doing that, and didn’t care if my next port call was Honolulu. No helicopter ride for him, he said! The fellow was in remarkable shape – in his 50s – hungry and thirsty, but otherwise OK. He had survived nearly 24 hours in the water clinging to a large plastic fish float, and had seen several helicopter passes and a vessel nearby before dark the night before, but they failed to see him. He told me his goal was to swim ashore if need be – but we rescued him over 10 miles offshore! I elected to take him to Coos Bay, which wasn’t far south of us and on the way back to our fisheries patrol area, but my operational commander ordered us to deliver him to Astoria. The man’s survival had created considerable public interest, and news media was involved at this point.

When we arrived in Astoria, there were press folks from several newspapers and TV stations. Our rescued “passenger” was quite a celebrity for awhile. I was later even interviewed by a reporter from the “National Examiner,” concerning details of his survival and rescue.

One series of incidents involving a young seaman and his use of marijuana sticks in my mind, though his name no longer does. This young fellow, a native of the Seattle area,

was known to be a drug user, probably marijuana, but we had so far failed to catch him. He was suspected of smoking pot on board and underway, which I didn't tolerate at all. I suppose some of us were a little bit less worried about the recreational use of marijuana while on liberty, and pragmatic enough to realize that we likely weren't going to catch those users in any event. However, word began to circulate that this young fellow was dealing in the illegal drug as well as using it. Finally, a "source" leaked to the XO, LCDR Bill Rohrer, that the seaman was going to Seattle over the weekend to make a "buy." Bill was ready to try and apprehend him on return. And sure enough, he was caught at the gangway with a significant amount of the "weed." On a Saturday night, Rohrer informed me of the "bust." The OOD, ENS Whitmer, I think, confined the young man to the ship, confiscated the "stash" and locked it in his stateroom safe. The next morning, the stateroom safe was missing! These small safes in some cases weren't even bolted down – just pushed into a desk alcove. LCDR Rohrer got the local police involved, and the young seaman eventually admitted he had taken the safe, but refused to say what he had done with it. Later that day the safe was found on the rocks near the ship's bow, at low tide. The seaman was disappointed, but hardly contrite. "It was my stuff, sir! I had a right to take it back" was his reasoning. There was a certain humor in the whole thing, in a way. After conferring with Rohrer, district staff folk et. al., we decided to send the young man to our Coast Guard Drug and Alcohol Treatment Program, held in Alameda, California, at the Coast Guard training center. The charges against him were held in abeyance pending his treatment, terms to which he willingly agreed.

The young man returned to duty onboard CAMPBELL after completing the treatment program of about two months duration. I "debriefed" him shortly thereafter, and among other things asked him if he felt the program was successful. His response was rather astounding. He said he was pretty sure he'd never take a drink of alcohol again as long as he lived – but that use of marijuana was a different story. He admitted he was still "using" and had made his first "score" in downtown Oakland, California on his first liberty while in rehab – perhaps five weeks into the program! He said quite candidly that he likely would keep using the stuff – he said he NEEDED it! I suppose it was a psychological addiction, since the science claimed using marijuana wasn't highly

addictive from a physical standpoint. I gave up on the young man. After discussions with LCDR Rohrer, we proceeded with an administrative discharge, declaring him unfit for service. I felt frustration and failure over that – we simply turned him back into society, probably to become someone else's problem – but there seemed little else to do.

During summer 1978, CAMPBELL was detailed to participate in Canada's Captain Cook Bicentennial celebration, marking the 200th anniversary of Captain Cook's exploration of the Pacific Northwest, Puget Sound and some of the inland islands of western Canada and the U.S. It was quite an international event, featuring a gathering of sailing ships of all kinds, and USCGC EAGLE, the Coast Guard's large three-masted sailing barque, was deployed from her Connecticut homeport to participate. CAMPBELL was assigned to escort EAGLE and the other participating sailing vessels on a transit from Victoria, B.C. to Vancouver, B.C. EAGLE was commanded by CDR Paul Welling (Academy '59), and I remember being really impressed with Paul's skill at sailing EAGLE. Paul and his ship, crewed largely by Academy cadets on summer training, put into Port Angeles harbor the day before the gathering of sailing vessels, where I met him for the first time that I can recall. Welling went on to be a vice admiral before he retired.

On the appointed day, we "formed up" the sailing ship parade, sailing vessels of all kinds. CAMPBELL assumed the "point", followed by EAGLE and the rest of the sail vessel entourage. It was a pleasant summer day, but with only light winds, and progress was slow. Up in Rosario Strait I contacted CDR Welling via VHF radio, got him onto a Coast Guard-only channel, and suggested he "crank up" EAGLE's diesel engine to add some speed to our transit. He was reluctant, and I could understand that – Paul wanted to take his ship up into Vancouver Bay on sail only, as Captain Cook had done 200 years earlier. But I reminded him that there were thousands of folks likely waiting to see our sailing ship parade enter the bay and moor, and that darkness would spoil that for everyone. He agreed, and we proceeded at a somewhat faster pace. I was "hangin out" on the bridge, enjoying the trip and the panorama of sailing vessels – when the cry "Man overboard! Man overboard starboard side!" echoed up from the main

deck . I ran to the bridge wing, and sure enough, there was a sailor in the water astern. We sounded the alarm and I started a Williamson turn to starboard. EAGLE, like us, was preparing to launch a boat but I told them we'd complete the rescue. At that point, a small RCMP patrol craft called us via VHF and the operator said, "I say, skipper, would you prefer we pick your chap up for you?" And they did. We got the young fellow back onboard. He was examined by the corpsman and evaluated by the exec,

LCDR Bill Hain (Academy '68). Bill advised me that the young fellow, a fireman apprentice who had very recently reported aboard, was despondent and seemed suicidal – which was his apparent reason for jumping overboard. We placed him under observation. After arrival in Vancouver, I had him taken under escort to the Public Health Service hospital in Seattle, for observation and evaluation. I later learned that the mental health "expert" found him non-suicidal and he was taken to Coast Guard Base Seattle. A day or two later he slashed his wrists and nearly bled to death. I later learned that his father was a retired Navy chief boatswain mate, and apparently really wanted his son to follow in his footsteps . The young fellow really didn't want to do that. But I guess he joined the Coast Guard – became a fireman apprentice (engineering trainee) but was totally unhappy. I talked with his father in San Francisco via I phone, advising him we were discharging his son in an administrative (no fault) action. The father was not pleased and accused us Coast Guard folks of somehow "ruining" his son. He wanted no part of my suggestion that the boy was in no way interested in, nor suitable for, a military career. I sometimes wonder what became of him.

Speaking of "jumpers" – guys who intentionally jump overboard – we had one other in the first year I was onboard. We were on fisheries patrol off the Oregon coast. LCDR Bil Rohrer came to the cabin one morning and described problems he was having in assigning a petty officer to be the ship's master of arms. That is a "day" job mainly involving running the crews' mess deck – overseeing the messcooks who clean and clear tables, etc., and also in charge of good order and discipline during meals. Usually a first class petty officer from deck division is assigned the job. We were short of petty officers for some reason, and Bill felt he needed to "dip down" and assign a third class petty officer – a gunners mate fairly new to the ship. He didn't like the choice much, and

the young third class wasn't happy with it either! But I gave Bill the "nod" to proceed. Two or three days later the entire ship's company (except watchstanders on duty) were mustered on the fantail for daily quarters and training. As Bill was taking reports from the division officers, I caught sight of someone running along one of the old weather balloon launching ramps overhead, above the fantail, and then dive overboard into the water! Or did he jump? I can't be sure.....but he was overboard! Cries of "man overboard, port side!" were shouted by numerous crew members as we all ran to "man overboard" stations. I recall that the run from the fantail to the bridge, including the ladders up, seemed a terribly long and slow journey.

I took the conn - executed a Williamson turn toward the man in the water – and we launched a boat to rescue him, all of which happened very quickly. I watched the boat crew pull the man aboard, then saw one of the crew start to punch the fellow! The boat coxswain apparently ordered him to stop, as he did so right away. I guess the boat crew fellow just "lost it" with anger over the "jumper's" stupidity – launching a boat in a seaway to recover a man in the water is at best a risky enterprise. They returned to the ship, and we recovered the boat safely. Sure enough, the "jumper" was the 3rd class gunners mate Bill Rohrer had assigned as mess deck master-at-arms. I guess that was his way of protest for what he thought was an unfair assignment.

During my tour onboard, we deployed twice to train with the Navy at Fleet Training Group San Diego. Our second training event was pretty interesting. I was determined to seek and secure an engineering "E" (excellence) rating, having failed to do so a year earlier. Our main problem was satisfying the Navy that we could set material condition ZEBRA with sufficient speed and water tight integrity. CAMPBELL, at age 43 or so, had lots of valves, hatches, ventilation openings, etc. that had to be successfully closed and show no signs of leakage. Our crew had been working on the fittings off and on for months, and we had them in pretty good shape – but there were just so many of them to close and secure. So each day when the Navy training staff embarked, we'd promptly set Condition ZEBRA in a timed drill. Day after day, our score was not satisfactory. LT Bob Dorfler and his engineers had done a good job of making all the valves, hatches, fittings and doors work well, but there were so MANY of them to close. It was basically

an “all hands” chore. We had a couple lectures and training sessions on our own, exhorting all hands to do their best. I kept requesting the Navy to conduct the drill each day, even though their training leader admitted he thought we were wasting our time. But our persistence paid off! Perhaps 2-1/2 weeks into our training, we passed the drill with a good mark. And CAMPBELL earned her engineering department “E”! We earned others as well – seamanship, gunnery, operations – close to a “clean sweep.” We had a proud and capable crew. Even though the ship was old, its spirit was young.

Late in my tour, COMPACAREA scheduled us for an ALPAT cruise of thirty days duration. Not long enough for a good patrol, in my opinion – but better than none at all. It was common practice for out-of-district cutters to call in Juneau, Alaska (17th Coast Guard District Headquarters), but I opted to sail straight to Kodiak to embark a National Marine Fisheries agent. We had “topped off” our fuel just before we deployed, which included about 10,000 gallons of diesel fuel – only useable in our small boats and our emergency electrical generator – and perhaps 8,000 gallons more than we needed! We made a “speed run” to Kodiak, embarked our agent and topped off our fuel tanks, then headed to the Aleutians and southern Bering Sea. Weather was generally lousy, but we made a number of successful boardings and inspections. We utilized the Zodiac inflatable boats, which we were able to launch in fairly rough seas. Our boarding party would enter and exit the boats using a scramble net. Meanwhile, the 378 also on patrol seemed to be hunkered down south of the Aleutians, avoiding the lousy conditions in which we were operating. Not any finger pointing intended – the 378s just didn’t have the hull design to ride comfortably in those conditions. As we were heading from the southern Bering Sea headed back to Kodiak, we encountered one of the Seattle-based 378s arriving on station, commanded at the time by CAPT A.J. “Axel Jack” Hagstrom, a “mustang” like me, who had commanded CAMPBELL three years earlier. We chatted over VHF exchanging info, and in the course of the conversation I asked “Axel Jack” how he liked being CO of a 378. His response was classic. “Hell, Dick” he said, “these danged 37’s were made by Mattel, I think!” (Mattel was/is a large manufacturer of toys and models).

Our patrol was a successful and productive one, not lost on the COMPACAREA and

CCGD17 folks, and CAMPBELL sailed on additional ALPATS under command of CDR David Cunningham (Academy '60) who relieved me around July 1st, 1979.

I neglected to mention an incident that happened in Juneau in 1977 while making the port call there with Academy cadets onboard. We were moored outboard of a 378 (the one we did a training UNREP with). In lieu of we two skippers calling on the district commander as was usually customary, we were informed that RADM John B. Hayes (not long later promoted to admiral and Commandant) would pay “unofficial” visits to the two ships. We coordinated with the 378 who was supposed to give us a “heads up” when RADM Hayes was ready to leave them and come aboard CAMPBELL, so I could properly meet and greet him at the gangway. In the meantime, CAPT Robert Lucas (then serving as chief of operations division, CCGD17) had come aboard to visit me and CAMPBELL. Bob and I had known each other for years – since HQ 1965 or so – and he had a fondness for the old 327 cutters as well. He and I were in the cabin chatting and having coffee, interrupted by a knock at the door, and then my OOD ushered RADM Hayes in! I was shocked and mortified – and Bob Lucas was likewise embarrassed! I apologized to RADM Hayes for failure to meet him at the gangway, saying our communications had somehow fouled up. He seemed to shrug it off, but I suspected he was less than pleased. We had a decent chat, during which Bob Lucas excused himself and headed back to his office. Later in the day, I received a phone call from CAPT Paul Yost (Academy '51) who was serving as 17th District chief of staff. He let me know that RADM Hayes was less than impressed by his visit, and that failing to meet him at the gangway was indeed poor protocol. Yost made rear admiral soon thereafter, and became commandant of the Coast Guard in 1986. Seems I irritated two future commandants in “one fell swoop”!

As my tour wound down, I started looking for clues on where my next assignment might be. Something of a reality check began to set in. Billets open for captains were not in great abundance. I wanted to avoid an east coast assignment if I could – particularly headquarters. I reviewed the rules for being selected (again) by the “command at sea” selection board, which was to soon convene. The only rules that applied were that candidates had to have two or more years in current assignment and desirous of a

command. There was nothing in writing that precluded back-to-back command at sea assignments. So I composed a letter to the board via channels, asking for consideration for selection for command at sea as an O-6. (I'd been promoted in August, 1978, a little over a year into my CAMPBELL tour). To my surprise, I was selected by the board in the early spring of 1979. I later learned that the board chairman was CAPT Richard Malm (Academy '51) whom I had known since 1960 or so, and had been my immediate superior in two assignments. Dick later told me that being selected by the board was one thing – being assigned a ship “back to back” was another – but that as chairman of the board, he said I was correct. I was eligible for selection, and my credentials were indisputably good enough to be selected. He also noted that the board selected more officers for command than there were afloat billets available.

One billet that was available was that of Engineering Division Chief, 17th District, Juneau. By then, CAPT Bob Lucas was chief of staff there. We were permitted, in those days, to solicit support from the superior officer over the billet to which we sought assignment, so I communicated with CCGD17(dcs) (at the time, CAPT Robert Lucas '52) and asked for the job. At the same time, I submitted an officer assignment and data sheet asking for that same assignment. And that is where the Coast Guard sent me summer 1979. CAPT Richard Sardeson (Academy '56) got the Seattle-based 378 that I might have asked for, and later told me he thought I would have had the “inside track” had I asked – but then, as now, I thought “back-to-back” afloat CO tours can be a pretty grueling scenario for an officer – and I still wouldn't recommend assigning an officer to two consecutive tours. I'll never know if I would have been assigned afloat again from CAMPBELL, but one of my lifelong regrets is that I didn't get to command one of those racy cutters, at the time certainly the “thoroughbreds” of the Coast Guard fleet. And I managed to “screw up” a second chance a year and a half later.

CDR Dave Cunningham relieved me in July 1979, and Ruth and I moved to Juneau.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

SEVENTEENTH DISTRICT STAFF

July 1979 – October 1980

Ruth and I flew up to Juneau in May, 1979 and I attended a District civil rights seminar, arranged by the gentleman I was relieving, CAPT William Devlin (Academy '56). Bill showed us his home, which he hoped we'd buy, but it just wasn't a "fit" for us – rather too large, for one thing. But we did find a modest home in the Mendenhall Valley just outside of Juneau.

I surely hated to relinquish command of CAMPBELL a few weeks later, but I suppose that puts me in the ranks of many other officers over the years. By the time I reported in at Juneau, Bill Devlin had departed for his next assignment. District commander at the time was RADM Robert Duin (Academy '48) whom I knew just slightly from years past – in HQ, I think. RADM Duin was (and is at this writing) a fine person, gentlemanly and easy to get along with. His wife Phyllis was (and is) a lovely person, warm and affable. Chief of staff was CAPT Edward Nelson Jr. (Academy '53). I knew his son Darrell (Academy '77) from an encounter in Seattle a year or two earlier, and met CAPT Nelson at an ALPAT conference in Seattle some years earlier when I was on CONFIDENCE. CAPT Nelson's wife Joyce was a fine lady as well, whom we enjoyed greatly at a number of social events during the next year-and-a-half.

Others on the staff included CAPT Verne Cox (Academy '54) Operation Division Chief, CDR Robert Cozzolino, a reserve officer in the Comptroller Division slot, branch chiefs in my division were CDR Robert Cassis (Academy '61), Chief Electronics Engineering Branch; CDR Robert Eddy (Academy '61) Chief, Civil Engineering Branch, and LCDR Dave Prosser (Academy '67) Chief Naval Engineering Branch. I soon learned that these three fine officers had their branches well under control, and hardly needed a division chief at all!

As a “newly minted” captain fresh from command at sea, I am willing to admit that my ego was pretty active. Being CO of a ship kinda’ does that to a fellow, and I had just been selected by a second command at sea board and just received my third Coast Guard Commendation Medal – ego boosting events, I think. Therein lay some of my problems during the next year-and-a-half, I’d say! As I stated earlier, the three branch chiefs in the division were very competent. That tended to make my duties quite easy and simple – in fact to the point of boredom, from time to time.

A collateral duty of mine was District civil rights officer, and that led to a rather unique problem in Alaska. The only prevalent minority group in Alaska was the native American population. By 1979, Alaska and federal law had adopted the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and follow-on regulations which had established native corporations and otherwise provided native Americans with assets of their own. It was difficult to hire Native Americans and other minority group people in Alaska – the federal government just didn’t pay enough. Even the State of Alaska had higher wages for comparable jobs. So when the Coast Guard Chief of Civil Rights visited on an inspection, we were criticized for lack of minority employees. I had something of a difficult time explaining the problem to him.

One ongoing problem in my jurisdiction was the industrial base at Ketchikan, Alaska. One of the base’s major functions was to provide a wide variety of maintenance and repair support throughout the district, including navigational aids and buoys, small boat maintenance and overhaul up to and including our WPB cutters. The repair and maintenance facility was operated under what was then called the industrial accounting system, and was supposed to be “self supporting” – i.e. units that were served with repairs, etc., were “charged” for the services rendered. However, the facility didn’t operate with very good efficiency, and the overhead rate – therefore the hourly rate for various assigned jobs – was very high. It was really difficult to “get a handle” on the problems to make the industrial base a “better bang for the buck.” The engineering branch chiefs were reluctant to use the facility, but my view was that we really needed the base’s capabilities. We had skilled civilian and military people

in their work force that knew our problems, were responsive to urgent repair needs, etc. One problem there was that the industrial manager – a GS-12 civilian (and a rather nice man) was not very effective. The Base Ketchikan base commander – a captain – was also a group commander, with operating units to manage and operate, and really viewed the industrial base portion of his command as being under control of the district engineering chief – namely me. With the help of folks in the district finance division, namely Mrs. Jean Overstreet (wife of the Mayor of Juneau, incidentally), I tried for a year to improve things. My success was limited at best.

I did achieve two things. I coerced the engineering branch chiefs and others in the district to fund projects and repair work at the industrial base, therefore employing the work force more heavily. That tended to drive the overhead rate down a little. Then I was able to delete the civilian billet of industrial manager and get it changed to a military billet. I believed a Coast Guard military engineer would in general be a more effective manager of the facility. The transition didn't occur until after I left Juneau but I later learned that first military industrial manager – LCDR Jon Thulin (who served with me on CONFIDENCE 8 years earlier) was very effective.

One big issue of the time was the management of fuel money, and how it was done in 17th District. Fuel funding was delegated to the various units – ships, air stations, SAR stations et al as a part of their quarterly OG30 operating funds. I rather disagreed with this policy for a couple reasons:

1. Unit commanders had to make operational decisions based on available fuel funds, but the decisions were often not theirs to make – ALPAT patrols and flights were controlled at the District level, SAR missions were unpredictable – and finally fuel prices were volatile (as they remain today).
2. Some unit commanders were better at (or luckier at) predicting fuel requirements. Sometimes having excess funds, these certainly didn't get "returned." Hence the ole saying "fuel funds buy chintz curtains for the wardroom."

Two other situations surfaced regarding fuel usage and conservation. In one case, fuel costs took a huge leap in early 1980. RADM Duin called in his key staff and asked that we “scour the barrel” for money to buy fuel to keep from curtailing ALPAT (fisheries enforcement) and other missions. This including funding fuel for 378 WHECs deployed from other western area districts. I met with my branch chiefs and asked them to come up with a million bucks. They were less than enthusiastic, pointing out the cutting or delaying repair and maintenance was costly in the long run and potentially harmful in mission performance. But they rolled up their sleeves and identified sources to provide the funds from electronics, naval and civil engineering programs and projects.

The second situation involved energy conservation and management. CDR Eddy (ecv) told me two or three times that edicts/guidelines, etc., from Commandant reading fuel conservation were being routed directly from the chief of staff to a LTJG in (ecv) bypassing both me and CDR Eddy, and were items over which this young officer had no control, authority or expertise. He was staffed in civil engineering expressly to run a program of improving energy effectiveness (cooling, heating etc) in various buildings and shore facilities in the district – insulation, energy effective windows, energy conserving HVAC equipment, etc.

We “dodged the bullet” on the first issue. In something of a crisis mode, Commandant eventually reallocated some funds from other districts to help out our 17th District missions, which were really fuel dependent and heavy in usage. However, the underlying fuel management and conservation “problems” (as I perceived them) did not go away. I finally one day sat myself down and wrote a fairly lengthy memo to CAPT Nelson outlining the problems as I saw them. I pointed out that energy management was a duty of the chief, operations division as defined by the Coast Guard “Organization Manual.” I confirmed that energy conservation programs for buildings and structures was an engineering division program funded by multiyear AC&I funds, and our audit program was in progress – but that other fuel management issues weren’t within our authority or even our expertise. However, I volunteered to be the district “energy czar” if he needed one. Well, that memo didn’t thrill CAPT Nelson at

all. He basically rejected it entirely and said he didn't invite that kind of input. I scuttled back to my office tail between my legs.

But the problem didn't go away. Many weeks later, CDR Eddy said his LTGJ was still getting "direct mail" from the chief of staff. However, I talked with then-LT Robert Vail (Academy '72) who was assigned to Operations Division and pretty much ran the allocation of OG30 (operating) money including fuel funds. He and I both agreed that centralized management of the funds would likely work better a lead to more realistic allocations, but said his boss (CAPT Cox) didn't support that approach.

In early summer of 1980, RADM Duin retired as did my old fiend RADM Dave Lath. Both were "discontinued" by the flag board, and I'm sure neither was pleased about it. I wrote Dave a letter, sympathetic and speaking to the "heavy-handedness" in which senior officers were sometimes treated. He replied with a remarkably buoyant and cheerful response. Among other things, he said it was sure better to be passed over as a rear admiral than it was as a captain! And he said most decisions were sound in the service's interests.

About then we received a packet of preparation material from COMACAREA. We were going to undergo an administrative and operational program review and inspection by the area inspection staff. Sure enough, CAPT Nelson "divvied up" the checklists and material and distributed it. The whole packet about energy conservation was sent to the hapless LTJG in (ecv). CDR Eddy delivered it to me. I promptly went to CAPT Cox, gave it to him, and told him he was in fact the responsible officer per the Coast Guard "Organization Manual." Vern admitted that was this role as defined in the publication, which as the forward stated, was not for guidance – but for compliance. I suggested we go see CAPT Nelson and discuss the issue. Cox declined. He told me he was afraid to, that CAPT Nelson would likely be angry with us. Stalemate.

After a few days on consideration, and discussions with Ruth, I decided to request retirement orders. I'd had enough. With 29 years of service, I didn't have much to

lose. So I typed up a simple retirement request and took it to CAPT Nelson. It was dated 1 August 1980 and requested retirement in 90 days.

He was surprised, I think, and asked to discuss it a little. At one point he asked me if he was “part of the problem” – and I simply couldn’t bring myself to talk about the details of that fuel management issue. I simply told him that I didn’t much enjoy engineering staff work, that the management style in the staff was difficult for me, and that Ruth and I were just flat ready to “hang it up.” I had a brief similar discussion with the District Commander, RADM Knapp. My retirement request was forwarded. Incidentally throughout this year-and-a-half we had enjoyed a pleasant social relationship with the Duins, Coxs, Nelsons and others on the staff. We had frequent gatherings, party bridge etc. and I am proud to say we left our office business in the office.

My request was approved and I prepared to “wrap it up.” No relief would be provided until next summer, and I suggested to CAPT Nelson that the E-Div chief responsibility be assumed by him, noting that with the talented branch chiefs we had, he’d probably not notice much difference.

In October, the Area Inspectors were due to arrive and not one bit of work had been done on the energy management section of the administrative review. CAPT Cox wouldn’t take it on. Neither would I, nor could I. In frustration, I prepared a lengthy memo to RADM Knapp describing the problem, providing documentation of events of the last year, etc. I asked him for a private discussion after he had read it. My motives were two-fold: I didn’t want 17th district to take an unneeded “hit” by the inspectors, and I didn’t want to be the “fall guy” in absentia. I never knew how he resolved it. He and I met after he had digested the information. He said he realized he needed to take action, but needed to study the problem a bit.

Did I handle that whole issue the best way? Probably not. My stubborn streak was evident, and I should have been more forthright with CAPT Nelson early on.

On my retirement day, the last day of October, the Area inspectors were onboard and we had a staff personnel inspection. I was formally retired, invited to speak, and gave a little speech outlining the opportunities and career upward mobility available to Coast Guard personnel. I pointed out that I started as a seaman recruit, held 13 different pay grades over the years, and had a wonderfully exciting and rewarding career. I urged the enlisted and junior officer folks to “grab the brass ring” and do meaningful work in a great outfit. To my surprise, the District Commander awarded me my third Coast Guard Commendation Medal. CAPT Ed Nelson’s work, beyond a doubt!

And therein should be the end of this story – but it wasn’t! Turns out the Coast Guard and I still had a ways to go together.

CHAPTER TWENTY

THE LAZARUS EFFECT

Ruth and I left Juneau on the Alaska ferry to Seattle on November 1st, travelled to Seattle and then drove to our new home in Port Angeles, Washington to “settle into” life after the Coast Guard. Port Angeles was a pleasant community that we had enjoyed while I served onboard CAMPBELL in 1977-79. We became involved in local affairs – I was appointed to the city planning commission, active in Kiwanis, etc. I enrolled in the community college and took full time classes centering in on journalism and creative writing, thinking of trying that endeavor as a second career.

CAPT Nelson’s son Darrell was now a Coast Guard aviator and reported in to Port Angeles Air Station in 1981. We met his fiancé Sherrie whom we found to be a charming young lady. I had occasional conversations and exchanged letters with CAPT Nelson, mainly touching base on a “loose end” or two, and letting him know we’d met Darrell and Sherrie. In spring 1982, Ed Nelson was selected for flag rank and assigned as superintendent of the Coast Guard Academy. Ruth and I were pleased for him and his wife Joyce.

In spring 1982, USCGC CAMPBELL was decommissioned. Shortly before decommissioning, her final commanding officer, CDR Richard Wright (Academy ‘66) hosted a “dependent cruise” from Port Angeles to Victoria B.C. and back. Ruth and I were invited for the cruise, and it was a pleasant, if nostalgic, day. The ship looked very good, considering decommissioning was imminent. Not long later, Ruth and I also attended her decommissioning. SSC Ernesto Mapano was accorded the honor of hauling her colors down at the appropriate moment. “Ernie” had served for years in Port Angeles, both on WINONA and CAMPBELL. Among the crew that filed somberly off the ship was my wife Ruth’s son, EM1 Gary Lockhart. Gary had transferred from the Navy several years earlier.

It later became apparent that the Coast Guard had no plans to provide a replacement cutter home ported in Port Angeles, and it wasn’t long before the mayor, several city

council members and others started questioning me on this issue. In 1979, the incumbent commandant, ADM John B Hayes, had permitted me to issue a local press release stating that the Coast Guard had made a commitment to keep a cutter in Port Angeles after eventual decommissioning of CAMPBELL (see the section of my service onboard CAMPBELL). I was sympathetic and also a little disappointed that the Coast Guard hadn't kept that commitment – but pointed out to the local authorities that I no longer served in the Coast Guard, that ADM HAYES was no longer the commandant, and that it was likely the Coast Guard had a rather short “corporate memory.” I advised them to discuss the issue with the 13th District commander, and possibly try to enlist help from the local U.S. congressman and perhaps the state's U.S. senators. Still, I felt as though I should try to do SOMETHING!. I had been involved in the issue in 1978-79, when the city funded and built a new pier for the Coast Guard, and when ADM Hayes had agreed to keep a ship there.

Late in 1982 or early in 1983, I wrote a personal letter to VADM Benedict Stabile, now serving as vice commandant. I had known him quite well since the late 1960s. I described the events of the construction of a new pier at Coast Guard urging, and how I had discussed a long-term commitment to keep a ship home ported locally with ADM Hayes. I also opined that the area was a great place for Coast Guard families and also a good strategic location for a cutter. In my letter, I wrote a sentence or two about how I perceived the Coast Guard was having some tough times with the budget wars, and speculated if they may not want to recall me to active duty, since I thought I had been pretty effective at the “prudent use of resources.” It was 80 percent jest and 20 percent wishful thinking, I'd say!

I received an informal reply not long later, in which VADM Stabile said he was sympathetic and had passed my information to the Chief of Staff RADM Paul Yost (whom I had met once or twice, but didn't really know at all). VADM Stabile expressed a desire to travel west and said if he could get to Port Angeles, he'd let me know. I considered his letter a nice gesture, but really expected nothing much to come of it. But at least I had tried.....

Much to my surprise, about two weeks later I received a personal letter from RADM Yost. The gist of it was that he had reviewed my letter and the facts of my information, and agreed that the Coast Guard HAD made a commitment to station a cutter in Port Angeles. He went on to state that there were some tentative homeport changes being considered for some medium endurance cutters, and he would try to get Port Angeles back into the mix for consideration. At the end of his letter he said he wasn't sure if I had been serious about returning to active duty, but invited me to let the Chief of Personnel know if I WAS interested. Well, I was sure surprised about that! By then, I'd been retired for over two years.....

Well, I was interested. To add to the intrigue of it all, the officer then serving as Chief, Office of Personnel was now RADM Richard Cueroni, who had been my "OPS boss" when I was CO of CAMPBELL several years earlier. Well, I just couldn't ignore it! I discussed the issue with Ruth, saying I'd like to respond and volunteer. But I told her I thought it was not likely to lead to anything. Retired officers were rarely recalled, especially senior ones, and then those recalls were often to temporarily fill a short-term need for some special event or project. Ruth told me to go ahead if I wished.

So I wrote a personal note to RADM Cueroni, including a copy of RADM Yost's letter. I did, however, suggest he might want to confer with RADM Nelson before he made any offer. I did, in fact, feel some guilt about "pulling the plug" the way I did in 1980, and thought Nelson should have the opportunity to comment. I sent it off, expecting some sort of polite "thanks but no thanks" response.

In late April (1983) I was still attending Peninsula College, and had come home for lunch. The phone rang. It was RADM Rick Cueroni!. The conversation went something like this:

"Hello, Dick. Rick Cueroni here. How are you?" I stuttered some sort of a possibly incoherent reply, stunned. "I have an assignment for you if you wish. The commandant has approved your recall to active duty. It seems a number of senior engineers are "pulling the plug" this summer and we could use you for a couple years," he said. "What did you have in mind?" I asked. "Well," he replied. "We have several slots here in

headquarters that.....” I interrupted: “No, sir! Not going THERE again,” I sputtered!

He laughed and told me that was just a little joke. He outlined a position at the Coast Guard Research and Development Center at Groton, Connecticut, and asked me if I’d be willing to talk to Ken Wiman about it. I agreed, and he transferred me to Wiman’s office.

It took me a couple minutes to realize that Wiman was now a rear admiral, and chief of the Office of Research and Development. RADM Wiman asked me to outline my engineering and operational background. I did. He seemed satisfied and asked if I could report to R&D Center as soon as possible. The center had been drawn down in anticipation of decommissioning, but the incoming Commandant ADM James Gracey had reversed the decision to abolish the center, and RADM Wiman said that it was urgent to get the center back up to full staffing, which meant beefing up the military complement and also recruiting a large number of civilian scientists, engineers and technicians. The incumbent CO was being transferred and he could use help in getting things going. I said I could make it in about 60 days, so we settled on June 1st.

A little later I received a call from CAPT Karl Luck (Academy ‘64) stating orders for recall were in the mail. He wished me well. Karl and I had served in Kodiak together in 1973-74. He was CO of the 180’ buoy tender in Kodiak at that time.

Not long later, I received another phone call – the voice was familiar, but I wasn’t sure who it was. He at first identified himself only as my “unofficial sponsor” in New London, CT. It was CAPT W.E. Smith (’53- retired), who now lived in the area. And coincidentally, the Coast Guard Academy superintendent at the time was RADM Edward Nelson (’53). He and “Wee” Smith were friends and classmates.

In late May, Ruth and I packed up – the movers loaded our furniture – and we set out for New London in our pickup truck, pulling a travel trailer. We settled into a little RV park quite near the base of the bridge across the Thames River, connecting New London to Groton. House hunting was frustrating, but we did find a home for rent owned by a Coast Guard officer, CDR Swan, who was being transferred from the

Academy to HQ. It would not be available for a few weeks, but we signed a lease anyhow. I reported into the R&D Center, located on Avery Point in Groton – where I had attended Radio Operator school and Electronics Technician school in the early and mid '50'. It was a nostalgic return....

The R&D Center in the '80s was an interesting facility. Commanded by a captain, it also had a Senior Executive Service (SES) position entitled Technical Director. The incumbent CO was a non-Academy officer whom I known slightly for a number of years. The technical director, a recent transferee from Department of Transportation, was a reserve Navy captain, a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, and a naval aviator who had left active duty after perhaps 9-10 years of active duty. His name was Samuel F. Powel II. The R&D Center complement was approximately 155, a curious “mix” of civilian and military people. The organization was divided into three divisions: Ocean Sciences, Physical Sciences and Administration. At the time I reported, assigned as the Assistant Director for Physical Sciences, the Ocean Sciences Assistant Director position was vacant. The position called for a GM-14 civilian. A great many other vacancies existed, both military and civilian. The R&D Center was at nearly half strength, with perhaps 40 civilian and 20 military vacancies.

The incumbent CO informed me that he was close to being transferred – less than three weeks away – and that my first task was to organize the “change of command” ceremony and associated tasks. He also let me know that recruiting and hiring was the next big task, and that advertising the vacancies had already been completed. Applications were coming in, but he said most hiring decisions would be deferred until the new commanding officer took over. Sam Powel and I got along just fine – he was technically my immediate superior – but in practice, we generally functioned as “co-workers”. He was new to the Coast Guard, but it soon became obvious that he was a capable administrator and quite able to function as a leader in our technical and scientific missions. The time passed quickly. CAPT Robert Ketchel (Academy '56) reported aboard and assumed command. We rolled up our sleeves and went to work.

One of our first decisions was to fill the Assistant Director, Ocean Sciences position.

We had a “ton” of applicants, including two incumbents already at the R&D Center – Mr. Dave Motherway, a branch chief, and Dr. Gerd Kleineberg, also a branch chief. Sam Powel and I, along with an SES civilian from HQ, served as the selection committee. I favored Motherway – he had the qualifications, was an oceanographer, and had shown loyalty by “sticking with” the R&D Center as it “drew down” toward closing. We finally did select him. Dr. Kleineberg was also considered, but his background as a forensic chemist didn’t seem appropriate for the position.

In the course of two-three months, we were back up to near full complement. My division had three branches – Electronics, branch chief CDR Roger W. Hassard (Academy ’63); Physics, branch chief CDR James Sherrard (Academy ’64); and Chemistry branch chief Dr. Gerd Kleineberg. Kleineberg was a different kind of fellow, German born but his post graduate college was done here in the U.S. He held a doctorate in forensic chemistry. He treated me very formally, and it was difficult to get into a more relaxed relationship with him. I eventually succeeded, and we became genuine friends. There were a number of active R&D projects underway in the three branches, but they were gearing up to accept more work. CAPT Ketchel and Sam Powel thought that I might be able to “drum up some business” because of my operational experience and because I knew some of the senior staff folks in USCG HQ. So I headed down to Washington DC. to introduce myself to the Office of R&D staff, and to visit various staff elements. My main mission was to try and find some useful ways to “take on” projects that were of value to the Coast Guard. I’m not sure the visit was a “roaring success”, but I did inform quite a few people that R&D Center was “alive and well” and open for business. One of the officers I visited with was RADM Robert Lucas, incumbent Chief, Office of Engineering. He was not in his office when I showed up unannounced, but his secretary (Sharon McClung - a pleasant young woman I’d known when she was a secretary in Naval Engineering Division in the ’60s) said RADM Lucas would return shortly. And he did. He walked into the outer office, I stood to greet him. He did a double take, looked confused. “Gee, Dick!” he said. “I thought you retired!” I explained that I’d been recalled for a couple years. I think he was the one who, in jest, said that I had returned from the dead like Lazarus.

In retrospect, my tour at R&D Center was vastly different from any other previous assignment. We had a fair amount of autonomy, largely constrained only by budget considerations – which were somewhat meager, as typical for the Coast Guard throughout my years of service. We were assigned some specific projects by the Office of Research and Development – but not nearly enough “work” to keep us fully employed. There have been tremendous technological and scientific strides since the mid '80's, but a sampling of some intriguing projects we had are as follows:

LASERS - We experimented with using a LASER beam as a navigational aid. We had one directed seaward from the mouth of the Thames River. Vessels inbound could maneuver until they were underneath the beam, and follow it into the river channel entrance.

SOLAR, WIND POWER: We had a test bed installation of a light house/fog signal station powered by both solar power and wind energy, used to charge battery banks which “ran” the station. An interesting byproduct was that we learned a great deal about the management of rechargeable batteries, information that proved quite valuable. A by-product was our ongoing testing of various commercially-available solar cells.

LORAN C SYSTEMS: We had 32 automated LORAN C monitor sites in the U.S and Canada, studying system stability at various ports in the U.S. This led us to be able to determine the effects of weather, diurnal shifts, etc. We then developed a differential LORAN C system that could provide at least 20 meter real time accuracy. We successfully docked small vessels at a dock at the Coast Guard Academy using a computer-displayed navigational chart with LORAN-C generated showing the vessel's real-time position.

GPS NAVIGATION: during the '80s and beyond, GPS (operated by the Air Force) was a highly classified system that provided mediocre positioning data to non-DOD users. It was encrypted to prevent potentially hostile adversaries from using the system for missile and other weapons attacks against us. With DOD permission, we developed a differential GPS system that would cover only a relatively small geographic area such as a major port. We developed a “test bed” for use on a buoy tender to enable them to

position buoys with great accuracy. We also tested and evaluated early commercial GPS receivers, which at the time were physically quite large and very expensive (up to \$10,000 or more!). Today, anyone can own a handheld device for under \$200!

AEROSTAT: Using radar systems installed in a helium- filled balloon (USAF Aerostat), we developed a deployable detection system to the Caribbean. We tethered the balloon to a leased vessel, observed marine traffic in Caribbean “choke points” such as Mona Passage, and transmitted the data to Coast Guard ships involved in drug interdiction. The data included target classification (size), real time display of track-line, course and speed, and would provide solutions for interception. The system was very successful, and was deployed operationally for at least several years.

MOBILE FORENSIC LABORATORY: We developed a mobile forensic chemistry lab that was built into a commercially-purchased motor home. It was transportable in a C-130 aircraft.

MARIJUANA “SNIFFER” - We developed a method to “sniff” marijuana with a handheld device. It was expensive to build, and DEA/Customs et al were disinterested.

OIL SPILL CLASSIFICATION AND DETECTION: R&D Center developed forensic techniques to analyze oil spills detected from unknown sources. A sample retrieved at sea could be matched to a sample from a merchant ship’s bilges or tanks. It was a highly successful procedure that led to many citations, arrests, etc.

COMMAND AND CONTROL SYSTEMS: R&D Center and the Office of R&D had several projects “pushing the envelope” on command and control systems. We developed a test bed for monitoring small boat operations automatically, giving the SAR station real-time location data on deployed boats. We ‘dabbled” in automated data collection to permit automated completion of such things as SAR incident reports, boat engine maintenance records etc.

COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY: R&D was deeply involved in a huge effort to “automate” the Coast Guard into automation utilizing computer systems. There were a number of separate efforts to effectively utilize computer systems, all using different hardware and

techniques. The offices of R&D and Telecommunications were “lead shops”, and even between them there was disarray and confusion. I recall having a couple private conversations with RADM Al Manning, then the Chief of “T”, in an attempt to “sort things out.” This led to a “summit meeting” of sorts between folks from R&D, T and “O” to try and seek common ground. By the time I left active duty in 1986, there still was no cohesive agreement on how to proceed on this issue. I suspect emerging technology eventually created its own solutions.

Twenty-odd years later, these projects seem pretty passé. Science and technology seem to work at warp speed! However, at the time it was exciting work that I enjoyed a great deal.

In the early spring of 1986, RADM “Howie” Thorsen was in his second year at the helm of the Office of R&D. He was a fine leader for the office and fostered better relationships between R&D Center and his staff. He was genuinely interested in having R&D efforts deliver good, usable developmental work for the betterment of the Coast Guard. He seemed to think my efforts were worthwhile, and held out a tacit offer to have me extend my active duty tour. I talked it over with Ruth, and we decided – even though I enjoyed the job, and we both enjoyed the New London area and our Coast Guard friends – it was time to “hang it up” and go back to the west. I decided not to ask for an extension. I had agreed to serve for two years – that turned out to be three years – and that seemed to be enough to both of us.

In spring 1986 RADM Thorsen paid a visit to the R&D Center and in an “all hands” gathering awarded me the Coast Guard Meritorious Service Medal. The citation had been prepared by CAPT Bob Ketchel and Sam Powel. I was surprised, to say the least. I rather doubt a retired officer on active duty had ever received that award. At the ceremony, I expressed gratitude, but said that I really thought R&D Center would have been better served with a Unit Commendation. RADM Thorsen apparently took that to heart, and followed through with that unit award that summer.

One amusing incident remains fresh in my memory. Back in 1971 or so I grew a beard - more of a scraggly goatee, to be honest. Over the years I called it my “protest beard”

When the incumbent commandant (in 1971) revised the grooming standards and permitted beards, there was considerable opposition – particularly among senior officers (see my narrative of my duty on 11th District staff 1970-72). I still had that beard in 1986 – a habit, I guess. In perhaps April 1986, my wife and I were attending a social function at the Coast Guard Academy. RADM Ed Nelson was superintendent, and he had invited Ruth and I to be seated with he and his wife Joyce at the dinner party. VADM Paul Yost, at the time Commander, Atlantic Area, was seated with us as well. There was high speculation the VADM Yost might be chosen to be the next commandant of the Coast Guard that spring on retirement of ADM Gracey. I was in casual conversation with VADM Yost, when he rather abruptly interrupted me and said that he didn't much care for my beard. I responded humorously, I thought, saying that I agreed that it wasn't much of a beard, but that it was the best I was able to grow! He wasn't amused, and went on to say that if he became able to do so, he would revise grooming standards to prohibit beards.

May 30, 1986 was my last day of active duty. That evening there was a "going away" party for us held at Sam and Jody Powel's home. As Ruth and I groomed and dressed for the event, I impulsively shaved off my 15-year old beard. It seemed to have served its purpose years ago, and it never did look very good anyhow! Surprisingly, most people at the party that night even noticed. Incidentally, VADM Yost became commandant, and in June 1986 "banned" beards in the Coast Guard.

EPILOG

I started putting these memories “on paper” in the late 1990s, if memory serves me. It has been an “on and off” project, interrupted by travel, volunteer work, building a house, moving and temporary lack of incentive. Close to 20 years has slipped by!

Some of the “Coasties” I have written about stand out as people who influenced me greatly, one way or another. CAPT Richard E. Morrell – commanding officer, USCGC NORTHWIND in the early 1950s, was perhaps the most gentlemanly and quietly competent officer I ever served under, and his example influenced me in years to come. RADM Al Manning was a wonderful example of a man with tenacity and integrity. RADM David Lauth ('48) was CO of MINNETONKA – and I was his XO – way back in the late '60s. He taught me a great deal about teamwork and how to motivate those with whom we served. He was a “true blue” friend until his death. CAPT Richard Malm demonstrated uncompromising leadership skills that were worth trying to emulate. These fine officers have “crossed the bar,” most recently Dick Malm who remained a friend until his death in 2012.

Two other flag officers impressed me a lot – VADM Charles Larkin, a thoughtful and considerate gentleman, and RADM Edward Nelson, Jr. RADM Nelson demonstrated the best in being what I called a “company man” – he was ALWAYS concerned about what was best for the Coast Guard and always valued the people he served with as the service’s most valuable resources. He was a highly effective superintendent of the Coast Guard Academy, fostering a strong ethic toward the importance of Coast Guard missions.

Others taught me lessons. BMC Toll on USCGC ACTIVE in 1958 was a fine seaman, and challenged me to grow as a leader. RM1 Sutton on NORTHWIND in 1953 was a fine, friendly fellow who made it to OCS – and by his example motivated me to consider trying to become an officer myself. CDR Donald Chapman challenged me to learn and succeed when I was an ensign in my first assignment as XO on a 125' cutter. I remember some of the “bad” ones as well, and from them I learned to cope with human frailties. I prefer not to mention those I remember in this light.

CAPT James (Jim) Butler was an officer with whom I never served, but became a close friend after I retired in 1980. He unfailingly performed his Coast Guard duties even if they were “unpopular” with his peers – and when he became your friend, he meant it!

CAPT William Rohrer served as my XO when I was CO, CGC CAMPBELL. Bill was a man of many talents and an officer with guts and determination. He battled chronic motion sickness, and managed to beat the malady into submission by force of will. He later served successfully as CO CONFIDENCE, performing ALPATs in Alaskan waters – likely one of WORST places on one of the worst ships for a person with chronic seasickness. Bill lost his battle with cancer in late 2013.

There are many others that come to mind.

There is life after the Coast Guard, and I have had some fulfilling years in city government, volunteer organizations and pursuing travel around the U.S.A as an avid “RV’er”. But my Coast Guard years were the best. I served with many fine “Coasties,” was permitted to help prosecute some missions important to our nation – and had some adventures and fun along the way!

Semper Paratus!

Richard Wight, CAPT USCG (Ret), November, 2013

APPENDIX A

CAPT. RICHARD H. WIGHT USCG (ret)
Service Record Data

TIMELINE AND ASSIGNMENTS:

Born Pasco, WA 4-28-1934

Enlisted at Yakima, WA o/a 1 December 1951

Reported to recruiting station Seattle: 1-3-1952; FFT recruit training

1-4-52 to 3-15-52 Recruit training Alameda, CA

4-1-52 to 6-1-52 USCGC WINONA WPG 65; Port Angeles, WA.
Deck Force

6-3-52 to 12-1-52 Radio Operator School; under training;
Training Station, Groton, CT

12-15-52 to 6-1-55 USCGC NORTHWIND WAGB 282;
Radio Operator;

6-1-55 to 7-3-55 USCGC WACHUSETT WPG 44; Seattle, WA
Radio Operator

7-15-55 to 1-10-56 Electronics Technician School; under training; Groton, CT

1-25-56 to 5-15-56 USCGC WACHUSETT WPG 44; Seattle, WA
Electronics Technician

6-1-56 to 6-11, 5-57 Loran Station Spruce Cape; Kodiak, AK
Electronics Technician

6-20-57 to 11-1-57 Officer Candidate School; under training;
USCG Academy New London CT

11-20-57 to 9-15-59 USCGC ACTIVE WSC 125; Monterey, CA;
DWO; XO

10-1-59 to 3-1-61 First District staff (r) and (e); reserve training; Boston, MA
Electronics Branch

3-2-61 to 4-15-62 Electronics Eng. Station; under training; Wildwood, NJ
under training

5-1-61 to 4-30-62	NE Nav. Facility (LORSTA); Estarrit, Spain; PCO; CO
6-1-62 to 6-1-64	RCA Institute, Manhattan; New York, NY Engineering Student
6-15-64 to 9-5-68	USCG Headquarter (EEE); Washington, DC Electronics Engineering
9-25-68 to 7-15-70	USCGC MINNETONKA WPG 67; Long Beach, CA Executive Officer
7-16-70 to 6-10-72	Eleventh District staff (e); Long Beach, CA Electronics Branch Chief
6-24-72 to 7-1-74	USCGC CONFIDENCE WMEC-619; Kodiak, AK Commanding Officer
7-20-74 to 6-5-77	Seventh District staff (22Se); Miami, FL Electronics Branch Chief, Acting (e)
6-30-77 to 7-1-79	USCGC CAMPBELL WHEC-32; Port Angeles, WA Commanding Officer
7-20-79 to 10-31-80	Seventeenth District staff (e); Juneau, AK Engineering Division Chief
11-1-80 to 5-31-83	Retired Status; Port Angeles, WA
6-1-83 to 5-31-86	USCG R&D Center; Groton, CT Assistant Director, Physical Sciences

Total active service was 31 years 10 months, (3 years served as a retired officer recalled to active duty).

PROMOTION RECORD

1-4-52	Seaman recruit	(E-1)
3-15-52	Seaman apprentice	(E-2)
9-1-52	Seaman	(E-3)
12-1-52	Seaman (radioman)	(E-3)
3-1-53	RM3	(E-4)
10-1-53	RM2	(E-5)
10-1-56	ET2	(E-5)
10-25-57	ET1	(E-6)

11-1-57	Ensign (temp service)	(O-1)	
5-1-59	LTJG (temp service)	(O-2)	
11-7-60	RMC (permanent)	(E-7)	while serving as LTJG (temp)
4-13-61	LTJG (permanent)	(O-2)	discharged from enlisted
service			
6-1-62	LT	(O-3)	
7-1-66	LCDR	(O-4)	
9-1-71	CDR	(O-5)	
8-1-78	CAPT	(O-6)	

AWARDS AND MERITS

Unit Meritorious Service Ribbon
 Restricted (Isolated) Duty Ribbon
 National Defense Service Medal (Korean and Viet Nam conflicts)
 USCG Enlisted Good Conduct Medal (3 awards)
 Expert Pistol Medal
 Arctic Service Medal
 Coast Guard Commendation Medal (3 awards - one with operational "O" device)
 Coast Guard Meritorious Service Medal

Cutterman Device
 Command at Sea Device

FANTAIL USCGC
CAMPBELL (WHEC-32)
ca 1978



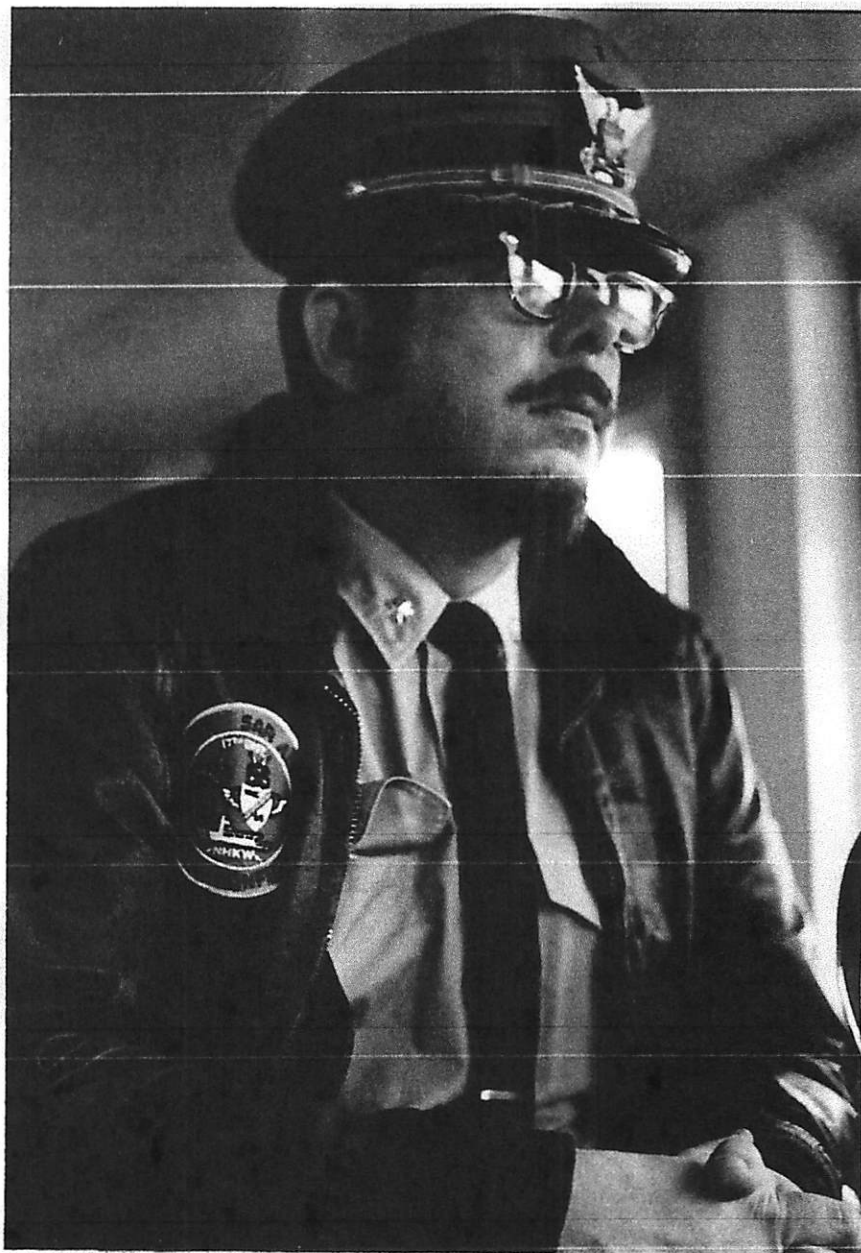
CAPT R.H. WIGHT
17th DISTRICT (e)
JUNEAU, AK 1979





PROMOTION CEREMONY USCGC CAMPBELL
ca 1978

CDR RHWIGHT
USCGC CONFIDENCE (WMEC-619)
1973



CONFIDENCE MOORED
KODIAK, AK 1973





218





storm
section
in today's
paper

Cutter rides out wild night in canal

By DON PAXSON
Executive editor

The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Campbell shared last week's wild winds with the Hood Canal bridge, but the queen of the Coast Guard fleet is back on the job while almost half of the bridges rests on the bottom, more than 300 feet below the surface of the canal waters.

The Campbell was headed for the Navy's facility at Bangor to pick up its regular ammunition supply. The munitions were stored there while the ship was undergoing its annual repairs in a Seattle Shipyard.

Capt. Richard H. Wight, the commanding officer, decided to anchor about 2,400 yards south of the bridge and about 1,500 yards off the west beach of the canal for the night and then go into Bangor about 8 a.m. Tuesday.

Radio weather reports throughout the day warned of the possibility of high winds but the captain said he expected the usual 35-knot variety which occurs in this area.

He did leave orders to be called to the bridge if the winds reached 35 knots.

The winds were pushing 30 knots when he went to the Campbell's bridge about 2 a.m., and he decided he would stay there through the night. The seas were not running high, but the winds continued to pick up.

He ordered one engine on the line as the winds increased. The Campbell was swinging on its anchor through an arc of about 110 degrees, and the heavy winds pushed it, anchor and all, toward the northwest.

By 3 a.m. the captain said a steady 60-knot wind, gusting to 65 knots, was screaming by the ship, which was continuing to drag its anchor toward the Sisters rocks. He ordered



THE DAILY NEWS—3
Port Angeles, Wash., Sunday, Feb. 18, 1979

Capt. Richard H. Wight, commanding officer of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Campbell, displays a regular link of the cutter's anchor chain and the replaceable link which parted early Tuesday

morning when 75 knot winds were w around the ship just south of the Hood bridge.

— Staff photograph by Tom The

the second engine on the line.

Capt. Wight said the situation was getting a little too tight to suit him, and about 4:30 a.m. he ordered the crew to get the ship under way. At that time he said the winds were blowing a steady 75 knots (83 to 84 mph). They had pushed the ship and its anchor 1,700 yards, and it was within 900 yards of shoal water.

Chief damage controlman Will Marlett had just raised his hammer to whack the pelican hook and start raising the anchor when the huge chain snapped.

Both the ship's propellers were turning over, so there was no real problem. Capt. Wight said he could

not see down on the deck where the anchor crew was working, but he knew something was wrong.

He ordered Marlett to the bridge. The captain said, "I never saw a man get to the bridge so fast."

Later examination revealed a replaceable chain link put in last October just above the anchor ring had broken in half.

Actually, the captain said, losing the anchor was more of a break for the ship because it didn't lose time hoisting the big hook.

He said, "It turned out to be fairly routine, but we had some anxious moments there."

It was about 5 a.m., and Capt.

Wight said he could see the Canal Bridge. The span was and everything was still in the lights were off.

The Campbell moved on the canal and swung into the protected Dabob Bay. It r there until checks by the N Coast Guard determined could safely move through where the bridge sections ha

The captain said ship's w an eye out for parts of the t the cutter moved out of th but nothing was seen. I returned to Port Angeles, captain said it would go be and pick up the ammunition

PROCLAMATION

KNOW ALL YE PRESENT WHO FOLLOW THE SEA NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

Let it be known that the following birdmen of IBSEC, during the period of 12 September through 26 September 1973, onboard USCGC CONFIDENCE (WMEC 619), having undergone the trials and tribulations common only to those who sail in a tender ship on troubled waters are hereby duly elected into the ROYAL ORDER OF BLACKSHOES:

LCDR D. L. PRIDDY (8496), USCG
LT E. J. SEARL (43746), USCGR
AD1 D. R. MARTIN (338-251), USCG
AT1 R. V. KELLER (318 730), USCG
AM1 J. F. LAWRENCE (327-589), USCG
AE3 D. W. REED (390-586), USCG
AD3 J. C. DURHAM (392-724), USCG

Be it known that, during the period mentioned above, these fine gentlemen of the sky did indeed fully qualify for membership in the ROYAL ORDER by completion of the following tasks and ordeals:

- Learned to summon the God of the Calm Seas by inserting the head in a convenient bucket or honeybucket, and loudly calling for "RAAALLLPH"....
- Determined through trial and error that "port" and "starboard" were indeed actual relative directions inside the ship, and that proceeding from one direction to the other was indeed faster when coordinated with the uproll in opposition to the direction of travel....
- Found that turning of the strange little wheel in the Pilot House made the pointy end of the ship change it's aspect with regard to the adjacent rocks and shoals....
- Quickly assimilated the useful reality that the source of ... most useable knowledge on this and other ships resides in a sage entity commonly addressed as "Messcook"....

Having learned all these things and many more associated with the Lore of the Sea, the above named gentlemen are hereby entitled to the honorary title of BLACKSHOE. Let this be a warning to those of the ROYAL ORDER who may be tempted to hold them in disdain. Never more shall these new members of the ORDER be addressed as "Zip Zoomies"

Done this twenty sixth day of September, Nineteen Hundred and Seventy Three, by order of the messcooks, snipes, bridge dollies and all other combined members of the ROYAL ORDER OF BLACKSHOES:

RICHARD H. WIGHT
Commander, U. S. Coast Guard
Scribe and Keeper of the Tally
USCGC CONFIDENCE Chapter
ROYAL ORDER OF BLACKSHOES

Hear Ye

So that Peace and Tranquility may remain the natural order of things within that speck of my Kingdom known as Ocean Station November, be apprised of my Ten Commandments and Adjudgments:

I They who relieveth not in the forenoon on the day preceding the Sabbath shall be held in distain, unless the elves dwelling in their bilges have betrayed them enroute to Station, by fouling their machinery.

II They who upon relief, fail to share the freshness of their larder (with milk, vegetables, bread et al), shall be known throughout my Realm as Penurious, and shall have the scourges of mold and rot visited upon their produce and foodstuffs.

III They who offer up only ancient and odorous reels for the Magic Lantern shall have the same visited upon them thrice-fold.

IV They who dares not highline because of slight adversity of the Elements shall be held in scorn by all those present in my Realm, and shall be likened to those of the confectionary posterior.

V They who on station cast not the depths with their Nansens on the morning of relief shall be considered Slothful. They will surely be rendered their just deserts by receiving all manner of harrassment by my loyal suggests, including the Green Monster of the Deep, who dearly loves to snatch at the bottles.

VI They who, upon relief, tarry with the task of assuming the mantel of Ocean Station so they are not able to make the Zulu time ascension in sacrifice to the Gods of the Upper Air, shall be deemed associates with the Gooneys, and shall have the same deference accorded them as is given those lowly creatures.

VII They who, upon relief, suggesteth tedious and laborious exercises and drills shall be adjudged to be eager - beaverish, unless they are shortly to suffer the agonies of Underway Training.

VIII They who, upon being relieved, do not share all their wisdom on events past and future which may aid their successors shall surely be punished by the adversities of my Elements as they proceedeth to their haven.

IX They whom the Gods have chosen to ride the new chariots powered by the noxious gasses shall not flaunt their good fortune over the less - favored brethen lest they be guilty of unseemingly pride. Likewise, those who boil water to make the wind whistle through their rigging shall not give voice to their envy, lest their fates never be improved.

X They who do not willingly meet in the Station Grid as chosen by their predecessors, and at the appointed hour or sooner, shall be held in ridicule by all the subjects of my domaine, high and low.

Hark ye my Words of Wisdom, and be bounded by this covenant now and forever more, for I, Ruler of the Realm and Master of the Depths and Skies thereover, have spoken.

KING NEPTUNE
Monarch of the Main

by His servant,
Davy Jones
DAVY JONES, Esq.
Official Scribe

COMPOSED BY LCDR RH
WIGHT & CAPT DE LAUTH
1969 - DESCRIBES WITH
HUMOR "RELIEF OF STATION"
ON OCEAN STATION PATROLS
CA 1970. ARTICLE IX
REFERS TO (THEN) NEW
378' TURBINE-POWERED
WMEC CUTTERS.

AN 'ASIDE' - THE USCG OFFICER PROMOTION SYSTEM and my confusing experiences with it!

When I received my commission as "Ensign, U.S. Coast Guard" in 1957, it was a commission categorized as "temporary, regular." All ex-enlisted Coast Guard OCS graduates were so designated, and our permanent rank was that which we held before we became officers. Mine was ET1 (E-6). We held no commission "approved by Congress" as did "permanent" officers.

All regular officers, temporary or permanent, were required to participate in an officer promotion examination and education program as outlined in the appropriate Commandant Instruction(s). This program consisted basically of a requirement to complete two promotion examinations per year, offered on three specific dates per year. Exams could be one of several from a long list that included such subjects as celestial navigation, communications, ordnance and gunnery, seamanship, shipboard damage control, aids to navigation and so on. Each of these subjects, with a few exceptions, was prepared for by taking an appropriate correspondence course issued either by the Coast Guard or the Navy. All regular officers of the rank of LCDR (O-4) and below were required to participate, and must complete a minimum of two successful tests per calendar year. If an officer desired, he could take three exams in a year, but that did not lessen the requirement to complete two the following year. The promotion exam requirements were rigid. An officer **MUST** pass two exams per year from the approved list. Failure of an exam merited one try at reexamination, to be taken at the next date offered. Failure to pass the required two examinations each year resulted in an officer being removed from the line of promotion! Failure was the "kiss of death" to a junior officer's career aspirations. Few exceptions, to my knowledge, were granted. Reserve officers were exempted, but were permitted to participate if they so desired, as an enhancement to their promotion/retention prospects.

Both temporary and reserve officers could seek permanent regular commissions

via a structured integration process also outlined in a “Commandant Instruction.” For temporary regular officers who were not college graduates, this process included taking a certain number of the system’s professional-subject promotion exams, completion of a specialized college level assessment examination, and an officer’s personal application for a permanent commission along with a favorable command endorsement.

Early on after I received my temporary commission and during my first assignment on USCGC ACTIVE, I became very familiar with the programs both for promotion exams and for integration. They were complementary programs to an extent – integration exam requirements for professional subjects were all contained in the promotion exam list requirements for LT (O-3) and below. I set out to complete both requirements. The permanent commission integration process was lengthy, requiring at least two or three years to complete. I recall that I was able to complete three of the integration exams in the first 18 months, all of which met promotion exam requirements. The integration process requirements also stated that officers integrated at the rank of O-2 or below would be offered seniority in rank amongst their peers at the level currently occupied. Officers in the grade of LT (O-3) or above would be integrated as the most junior officer in their pay grade at the time integration was approved. It was a matter of importance to get a permanent commission before the rank of LT was achieved, to avoid losing “seniority numbers”.

While engaged in this endeavor I was transferred to First Coast Guard District in Boston. While there, I happened to read that chief petty officer exams would be offered in the near future. I approached the district personnel officer, a pleasant and helpful commander whom I cannot name any more. At my request, he queried Headquarters (enlisted personnel division) to see if I could participate in the CPO examination process. I further asked if I could take the Chief Radioman exam in lieu of the Chief Electronics Technician exam, as I reasoned the RMC exam might require less study than the ETC exam. To my surprise, Headquarters said I could apply for either exam provided I completed practical

factors requirements for the specialty I chose. I asked the assistance of the district communications officer, LT Horace Holmgren (Academy '50), and he agreed to examine me for practical factors requirements for Chief Radioman. I subsequently took the exam, and in late 1960 was promoted to the permanent grade of RMC (E-7). My temporary grade was LTJG (O-2). I still have my CPO Certificate dated 31 January 1960, signed by Admiral A.C. Richmond, Coast Guard Commandant.

During the same period I plugged along on the integration process. I took the two-year college level exam on the only date offered in 1960, in the 13th District office in Seattle, after an all-night flight from Boston to Seattle following the abrupt death of my stepmother. I was surprised to pass the exam, and would have delayed it a year except that I faced the prospect of possibly losing seniority in rank if I was promoted to LT (O-3) before integration was approved. I finally completed the requirements and sent in my request for permanent commission in late 1960. I was approved and offered integration as permanent officer in March 1961. I eventually received my permanent promotion to LTJG (O-2) dated 15 March 1961, with date of rank from 1 May 1959, the day I was promoted to LTJG (temporary). It was signed by Douglas Dillon, Secretary of Treasury, "by and for the President".

A curious aside to this story is that some officers in my OCS class, and others given temporary commissions in the mid and late 1950s, who did not seek integration as permanent officers were tendered permanent commissions in the mid 1960s anyhow, without any loss of "numbers." In the interim, they had all received permanent commissions as Warrant Officer (W-2) when they received their temporary promotions to LT (O-3). To this day I feel a little "short changed" somehow!!! They all just didn't have to do as much as I did to get my permanent commission!

But my motives at the time were sound – job security! And it worked.

My OCS class mate Joe Tanguay fell afoul of the system. He failed promotion

exam twice, both while in preflight school, I think. He was a “permanent ensign” for quite some time and lost a couple years seniority. He was by all accounts a fine aviator, an aircraft commander as an ensign. Eventually he was reinstated to the line of promotion and retired as a captain (O-6) after a distinguished career. Joe succumbed to cancer and died in the early 2000s.