



**The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton's (WHEC-715)  
Deployment to Vietnam, August 1969 – June 1970**

**As Told by the Commanding Officer,**

**Captain James H.B. Morton,**

**In Letters called "Family-Grams" to the Folks Back Home**

**Organized and prefaced by RMC (RET) C. Brent Cole**

**(RM3 during the deployment)**

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## Preface

Early in the Vietnam War, it became clear that many weapons, supplies and troops were being smuggled into South Vietnam via its extensive coastline and its many waterways.

Operation "Market Time" was established in 1965 to prevent this smuggling. The Coast Guard was asked to participate in this operation by providing patrol boats and high-endurance cutters to assist the Navy ships and their "Brown Water Navy."

At the height of U.S. Coast Guard involvement in Vietnam, there were 26, 82-foot patrol boats, 5 high-endurance cutters and 1,500 U.S. Coastguardsmen serving there along with an Aids to Navigation Team headed by the cutter Blackhaw, several LORAN stations, explosive loading details and a shipping advisory.

Coast Guard Squadron One consisted of the 82-foot patrol boats. The WHEC's, (255's, 311's, 327's and 378's), made up Coast Guard Squadron Three.

The cutters Bering Strait and Yakutat each made two deployments. All of the patrol boats and the cutters Castle Rock and Cook Inlet were eventually given to the Republic of South Vietnam as part of their Navy.

From 04 April 1967 through 31 June 1972, a total of 30 U.S. Coast Guard WHEC's deployed to Vietnam and assumed duties on Market Time Patrol with Squadron Three.

This is the story of one of them, the USCGC Hamilton WHEC-715, a 378-foot cutter, as told by the commanding officer, Captain James H. B. Morton, in letters he wrote to our families monthly during the deployment to WESTPAC from August 1969 until June 1970.

I found these letters in one of those boxes we all have where we collect memorabilia and promise ourselves that one of these days we'll sort through them. They've resided there for almost 50 years, since being sent to my mother and father. Imagine how surprised I was to find them.

It would be a shame, I think, if such a "Sea Story" was lost.

RMC (RET) C. Brent Cole

Coast Guard Squadron Three Statistics (04Apr1967 to 31Jan1972)<sup>1</sup>

Miles Cruised: 1,292,094

Percent of Time Underway: 62.6%”

Market Time Patrols: 205

Vessels Detected: 69,517

Vessels Inspected: 50,000

Vessels Boarded: 1,094

Personnel Detained: 138

NGFS Missions Conducted: 1,368

Rounds Fired: 77,036

Structures Destroyed: 2,612

Structures Damaged: 2676

Enemy KIA: 529

Enemy WIA: 243

Underway Replenishments: 1,153

Vertical Replenishments: 87

Small Craft Replenishments: 1,516

Medical Civic Action Programs: 131

<sup>1</sup> From “The United States Coast Guard in South East Asia During the Vietnam Conflict,” by Lieutenant Eugene N. Tulich, USCG. It was written for the Coast Guard Historical Monograph Program for the Coast Guard Public Affairs Division, Washington, D.C. (1975).

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The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton's Deployment to Vietnam, 1969-1970

In the Words

Of the Commanding Officer, Captain James H.B. Morton

In this and all of Captain Morton's letters, he mentions various crew members. Each name is preceded by an abbreviation that refers to the member's rank and rating, i.e. "RM3" or "RMCS" or "LCDR." Those abbreviations can be distracting if you are not familiar with military titles. If those ranks and ratings interest you, there's an explanation of them in the appendix on page 61.

Otherwise, the names in the captain's letters will read just as well replacing the abbreviations with "Mr."

*From Captain James H. B. Morton, Commanding Officer, U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton, September 1969, Family-Gram Number One.*

*Dear Families and Friends: This is the first of what is to be a monthly newsletter. The plan is to do our best to keep the families and friends of the men on the Hamilton up on what we are doing. There are a few problems, though. Mail service is slow. Also, of course, certain of our activities are classified. Therefore, some of what we do cannot be printed, and much more will come to you late. But we will do our best to keep you informed.*

*This first letter will be about our trip from the cold waters of Boston Harbor to the tropical "Paradise" and our new base of operations, Subic Bay [Philippines]. The trip was certainly interesting, especially for those who have not been this far west before*

*(or East, depending on your point of view). The trip south from Cape Cod Canal was blessed with particularly fine weather. We just slipped in behind two hurricanes and in front of a spawning third, but all we got were a few gentle ground swells.*

*On the morning of the 27th we anchored off Cristobal, the Panamanian city at the Atlantic end of the Panama Canal. After swearing that we didn't have any rats in our bilges, pet animals, or anybody on the ship with the plague, we were joined by a pilot from the Panama Canal Company and were on our way. The pilot was a salty old cuss who knew everything about anything you could imagine and even worse, he wouldn't stop telling us about it. However, his 20 years experience with the Panama Canal Company made him an excellent guide.*

*The canal is over 50 miles long and is actually made up of two canals with a lake between them. The first set of locks, called the Gatun Locks, is a series of three locks in a row that lift the ship about 85 feet to the level of Gatun Lake. After crossing the lake, we went through the long narrow Gaillard Cut to the next set of locks. Along the banks of this cut is a dense tropical jungle complete with waterfalls, monkeys, and all the sounds of an old Tarzan movie. Then, we dropped 31 feet through the Pedro Miguel Locks into the Miraflores Lake. This lake is only about a mile long and leads to the Miraflores Locks that dropped us 54 feet into another canal. This canal leads to the Pacific Ocean, but we stopped at Rodman Naval Base near Panama City for a little replenishment (fuel and supplies), rest and relaxation. In all, the trip through the canal took eight hours and \$1,300.00 in toll fees.*

*After tying up at a Navy pier, we were briefed by a Navy boarding team. We were warned that because of the political unrest in Panama, nearly every ship has trouble with*

*the local authorities when they hit the town. [Instead of policemen in Panama City, it was the army who was patrolling the streets.] We got a good chance to see Panama City and some of us even got to see some of the native villages that surround the city. Yet, there was not one unpleasant incident. We all saw a lot and learned a lot about Panama. All in all, it was a very good liberty, but not quite long enough before we had to attack the 4,685 miles between Panama and Hawaii.*

*The crossing to Honolulu was long and not too eventful. The weather was great. It rarely rained and wasn't even too hot. There were the continuous swells typical of the Pacific, but this had little effect on the Hamilton, bred for Ocean Station Bravo.*

*The 12 days [from Panama to Pearl Harbor] with little to do gave us a chance to get in a little target practice with the new guns we have aboard. Teams of men were trained in how to use the M-16, M-60, 45-caliber pistol, and 50-caliber machine guns. We even took time out one day to shoot at a large balloon target in the water with the five inch gun, but we didn't hit it. Ensign Chynoweth's team tried to tell us that they weren't really trying to hit it because they didn't want to ruin it. One night we put a small target in the ocean and fired flares from the 81-millimeter mortars to light it up while the machine gun crews shot tracer bullets at it—a real Fourth of July type show.*

*The Medical Department took advantage of the light schedule to continue its shot program. I wonder if it will ever stop. HM3 Deal claims he has given over 700 shots himself since deployment, and he has plenty of help, too. The word is they are just getting a good start.*

*Of course, the Deck Department has been at work putting the Hamilton in the best shape possible. Next month we will be going places where nobody has ever seen a 378-*

*class cutter, and we want her to look as sharp as we can. There is a lot of Navy to compete with in WESTPAC, but we think the Hamilton is ahead of the game. YN3 Ritter and RD3 Clausen painted the name and picture of the Hamilton on two large pieces of canvas. They go along each side of the gangway and really dress up the ship in port.*

*After 12 days at sea, we finally moved into the channel that leads to Pear Harbor where nearly 30 years ago the U.S. Pacific Fleet was attacked by the Japanese. We passed the monument to the USS Arizona and tied up outboard of a destroyer. That began 5 days of well deserved liberty. I think everyone was impressed with the Fiftieth State. [Hawaii had only been a state for 10 years then, since 1959].*

*There are endless chances for recreation and entertainment, swimming, surfing, fishing, golfing, etc., and even a few night clubs for those with interests along that line. The island was strikingly beautiful with its black volcanic rock, abundant vegetation, and deep blue water. But finally, on the morning of the 16th, we had to leave our "island paradise" and head west.*

*The first day out, we brushed up on our helicopter landing procedures. A Coast Guard chopper from Barber's Point, Hawaii, came out and made about a dozen landings. Everything went well and we looked good. After that we practiced our underway refueling technique with a Navy oiler (refueling ship). Again, things went smoothly. I guess all that training in Cuba last summer is paying off.*

*The remainder of the trip west from Honolulu to Guam involved more training to make sure we were ready for the combat zone, more ship upkeep, and more shots for the medical department.*



*Six days out of Honolulu we had to cross the International Date Line. This is a confusing proposition. All the way across the Pacific we have had to move the clock bank one hour every once in a while to keep the local time. This makes for more sleep at night, so nobody complained, except the watch standers who had an extra hour of watch. But now, all of a sudden, we lost a whole day. No September 23 this year. That's a little hard to get used to.*

*It was 11:00pm, September 22, then, an hour later it was midnight again and the next thing it was 12:01 on September 24. If it confuses you, don't worry about it. What it all boils down to is that we are 12 hours later than your time (13 hours after you change to Standard Time). So when it's 8:00pm your time (or Boston time) it's 8:00am (or 9:00 am EST) here the next day.*

*Also associated with the crossing of the line is the Golden Dragon ceremony which many of you have heard about. The general idea is that the Golden Dragon's (those who have crossed the International Date Line before) initiate the Polywogs (those who have not crossed before) into their Royal Order –but not before trials, punishments, and a lot of general harassment.*

*During the 18 hours or so of festivities, Davy Jones (RM1 Elbertson) flew his flag, the skull and crossbones, over the ship. But shortly after the flag was hoisted, a couple of Polywogs (ET3 Guilmette and ET3 Fox) cut the center out of his flag. This did not sit well with the Royal Dragons, and before the initiation was complete, the Polywogs paid dearly. The Royal Barber (RM3 Rasmussen) made a real mess of a lot of people's hair. One of the highlights was when the Royal Dragons decided to wash down the Polywogs*

*with a fire hose. Lo and behold, the Polywogs had a fire hose of their own plus 6 dozen not too fresh eggs. There were no winners; everybody lost.*

*Finally, the Royal Jailers (CWO Cox, ETCP Moore, EN1 Kasiola, SD2 Lagos, SD2 De la Cruz, QM2 Holman, GM2 Schwalm, Gm3 Sharpe, ET3 Singleton, RD3 Marsh, and SN Riley) got things under control and the trials continued. The Royal Prosecuting Attorney (FT3 Schaffel) really had his heart in his job, but I can't say the same for the Royal Defense Counsel (EM2 Flanagan). Lord High Sheriff (QM3 Larder) kept a close watch on the Polywogs as the Royal Doctor (BT1 Dykes) and Royal Dentist (EN1 Irwin) fixed them up with all kinds of foul tasting paints and potions. Also on the court were King Neptune (CSCS Potopowicz), Queen Aphrodashe (BM3 Majkowski), Lord High Wazoo (HM1 Young) whatever that is, and of course, the Royal Baby (GMC Browining). The day ended with no injuries, a lot of funny looking haircuts, and a happy hour.*

*This leg of the trip from Hawaii to Guam was again blessed with mostly pleasant weather. For a few days we were following in the tracks of Typhoon Flossie, but again, we saw only some mild ground swells.*

*A little more than a day from Guam, when most of us could almost smell land again, the Navy Seventh Fleet decided to send us on a mission in the other direction. It took us nearly 300 miles off course to check on a foreign ship. But because of the great speed the Hamilton is capable of, especially when headed for port, we were less than a day late into Guam.*

*We arrived in Guam on the morning of the 27th for fuel. We had to leave again that afternoon for Subic Bay, so we didn't really get a chance to see much. Many of us hit the exchange and saw the great prices we would have in WESTPAC, but I don't think*

*many people bought much. We also got a taste of some really hot and humid tropical weather.*

*On the last leg to Subic Bay, we continued with more training and ship upkeep (no shots for a change). We finally got into a little rough weather the last 3 days of the trip. It rained most of the time and seas ran about 5 feet with 20 to 30 knot winds, but it never got bad. The weather experts ashore assured us there were no tropical storms developing in the area. But as we entered the San Bernardino Straits which cross the Philippines, they announced that there was a tropical storm and then a typhoon in the area we had just crossed. However, by then we were well out of the way.*

*We spent the night of September 30th crossing the straits. The Navigator, LCDR Gray, and I didn't get much sleep I am afraid. The next morning we came out on the western side of the Philippines and started the short run up the coast to Subic Bay. It decided to come up a pretty good blow that morning, but as soon as we entered the bay it settled down and even quit raining for a while. After loading ammunition at the Navy Ammunition Pier, we moved into Subic Bay and tied up next to the Cutter Spencer who we are relieving.*

*Well, this takes us up to October 1st, so I'll stop. At this point, I would like to make one little request. We all like to get mail, and the more often, the better. We should be getting a little better mail service now that we have arrived at WESTPAC. So please write to your man on the Hamilton and the more often the better. James H. B. Morton.*



From Captain James H. B. Morton, October 1969, Family-Gram Number Two.

*Dear Families and Friends: Well, another month has gone by and it's been a busy one for the Hamilton. The first few days were spent getting acquainted with our new boss, Coast Guard Squadron Three in Subic Bay which is part of the Navy's Seventh Fleet. We were briefed by Commodore Scalabrini and his staff and then spent a couple of days getting the ship in top shape for his inspection. Of course, this didn't take much work because she was already well squared away due to the efforts of the whole crew. Everyone is helping to keep the Hamilton looking her best now that we are visiting places where a 378-class cutter has never been. We have had nothing but compliments for the fine appearance of Hamilton wherever we go, both from military and civilian personnel visiting the ship.*

*We also had a chance to get off the ship and look around the Subic Bay area. The Naval Base is well equipped with exchanges, clubs, and athletic facilities. Especially interesting was the B-6 exchange which specialized in foreign made goods. They had a very wide variety of things from all over the world, and they're tax free. Just outside the base is the Philippine city of Olongapo. It is a small city that has to take care of very large liberty parties, sometimes up to 10,000 men. As a result, there are many restaurants and clubs, and most are reasonably priced.*

*We left Subic Bay on a clear calm day. Aboard for our first patrol was the Squadron Three chaplain, LCDR Robert Borden. Chaplain Borden was a welcome addition to our ship, providing not only spiritual guidance to the crew, but many interesting facts concerning the Vietnamese people, their customs and beliefs. The crossing to Viet Nam was uneventful. The gunner's mates mounted the machine guns on*

*deck and made other last minute preparations. Then about 8:00pm, the second day out, an announcement was piped through the ship: "For the information of all hands, we are now entering the war zone." That was important for several reasons. We were then able to start our income tax exclusion, and personal mail also is free in the war zone. But mainly, I guess it meant that after three months of preparation, we were finally there.*

*At first light on the 8th, we relieved the cutter Taney so she could be on her way to liberty in Bangkok. We had several jobs to do. The main one was called Market Time and involved keeping Communist boats from delivering weapons and men to the coast of South Viet Nam. We were stationed just south of the DMZ, so another job was to keep friendly ships from accidentally crossing into Communist waters and to intercept any unfriendly ships coming south across the DMZ.*

*In the war zone, we usually operate under darken ship at night which means no lights at all topside. Believe me, it is really dark. You can't see a thing for several minutes after going topside. Most of the other ships in the area are also dark so there is not much to see on the water anyway. One exception was the hospital ship "Sanctuary" which was operating in our area. It is lit up like a shopping center and can be seen for many miles. You can also see flares and occasional flashes on the shore a few miles away.*

*While in this area, we also try to fill the needs of the eighty-two foot Coast Guard boats, fuel and water, but most of all a chance for their crews to come aboard the Hamilton and relax for a while.*

*We also got our first refueling at sea on our second day on station. We had practiced hooking up before, but this was the first time we actually transferred fuel.*

*LTJG D'onofrio and his crew hooked up the hose just like it said in the book, but something went wrong. When the high pressure pumps on the oiler were turned on, the hose popped off and washed down the decks (and a few people) rather than filling the tanks. This didn't sit very well with the deck crew that spends so much time keeping the ship spotless. However, the problem turned out to be a faulty fitting on this particular oiler, and after a little modification (beating on it with a large hammer), everything went well.*

*On the 11th, we moved south to a new area. On the way we stopped in Da Nang Harbor for a short briefing. It was very foggy and we couldn't see much, but we were very impressed with the large amount of ship traffic in the harbor. After leaving Da Nang, we moved on to the small coastal town of Qui Nhon and much better weather. We anchored and sent the Executive Officer (LCDR O'Brien) and a team ashore to find out just what we were expected to do in our new area. After their briefing, they brought several of the men from shore out for dinner on the ship.*

*We were to do the same Market Time coastal guarding that we were doing to the north and also support the eighty-two foot boats in the area, as well as the Navy's fifty-foot Swift boats when necessary. Also, we were told to be ready for gunfire support missions if they should be necessary. This means firing at targets on land with our 5-inch gun.*

*Things were pretty quiet for the next two weeks. Doctor Breck, our ship's doctor, got a chance to do a couple of MEDCAPS. This stands for Medical Civilian Action Programs and means giving medical attention to the Vietnamese people. We also sent a working party to the Save the Children Hospital in Qui Nhon. Some of our damage*

*control men, DCC Ditmars, DC3 Bolden, and EN1 Miller assembled cabinets and made other things. Yn3 Ritter was there with his trusty paint brush to add his artistic touches and everybody helped paint all the beds in the hospital. They tell me CWO Hickey fell in love there with a cute little three year old Vietnamese girl. LCDR Gray, DCC Ditmars, and ENC Hoskins didn't make it back with the rest, but when they showed up a little later with the supplies for our next happy hour, all was forgiven.*

*We took advantage of the slow action to have a cookout on the flight deck. We had steaks prepared by EM2 Flanagan, CS2 Wallace, BM3 Majkowski, and GM3 Sharpe, along with beans and potato salad. It was delicious. During the festivities, a Navy plane with a loud speaker flew over and seeing the cookout said, "Welcome to the war, Coast Guard," in a somewhat envious tone.*

*On Sunday, October 19th, I got to go ashore for the first time. We anchored off Qui Nhon and several of us went in to talk things over with the commander of the Area Coastal Surveillance Center. Our chaplain also came ashore to catch an airplane back to Subic Bay to join the cutter Dallas. We didn't stay too long because we don't like to stay at anchor any longer than necessary. There is always a chance that swimmers might try to sabotage the ship. We maintain constant armed watches to prevent this, along with the harbor patrol boats in the area for the same purpose. We also throw hand grenades into the water around the ship to discourage swimmers. Later that afternoon, we pulled out to sea again.*

*The next week we continued our usual patrol duties. We were able to send another work party ashore on Monday. We also put a couple of men, LTJG Medeiros and ENS Kiley, on a Coast Guard eighty-two foot patrol boat for a couple of days while*



*several of their crew stayed aboard the Hamilton. One night we got a call from a patrol boat at sea that one of their men had been hit by a machine gun bullet and needed medical attention. We went at nearly full speed for over an hour to meet them. But when we got there, at 2:00am, we were glad to find that he had been only slightly injured. The medical department fixed him up and the next day we dropped him off in Qui Nhon.*

*On this patrol we also had our first VERTREP (Vertical Replenishment). We send the supply ship a message telling them just what we need. They get it all together and put it in large cargo nets on their flight deck. Then, we sail alongside the supply ship while the helicopter shuttles the goods across. And he really brings them in a hurry! He makes a trip on the average of every sixty seconds. The problem is to get the deck cleared of the previous load before another one is dropped. It takes the cooperation of all hands. On our first VERTREP, they delivered 15 loads in 15 minutes, and by the time they were finished everyone was pretty well worn out.*

*On Thursday, everybody was glad to start on what turned out to be a smooth trip to Hong Kong. We arrived in Hong Kong in perfect weather which lasted the entire time we were there. Hong Kong must be the "Bargain Basement" of the world. There are hundreds of shops and stores full of things from all over the world. The U.S. Government also has a large merchandise display room in the British China Fleet Club, although there are many more Americans in it than British. There was also a wide variety of tours and side trips that many of us took advantage of. The wonderful food in great quantities very reasonably priced was too tempting to resist. We may have to start a mass diet plan about the Hamilton to take off the pounds that we put on. All in all, everyone had a good time and got a chance to relax before our next long, long patrol.*

*That does it for October, but before signing off, I would like to offer my congratulations to the many men who have been promoted since Deployment. They are as follows: RD3 Brown, DC3 Bolden, ET3 Fox, TT3 Ribitzki, ET3 Holland, EN3 Trembley, SN Crosby, SN Charney, SN Goulet, SN Martin, SN Frenette. James H.B. Morton.*

From Captain James H. B. Morton, November 1969, Family-Gram Number Three.

*Dear Families and Friends: The month of November began very early for the Hamilton. We relieved the cutter Taney at first light on November 1st and took over Market Time patrol duties off the Mekong Delta. During the relief, there were six foot swells with a brisk Northeast wind which made it a bit uncomfortable for the crews of the small-boats. Everyone involved in the operation got a very thorough salt water bath. I was told that CPO Allwein didn't want to come back to the Hamilton after he got warm and dry on the Taney, but he did, and he got himself wet all over again. BMI Conley, the small boat coxswain, said he was trying his best, but he didn't say whether he was trying to keep everybody dry or get them wet. At least the only injury was a small cut on SN Biddle's finger and nobody, not even he, could figure out just how it happened. Afterwards, the doctor prescribed a small amount of medicinal brandy for the relief party to combat the effects of the weather.*

*We spent the next two weeks in the same area. The second day there, we refueled from a tanker and then spent a day and night towing a disabled Vietnamese fishing boat into Vung Tau. It was a small boat and difficult to tow, especially since the weather was still bad. But the boat must have had the most talented line handlers in Viet Nam. LCDR O'Brien (Executive Officer) and CPO Fernet (Chief Boatswain Mate) secured the tow line to the boat.*

*We also got a chance to make use of our flight deck again. A man on a Navy gunfire support ship had a kidney stone and needed to be taken to the hospital immediately. We brought him over to the Hamilton by small boat and got an Army helicopter to come and pick him up and take him to a hospital.*

*On Saturday afternoon, the morale committee turned out another outstanding cookout on the flight deck. The steaks were cooked to order by BM1 Johnson, EM2 Flanagan, and BM3 Majkowski.*

*The next day, Dr. Breck and HM1 Young went on a two day MEDCAP. They visited one of the Navy's Advisory groups along the coast. These groups help teach the people better ways to live and farm, as well as how to defend themselves against the Viet Cong. They also provide medical aid to the people when it is available. The doctor took care of about one hundred patients in a small village full of refugees from the Viet Cong.*

*We had only one chance to get into the city of Vung Tau. I wasn't able to grant any real liberty since we could stay only a short time, but I let as many of the crew as possible go ashore for a look around. The city used to be a French resort. It is not too well maintained now, but there are still many beautiful buildings. The town is now used by the Army as an In-country R and R center. The streets were "wall to wall" motor scooters, outnumbered only by the children.*

*Our last refueling at sea in this area was with the USS Chipola. This oiler has a sign on its side that tells what ship holds the record for shortest times for hooking up and unhooking the fueling hoses. I was pleased to see that the Hamilton held both records.*

*One quiet Sunday afternoon, a message arrived telling us to check out a small trawler several hundred miles away. It was reportedly the type used by the Communists to smuggle supplies into South Viet Nam. There were indications that this trawler had the same intentions. We went at full speed to the area, arriving at night, and intercepted the trawler fifty miles off the southernmost tip of Viet Nam. When they saw us, they headed out to sea and that started a long period of close surveillance.*

*We followed it day and night in several directions. After several days, we were joined by a Navy ship and then an oiler which refueled us at night under very poor weather conditions. All hands did an outstanding job. The farther north we went, the worse the weather became. Finally after nearly a week, a second Navy destroyer came and we returned to our Market Time duties in the calmer waters to the south. However, on the way back to our area, we met the cutter Chase which had our mail and two new members of our crew: ENS Fanolis and EN3 Clark.*

*When we returned to our area, we received a message from Navy Seventh Fleet, congratulating the Hamilton on the way that we had responded to the trawler incident. They were impressed by our ability to act quickly and accurately in order to locate the boat and then to stay with it in rough weather. It made us all feel pretty good as did the several other similar messages received from the other involved commands.*

*The last week of the patrol was spent in a new area for us, the south coast of Viet Nam near the Cambodian border. The weather in this area is perfect this time of year. One evening we were called upon for gunfire support and shot several rounds at inland targets with our five inch gun. We also boarded one suspicious looking boat, but it turned out to be harmless. Otherwise, our stay in the southern waters was very quiet. But we had steamed from the DMZ in the north all the way to the Cambodian border in the south during this one patrol.*

*On the twenty fifth, we headed north to meet the cutter Chase and turn our duties over to her, after which we headed for Cam Ranh Bay. There, we gave large amounts of clothing, school supplies and food to an orphanage located in Tan Binh near Cam Ranh Bay. The gifts had been collected by students of the Normandin Junior High School in*

*New Bedford, Massachusetts. While ENS Chynoweth, ENS Hall, YN1 Kelly, and YN2 Lachance went out to the orphanage, a number of the children were entertained about the Hamilton. They toured the ship, ate ice cream, cake and cookies and sang us several Vietnamese songs. I really don't know who had a more enjoyable day, the kids or us!*

*Late in the afternoon, the Hamilton headed east toward Subic Bay for what was to be a most unpleasant trip. There were no serious problems, just poor weather. The Heavy Weather Bill was set for most of the trip, and nobody was allowed topside. There was no damage to the ship and only minor cuts and bruises among the crew; however, the seasick rate got a little out of hand and many a man carried a bucket.*

*Finally, on the morning of the twenty sixth, we arrived in Subic Bay. This gave us a chance to work on the ship and take care of problems that can't be handled at sea. Of course, we were also able to enjoy some much needed liberty during non-working hours.*

*On the last night of the month, we held a football game between the officers and the crew. It was a spirited game and a close contest, for a while at least, with ENS Kiley calling the plays for the officers while SN Calarco coached the crew. The crew was alternating quarterbacks, using SN Mathews, a right hander, and SN Green, a left hander, trying to catch the officers off guard. But the officers held up well against the great bench strength, youth and vitality of the crew while LCDR Grey quarterbacked the officers to a 12 to 6 halftime lead.*

*But early in the second half, the tables began to turn. SN Green ran the kickoff back for a quick touchdown. A short time later, just as it appeared the officers were making a come-back, SA Cowell made a key interception to stop the drive. From then on*

*it went badly for the officers as Coach SN Calarco continued to put fresh men into the game against them.*

*Toward the end, SN Lins began beating ENS Comenos on the long passes to wrap the game up. The final score was 34 to 18 in favor of the crew. There were many others who contributed to the game, including YN1 Kelly who won the award for making the most noise. The game was officiated by HM3 Deal and SA Kneeland. The only injury was a bruised knee, but the team doctor says QM3 Spirito will be back in the lineup soon.*

*That ends another month, and now we look forward to December. I am sure that things will go well for us on the Hamilton as I hope they do for those of you at home. Keep the mail coming. Faces are always a lot brighter around here after mail call. I would like to thank all of you who have sent me letters. I really appreciate them, and I'm glad you enjoy these Family-Grams. We'll keep them coming.*

*Since the next Family-Gram will not reach you until after the holiday season, I would like to wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I hope next year finds us all with our loved ones. James H. B. Morton.*





*From Captain James H. B. Morton, December 1969, Family-Gram Number Four*

*Dear Families and Friends: December was long and uneventful for the Hamilton. The first week was spent in Subic Bay, with LCDR McDougall's engineering department accomplishing all the jobs that couldn't be done at sea, and CWO Hill's deck force getting a chance to improve the appearance of the Hamilton. And of course, many of us had the chance to buy several of the items we'd been window shopping for the first time we went through Subic. The ship is already beginning to look like a floating showroom for tape recorders and cameras.*

*Overall, our stay in Subic Bay was much more pleasant this time than last, mainly because of the change in weather. The dry season had arrived and each day was warm and sunny. On the tenth, we left Subic for patrol. Upon our departure we welcomed aboard Commodore Scalabrini, Commander Coast Guard Squadron Three, who wanted to observe the Hamilton on operations underway.*

*The South China Sea greeted us with the same foul weather that had escorted us into Subic Bay ten days earlier. The wind was up, the swells large, and the seas moderately heavy. And after ten days tied up to the dock, I guess it seemed even worse than it was, although the temperature was much, much milder.*

*One day out of Subic we conducted a VERTREP with the USS Mars. This, you may recall, stands for Vertical Replenishment in which a helicopter brings the supplies to us from a cargo ship. As you can imagine, the conditions were far from ideal and the results were likewise. One of the loads was dropped on one of our antennas, and another on one of the nets around the flight deck causing minor damage to both. However, only a*

*few of our supplies were dropped into the South China Sea, and nobody was injured.*

*Considering the conditions, we didn't make out too badly.*

*The next morning we met the cutter Dallas whom we were relieving in Da Nang Harbor. It was a cloudy, damp, windy day, and with the temperature down to 68 degrees (the lowest temperature recorded this month on the Hamilton), it was actually a little chilly. Both ships anchored, and we exchanged the necessary patrol information after which several of our personnel went into the Coastal Surveillance Center in Da Nang for briefings. Commodore Scalabrini departed the ship for Saigon. He commented that he thought that Hamilton carried out all her underway evolutions in an excellent manner, with the exception of our Radar Assistance to Piloting Team, which was a little rusty. I am sure this stems from the lack of practice since arriving in Southeast Asia, because we don't enter a port very often [we anchor off of them and use the small boats]. There is one thing for sure; the team will be performing at its best when we head for our next liberty port. They haven't failed to pilot us safely into port yet. I know they'll be their sharpest on the way home. He also commented that the morale was excellent.*

*While waiting for our personnel to return from the briefings in Da Nang, several Air Force helicopters started circling and hovering near Hamilton. After several minutes of signaling and waving, we finally contacted them on the radio and discovered that they were Coast Guard pilots. The pilots are assigned to the Air Force through a pilot exchange program. Their main duty is rescuing downed pilots all over Viet Nam. They were glad to see us, and we invited them to land on board Hamilton for dinner sometime. They fly the combat version of the same type helicopter which is becoming part of the Coast Guard's fleet of aircraft. Shortly after noon, everyone was on board and we*

*headed back to the still very rough seas and our Market Time duties in the I Corps Area of South Viet Nam.*

*During the next two weeks, very little of interest happened. The weather remained bad, raining and blowing most of the time. However, during the northeast (winter) monsoons, this is no surprise in this area, and we were fully expecting the treatment we got. On the third day of the patrol, we had a gunfire support mission scheduled, but the weather was so bad that the aircraft that was suppose to observe our shoot was not able to take off. So it had to be cancelled. A few days later, a cookout planned by the Morale Committee also had to be cancelled because of high winds. We settled for hamburgers inside, but they would have tasted much better, I am sure, cooked over charcoal and eaten topside.*

*Finally, after two weeks, the weather broke somewhat and we were called on for another gunfire support mission which went off very well. Then, a few days later, we got the word that an aircraft had spotted another probable North Vietnamese infiltration trawler similar to the one that we had spent a good part of November following around the South China Sea. This one was suspected of carrying supplies for the Viet Cong also, and we were told to move south to prevent supplies from being delivered to the beach. We moved to a point just off the southern tip of Viet Nam and waited for the trawler to make up its mind what it was going to do. It was still well off the coast, and aircraft surveillance was being maintained. This is what we spent most of the rest of the month doing: standing by, ready to act quickly in the event the trawler tried to come ashore.*

*At 1:00am on the 24th, we had an UNREP (Underway Replenishment) in somewhat rough weather. We took fuel and supplies, and also had a personnel transfer.*

*It looked for a minute like BMI Browne was going to get dunked, but quick work on the part of all hands kept him out of the drink. The UNREP was well handled on the part of our crew, although there were some problems about the oiler.*

*Christmas went well on the Hamilton. Many families sent Christmas decorations and the Coast Guard provided us with several trees. I didn't realize we had so much talent aboard for interior decorating. Most of the spaces around the ship smelled of pine needles and were all decked out in Christmas reds and greens, wreaths, tinsel and flashing Christmas lights. And of course, the traditional fruit cakes from several "CARE" packages from home were very much in evidence.*

*We had another UNREP early Christmas afternoon. That meant work, but it also meant mail. Many of us got word from home, and some got last minute Christmas packages. It was rather gratifying when the Captain of the oiler Cacapon said that we had performed one of the best UNREP's he had ever seen. Later that afternoon, we enjoyed a fabulous Christmas dinner prepared by the galley crew followed by a happy hour.*

*After Christmas, while the Hamilton waited for the trawler to make its move, the morale committee organized a card tournament. RMCS Quinn and BMC Fernet won the hearts division, while YN1 Kelly and EM1 Flanagan won pinochle and SK1 Goodwin won cribbage.*

*On New Year's Eve we were released from the trawler stand-by. The cutter Chase had taken over our duties and we were told to return to our Market Time job near Da Nang. We headed north again toward what was sure to be much worse weather. New Year's Eve was marked on the Hamilton by a Monte Carol Night party on the mess*

*deck. After several hours, a lot of synthetic money had change hands. I awarded the prizes to those with the most money: RMCS Quinn, ETC Moore, DC3 Conner, SN Atspins, SA Casale, and SN Cowell. Of course there were no hangovers on New Year's Day, but we all stayed up to see the New Year in.*

*You may have found the mail service slower this past month. The reason is that we have not had any way to get the mail directly ashore, so, often, it spends a while on an oiler before heading back to the States. Our ship's postal officer, ENS Pfister, and his mailmen, QM1 Gerdes, QM3 Larder, SO3 Middleton, QM3 Spiritio, and ETN3 Walters, are doing their job getting the mail off the ship promptly, but after that, there isn't much they can do. So don't worry when there isn't any mail for a while. It probably just means that it was held up somewhere along the line.*

*We have heard a lot on the News lately about the heavy snowfall and low temperatures throughout much of the United States and particularly in New England. I thought that as you shovel the snow out of your driveways, it might interest you to know just what kind of weather we are having. As I mentioned earlier, we have had a lot of rain, but of course no snow. The lowest temperature recorded on the Hamilton in December was 68 degrees and the highest was 97 degrees.*

*I would like to discuss for a moment the subject of Emergency Leave for deserving crewmembers. As we all realize, when families are separated for long periods of time, situations will arise which may require a crewmember to return home. Because of our unpredictable movements and large amounts of time spent at sea, the quickest and most reliable means of contacting a person on board the Hamilton is by official message. This*

*can best be accomplished through the nearest Red Cross Chapter, and this method should be used for deaths in the family, accidents, etc.*

*For emergencies which you feel are not suitable to be handled by the Red Cross, the best procedure is to contact the Commander, First Coast Guard District, Office of Personnel in Boston: Telephone: 617 223 2614 (2616 or 2617). They will be more than happy to assist you and can contact the ship immediately in addition to offering immediate advice concerning your problem. I certainly hope that none of you have such an emergent situation arise, but if one should occur, this method is much faster than mail and will also have all the Red Cross and Coast Guard facilities immediately available to help.*

*As the month and the year come to a close, there is some uncertainty concerning our future schedule of port visits. We aren't really sure where we are going, how long we will be there, or just where we will be going after that. But of course, I'll tell you all about that next month.*

*Before closing, I would like to offer my congratulations to the men who have been promoted in rate during this month. They are as follows: LTJG Kiley, LTJG Chynoweth, LTJG Fanolis, GMC Browning, QM1 Holman, RD1 Henke, BM2 Browne, GMI Anderson, CS2 Dimmick, SK2 Jarrett, SN Gould, and SN Kneeland. Happy New Year.*  
*James. H. B. Morton.*

From Captain James H. B. Morton, January 1970, Family-Gram Number Five

*Dear Families and Friends: You may recall that New Year's Eve found the Hamilton in the rough northern waters near Da Nang. Well, this is where we stayed I am afraid, for nearly half of the month of January. New Year's Day was not exactly a holiday for us either. We started out with a VERTREP at 7am, and that means a lot of work for everybody. The helicopter covered the flight deck and fantail with cargo net after cargo net full of supplies. It took a long time to clear the decks and a lot longer to properly stow the goods.*

*The rest of the day was holiday routine, but after supper, everyone had to go to work again to make the flight deck ready for an unexpected visit from a helicopter. Then after everyone was asleep, we had to go aboard a suspicious boat that we discovered. That meant getting a lot of people out of bed.*

*The next few days were routine. We continued our normal Market Time patrolling duties and except for an occasional beating from the large swell, not much happened. But toward the end of the week, the monotony was broken by a rendezvous with the cutter Chase. We had some supplies for her, as well as several of her crew that were returning from leave in the Philippines. But the main reason for the meeting was that we had 16 bags of mail belonging to them.*

*It was a bright clear day, but the wind was blowing and the swells were quite large. It made for a very rough highline operation. Nearly everyone involved on both ships got a good salt water bath, including one of the men transferred to the Chase. He caught a large wave at just the wrong time. The spray from some of the waves crashing*

*against the side of the ship reached near the top of the stacks, a height of over 50 feet. The men on the Chase got their mail, but I am afraid not all of it was dry.*

*After parting with the Chase, we proceeded to Da Nang Harbor. There, we discharged a couple of people and then returned to our patrol duties.*

*During the next few days, we got in a couple of gunfire support missions. The first mission ended with only a few rounds being fired because of an equipment casualty, but the second mission provided the Hamilton with its first substantial Gun Damage Assessment (GDA)—15 structures and four North Vietnamese Army fighting positions were destroyed. We had Army artillery officers and enlisted men aboard to observe how we conduct our gunfire missions. They came aboard in an Army helicopter and the two Army Warrant Officers piloting the helicopter were a little apprehensive about landing on a ship. They did a fine job, and we were glad to have the Army aboard.*

*After our gunfire support mission, we needed to replenish our supply of 5-inch ammunition. So we had our first ammunition UNREP (underway replenishment) on the 13th, with the USS Pyro. The setup used by the ammo ships is a real work saver for us: they send a cable and a pulley over to us and then by pulling on one end of the cable with their power winches, they can move the heavy loads from one ship to the other. No more pulling the loads over by hand. As a result, it doesn't take long at all to transfer large amounts of ammunition.*

*It is a good thing that the transfer doesn't take much work though, because after the ammo is on our flight deck, the work really begins. Each round comes in two parts: a 55-pound projectile and a 25-pound can of powder. Each piece has to be hand carried from the flight deck, down to the main deck; then forward, the full length of the ship to*



*the area of the main hold and then down two more levels to the lower handling room. That is a lot of work, especially if there are many rounds to stow.*

*The next day we again met the Chase. But this time, fortunately, she was relieving us. She also gave us two members of our crew that had been on leave in the Philippines: TN Garcia and TN Lacuesta.*

*After briefing the Chase, we headed at long last for liberty in Bangkok. On the way, we stopped in Vung Tau and again in An Thoi to pick up other military personnel headed for some R and R in Bangkok.*

*Finally on the 17th, we arrived in Bangkok. That ended thirty-nine days at sea which we all hope will not be repeated during our deployment. Coming into Bangkok involves a three hour trip up a narrow, swiftly moving river. A Thai river pilot came aboard and guided the ship up the river. He moved surprisingly fast up the river in very close quarters with some very large tankers and freighters. But he didn't scrape off any white paint.*

*Shortly after mooring to the buoy in Bangkok, about one thousand pounds of mail came aboard. Since we didn't know when we would be leaving the previous patrol, the mailman didn't know either. So he just sent all our mail for the last couple of weeks to Bangkok. While we were waiting for clearance to go ashore, we got a chance to catch up on things back home. Some of us even got leftover Christmas mail.*

*In the early afternoon, liberty was granted and for the next four days we were able to walk around on dry land for a change and to enjoy ourselves a little. Bangkok is a large, modern city. But it is the capital of a rather rural country, Thailand. While there are no tall buildings in Bangkok, it is quite large and spread out. It is actually*

*quite westernized, with typical western architecture in its buildings, western clothing, and a large number of English speaking people. But the Asian culture is still quite prominent and local customs of etiquette still prevail in most places. Bangkok is quite famous for its beautiful Buddha statues, highly decorated and very large. Tigers, elephants, and especially snakes, including the deadly king cobra, fascinate many visitors. All sorts of Asian food are available in Bangkok.*

*Bangkok is also the location of the SEATO [Southeast Asia Treaty Organization] headquarters. Therefore, many countries maintain embassies there. The city is dotted with these elaborate buildings, representing various countries, and it is not unusual to see chauffeur-driven black limousines, with a national flag on the fender.*

*But after four days, we had to end our visit and head back down the river to the Gulf of Siam and the South China Sea. We dropped our passengers off at An Thoi at 3:00am and headed for our new patrol area in the calm southern waters. We were briefed by the crew of the cutter Dallas near the tiny hamlet of Song Ong Doc on the southwestern coast of Viet Nam; this is where we stayed throughout the remainder of January. The weather is much more pleasant in this area, and furthermore, I think we are able to contribute more to the war effort here.*

*During the first few days on station, we fired the five inch mount four times. It was the first time that Chief Potopowicz and his crew, handing ammunition to the mount from the upper handling room, were put to the test. But with extra effort from CS2 Dimmick, GM2 Anderson, TN Adarna, TN Rivera and others, the challenge produced the organization to swiftly and safely handle the necessary ammunition. The large quantity of ammunition handled also called for extra effort from the lower handling room crew of*

*EN3 Clark, FN Auger, FN Smith, SA Casale, FA Devine, and SN Rockwell. Total damage inflicted upon targets for these few days of shooting included fourteen structures damaged or destroyed, five fighting positions damaged and an estimate by an air spotter of three Viet Cong killed.*

*Because of the gunfire support missions of the previous few days, we were nearly out of ammo when we met the USS Ranier on the 27th. So we asked her for all the five inch ammo we could possible carry, and she gave it to us. As with the other ammo UNREP, the real work came later while stowing the ammunition. An all hands effort was required, and I even saw a few officers out there helping. But even with a lot of hard work and cooperation, the job took over four hours. The next day, there were a lot of sore muscles.*

*On the 28th, we had a rather unusual UNREP. The water was absolutely calm and glassy, so the oiler anchored and we tied up alongside, rather than using a highline while underway. This is a great work saver, but unfortunately the water is rarely calm enough to be able to tie up to the oilers this way.*

*During the next few days after receiving all that ammunition, we were not able to use much of it. One night we shot at targets picked up by a spotter plane using special detectors, but on two other nights, he couldn't find any targets. But even though we hadn't gotten rid of much ammo, we took on some more on the 29th because the USS Vesuvius had a type that we weren't able to get much of earlier.*

*We continued our gunfire support missions and, once, fired so many rounds in an hour, the black paint blistered off of the five-inch gun barrel. By this time, the five-inch gun crew, consisting of mount captain BMC Fernet, gun captain GM2 Schwalm, along*

*with GM3 Sharpe, SN Opotzner, SN Biddle, SN Martin, SN Hallet and others, has developed into a very efficient, coordinated gun crew. GDA for the few days left in the month as reported by spotter aircraft included 40 Viet Cong structures damaged or destroyed, 14 Viet Cong bunkers damaged or destroyed, 17 sampans along canals destroyed or damaged and an estimated 11 Viet Cong killed.*

*In our spare time between NGFS missions, we resupplied or provided medical attention to a couple of VNN [Vietnamese Navy] gunboats, several Swift boats (USN), river patrol craft and even an LST which is nearly as large as Hamilton. All told, it was a busy and interesting month.*

*I would like to offer my congratulation to the following crewmembers who were promoted during the month of January: SN Cowell, SN Probert, SN Opotzner, SN Tengstrand, FN Lefevre, and FN Dahlman.*

*The month of January was a special one for us on the Hamilton. The 21st of January marked the halfway point in our deployment and from now on it is all downhill. We are all counting the days until our return to Boston. Also, our remaining schedule has cleared up since I last wrote you, and Hamilton can look forward to a very favorable schedule during the remainder of our deployment. James H. B. Morton.*

From Captain James H. B. Morton, February 1970, Family-Gram Number Six.

*Dear Families and Friends: The month of February is the shortest of the year. But for all of us on the Hamilton, this span of 28 days saw us travel more than 3000 miles—from the firing line at the southernmost tip of Viet Nam, to Manila, the old and beautiful capital of the Philippines, to a 14 day stopover in Hong Kong and finally back to our previous patrol area off the west coast of Viet Nam. February was also a month of extreme, with temperatures ranging from a chilly low of 58 degrees our second day in Hong Kong, to a warm 91 degrees in our patrol area and seas that were at times stormy and at other times placid and calm. As always, we had several UNREP's which everyone seems to welcome, both for the mail from home and also a break in the everyday routine of patrol.*

*On the first day of the month, we conducted a naval gunfire support mission while anchored a few miles offshore. The object of our 5-inch gun was the many enemy installations ashore, including bunkers, sampans and structures. After firing 161 rounds, an Army spotter plane gave us our GDA of seven structures destroyed, four structures damaged, two sampans destroyed and one sampan damaged; altogether, not a bad day's work.*

*As if to remind us in our tour of duty with the Navy that we are first and foremost a Coast Guard ship, we received an urgent message in the early evening of the same day to proceed as fast as possible on a search and rescue mission 125 miles away. All we knew, as we fired up our gas turbine engines, was that a South Vietnamese fishing boat with 15 men on board was sinking just off the east coast. Every possible preparation was*

*made in advance to aid the distressed boat, since at this time we didn't know whether we would be towing the boat, putting out life rafts for survivors, or whatever.*

*Search patterns were set up, just in case the boat could not be found at her last known position. Around midnight, still about 20 miles away, we learned that a South Vietnamese patrol boat was picking up the 15 survivors. We held our speed though, and when we arrived on scene, we took the 15 survivors on board for the 80 mile trip to Vung Tau near the mouth of the Saigon River. All the men were checked by Dr. Breck, and then fed on the mess deck. Cots were set up in the engineering and deck berthing areas for the night. At 10:30 on the morning of the 2nd, we reached Vung Tau and transferred 15 grateful fishermen to a naval patrol craft.*

*Our latest adventure over, we headed back to our patrol area, where we were relieved by the cutter Mellon, a 378-footer home ported in Honolulu. Mellon was the third of the 378-foot Hamilton Class to be built and the fourth to be deployed to Vietnam.*

*So, at ten o'clock on the morning of 3 February, we were on our way to Manila. Along the way, we rendezvoused with the USS Pyro for an ammunition UNREP in the afternoon. After that, Hamilton was on her way for some well-deserved liberty. The trip took two and one-half days. At 7 o'clock on the morning of 6 February, we were at the entrance to Manila Harbor and passing Corregidor Island, now all silent and deserted nearly 30 years after her World War II prominence ended. We were met by a pilot who guided us all the way to the inner harbor where we received dock space very close to downtown Manila. This was a welcome change, as we normally anchor in the ports we visit necessitating boat transportation to and from the ship.*

*We were to be in Manila for just two days, so everyone made the most of the time available. For the sightseers, there was beautiful Rizal Park, a huge green oasis of gardens, fountains, and even piped in music in the heart of the city. As in all the foreign ports we've visited, shopping was excellent as were the many nightclubs and restaurants for just plain relaxing. The stopover in Manila was particularly welcome to our Philippine stewards, most of who were able to visit with families and friends for the two days.*

*The morning of 8 February arrived all too soon as we put to sea again, this time bound for Hong Kong. The two day trip across the South China Sea was quite pleasant weather-wise, with the sun shining and a reasonable sea running. Up until then, all of our encounters with the South China Sea had meant skies that were windy, rainy and cloudy, and seas that brought out the sailor in most of us, in one way or another.*

*We reached the mouth of Victoria Harbor, Hong Kong, at six o'clock on the morning of the 10th. The air was in the chilly 60's, but none of us seemed to mind as the white and thoroughly modern skyline of Hong Kong loomed into view. Even though we hadn't been there since October, each man had his own pleasant memories of this beautiful city as we entered the harbor. We tied up alongside the LST USS Vernon County which we were to relieve the following day as Hong Kong Station Ship. Our previous visit had been purely R and R, but this in port was to be mainly of the working variety, as we were now administratively in charge of all American warships visiting the port.*

*This involved, for example, setting up berthing assignments, food and water supplies and a million and one other details that any ship visiting a foreign port would*

*require. Tight watch schedules were set up to perform our new job and a permanent shore patrol detachment was formed to keep order and a watchful eye over the many hundreds of American servicemen who would be on liberty each night—no small task. They were: LCDR McDougall, Officer-in-Charge; ENC Hoskins; GMC Browning; ETCP Moore; CSCS Potopowicz; YN1 Kelly; FT1 Miller; BM1 Conley; EM1 Irwin; BT1 Dykes; and EN1 Farrel.*

*We got the ship looking as she should once again, after several rough patrols, as Mary Soo and her painters, something of a Hong Kong Legend for over 25 years, cleaned and painted most of the ship's exterior from stem to stern. Vessel upkeep on Viet Nam deployment is particularly difficult largely due to the great amount of underway time and to the lack of fresh water for cleaning purposes. And of course, Hamilton's deck force was glad for Mary Soo's helping hand, lightening their workload just a little.*

*This working in-port was not all work though, as everyone still found time for some excellent liberty. Many did things they didn't get to on our last visit to Hong Kong, such as purchasing custom-made clothes at greatly reduced prices. Also, those who didn't take the tramway to the top of Victoria Peak and see its beautiful view of the harbor and Kowloon beyond made this a definite part of their sightseeing plans. As in the other ports we've visited, the restaurants and especially the nightclubs were outstanding, as many a crewmember's "morning after" would attest to. Hong Kong is a city of contrasts ranging from sidewalk food sellers, the glass and aluminum skyscrapers of the business district, and from the one-man rickshaws to the rush hour traffic that would do justice to any American city's traffic problems.*



*We had two additions to our crew while in Hong Kong: RM2 Akins and RM2 Thibault; also, several men advanced in grade during this time, including EN3 Leclair, FN Auger, and SN Riley.*

*On Sunday, 22 February, Hamilton turned over the duties of Station Ship to another LST, the USS Terrel County. On the 23rd, our mast was strung with its colorful signal flags (called "Dress Ship") in honor of Washington's Birthday. The following two days saw everyone in the crew taking care of last minute shopping, etc., and on the morning of the 24th, we headed out to sea once again, heading back to our previous patrol area near the southern tip of Viet Nam.*

*On 26 February, as we neared our destination, we had an UNREP with the USS Mattaponi, yet another Navy oiler, for fuel, supplies, and even a little mail, which few in the crew had expected so soon after leaving Hong Kong.*

*At 8am on the 27th, we relieved the cutter Klamath from Seattle of patrol duties. This was her last patrol in Vietnam, and it must have been one happy trip that sent her at full speed in route to her final stop in Subic Bay, and then, home. I think that many of us, as we watched her pull away, were thinking ahead (just a little prematurely, maybe) to the day in May when we'll be in exactly the same situation.*

*So, for a short month, February turned out to be an active and interesting one for Hamilton and one that brought us a big 28 days closer to home. Looking ahead to the month of March, from what we know of our schedule, there should be no lack of action and new situations to contend with. James H. B. Morton.*



From Captain James H. B. Morton, March 1970, Family-Gram Number Seven.

*Dear Families and Friends: When we last left you, if you'll remember, we had just returned to our patrol area off the western coast of Viet Nam from an extended stay in Hong Kong. That in-port time, and what rest and relaxation it was, stood us all in good stead, for the month of March was to be filled with many naval gunfire support missions coming at all hours of the day and night and also the usual UNREP's for ammunition, supplies, and mail.*

*March was to be the most active month since we began our deployment—not measured by the number of miles traveled or small boats inspected, but rather by everyone's hard work and many a sleepless night. However, in spite of this, there was satisfaction to know that we were finally inflicting direct damage on the enemy through our NGFS missions, much more than before, when we had spent much of our time patrolling a barrier line offshore.*

*March 1st also marked the time that we were authorized to wear the Vietnamese Campaign ribbon which is awarded by the government of South Viet Nam for those serving in the combat zone for six months or more. Advancements in grade for the month were made by SN Strout, SN Fiocchi, SN Macaulay and SN Jones. There were several changes in Officers' primary duty assignment on board—LTJG Chynoweth became ASW [anti submarine warfare] officer, LTJG Kiley went to deck department, LTJG Medeiros took CIC [combat information center], and ENS Comenos became gunnery officer.*

*As far as weather was concerned, we had the usual 30-degrees temperature variation for the month—a high of 92 degrees in our patrol area on 4 March and a low of 63 degrees at sea in route to Taiwan on 24 March. Actually, we're told that we don't*

*know what hot weather in Southeast Asia can be like, as the summer months of June, July and August see temperatures of well over 100 degrees, so we'll be leaving here at just the right time.*

*Sunday, 1 March, was holiday routine on board but only until one o'clock in the afternoon, when we had our first NGFS mission of the month. After an hour, we had fired 111 rounds of 5-inch, 38-Cal ammunition and our gun damage assessment (GDA) as given to us by our spotter plane was seven structures destroyed or damaged, one bunker destroyed, and three enemy KIA.*

*At eight that evening, we took alongside one of the many South Vietnamese Navy patrol craft in the area and transferred 1000 gallons of fresh water to them. It seems that the fresh water they get ashore is of pretty poor quality, so they're always happy to get a fresh supply from our own evaporators. Incidentally, along with our major missions of providing gunfire support and inspecting and boarding civilian craft, we also supply water, fuel and spare parts to the many patrol boats, both South Vietnamese and American that patrol the inland waterways up and down the coast.*

*At nine o'clock, we were called upon for an emergency gunfire mission. Friendly forces ashore had spotted an enemy sampan moving up a river, and within ten minutes, we fired ten rounds at the enemy. On night shoots, however, there is no way of knowing the GDA due to the darkness.*

*At noon the following day, we had another mission, firing 44 rounds and getting a GDA of four structures damaged or destroyed and three enemy KIA. At nine in the evening came another gunfire mission. In this shoot, a spotter aircraft equipped with special equipment flew over enemy-held territory and detected fires or other bright lights.*

*The plane then called their position in to us, and we shot. On this particular night, we fired ten rounds of HE (high explosive) ammunition.*

*On 3 March, we were called upon to move about 30 miles north to investigate a small fleet of sampans that was loitering close to shore, apparently not fishing. Upon arrival, we put our two small boats over to begin boarding and inspecting them. Some of the crew members who normally take part in these boarding as either coxswains, engineers or seamen are BM2 Browne and BM2 Trotter; EN3's Burkins, Fishwood, and Chito; SN's Beebe, Caswell, Fruscello, Doyle, Hassig, and Roaf. On this particular day, four of the sampans were boarded, and though all were found to be non-suspicious, their registry papers were confiscated and later turned over to the Vietnamese Navy for certification.*

*Later in the evening, we rendezvoused with the cutter Mellon for routine transfer of supplies, then anchored and had another gunfire support mission which ended at 10pm.*

*The 4th of March was much the same. During this 24 hour period, Hamilton conducted three NGFS missions, firing well over 100 rounds of 5-inch, 38-cal. ammunition. By this time we were pretty much in the groove of firing at any hour of the day or night on very short notice, and we were rapidly becoming hardened veterans of the firing line.*

*Thursday the 5th was pretty much of a free day, allowing time for regular ship's work. At 8:30pm, however, we set gunfire support stations once again and by 9:30, had expended 15 rounds at enemy targets.*

*On the 6th, we anchored off Hon Rai Island on a MEDCAP [medical civilian aid program] to transfer our corpsman, HM1 Young, to a patrol boat for further transportation ashore. In the afternoon, still anchored, I held a personnel inspection for the purpose of presenting awards to several member of the crew. FT2 Schaffel and TN De Leon received the Coast Guard Good Conduct Ribbon, and LCDR O'Brien, our Executive Officer, received the Coast Guard Achievement Medal for meritorious performance of duty while stationed at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, D.C. This concluded the inspection, and when HM1 Young returned from the MEDCAP a short time later, we returned to our previous anchorage a few miles down the coast. That evening saw us firing once (56 rounds). Then at 9pm, we weighed anchor and headed towards a rendezvous the following morning with the USS Vesuvius for ammunition to replenish the large amount of powder and shells which we had expended.*

*On the 7th, we returned to our old job of patrolling a set barrier line ten miles off the coast. Things continued to be quiet however, and on the 8th, we rendezvoused with the USS Tolovana (who we were to see later in the month in Kaohsiung) for fuel and mail.*

*In the evening, we anchored in our customary spot for NGFS missions, and at 8pm commenced fire on enemy targets ashore. After firing 91 rounds, we returned to the barrier line to resume patrol.*

*The next ten days went much the same as previous—a succession of NGFS missions, fuel and ammunition UNREP's, and barrier patrol. On the 9th, we had an ammunition UNREP with the USS Chara and a 100-round gunfire mission that evening. On the afternoon of the 10th, we fired a particularly large mission of 180 rounds with the*

*following GDA: 21 structures destroyed or damaged, two sampans destroyed, and one small secondary explosion initiated. The next three days saw several more NGFS missions.*

*On the 13th, SK2 Jarrett and EN3 Bryant donned their diving gear to unravel tangled fishing nets from the ship's propellers and shafts. Fishing nets are a constant problem in Vietnamese waters, and though we try to avoid them whenever possible, they are sometimes stretched out as far as the eye can see, and there is no way to get around them. And, of course, this is particularly troublesome at night.*

*At 8am on the 14th, we had the last VERTREP of our deployment with the USS Mars. This had barely concluded before we performed another transfer of ammunition during an UNREP at 10am with the USS Mount Katmai. This UNREP was a little different from most as the Mount Katmai provided a rock band made up of several of her crewmembers to play on her main deck while we were alongside a mere 80 feet away, complete with amplifiers, singing, etc.*

*Sunday, the 15th, was a fairly quiet day. The temperature in the afternoon rose into the 90's, so "Swim Call" was held for all hands. Our lower decks and flight deck resembled a bathing beach without sand, as the swimming trunks and various novel kinds of inflatable plastic rafts were brought out from storage. Conditions were ideal for swimming, with the warm sun and crystal-clear light green water.*

*On the 16th, we had two UNREP's, one for fuel and mail with the USS Mataponi and the other for ammunition from the "swinging" Mount Katmai.*

*The early morning hours of the 17th were probably the busiest of our trip. Between midnight and 6am, we had a total of eight NGFS missions and fired 145 rounds in the six hour period.*

*On March 19th and 20th, Hamilton took part in a South Vietnamese sweep operation on the island of Phu Quoc about 30 miles up the coast. Our mission was to provide gunfire support on an as-needed basis as friendly troops swept through the Island in search of the enemy, and also to provide a mobile base in which helicopters could evacuate wounded if necessary. From our anchorage, one and on-half miles off the island, we fired a total of 370 rounds in the two day period. Also, during this time, our total rounds fired went over the 3000 mark, the bulk of this coming on the current patrol.*

*Early on the morning of 22 March, we were ready to be relieved of our duties by the cutter Chase (a Boston-based 378-foot cutter). Relief was completed by 7:30am and we were on our way to Kaohsiung, pronounced "Cow Shung," Taiwan for five days of well-deserved liberty after a very long, work-filled patrol. The four-day trip across the South China Sea was not a calm one, for as on past crossings, the seas were high and the ride uncomfortable. No one really seemed to mind though, probably because a liberty port was at the other end.*

*At 1:30pm on Thursday, 26 March, we moored in Kaohsiung Harbor and liberty was granted a short time later. Though not as active as Hong Kong, nor as beautiful as Bangkok, Kaohsiung was an interesting place with many bargains available, especially in hand carved wood. Several softball games were played on local athletic fields, one of them with the Navy team from a supply ship in port at the time. There were several good*



*hotels, with Chinese food again the specialty, such as Nancy's Harbor Hotel and the Empress.*

*On Tuesday the 31st at 11:30am, we left Taiwan and headed back to our patrol area and a short one-week patrol. Everyone probably breathed a small sigh of relief that the busy, tiring month of March was at last over and that the last few weeks of our deployment were definitely in sight. So long, until next month. J. H. B. Morton.*



From Captain James H. B. Morton, April 1970, Family-Gram Number Eight.

*Dear Families and Friends: The month of April, like March, was one of the most active of our deployment. During this time, we did a little of everything, including a few days of barrier patrol (which had been our primary duty during our first few months in WESTPAC), NGFS missions, two MEDCAPS, several UNREP's for both fuel and ammunition, helicopter operations, two days of special operations, and assignment as the Seventh Fleet Naval gunfire support ship in both IV and II Corps. I think we'd all have to agree though, that the biggest event of the final segment of our deployment occurred on 4 May, when we left Vietnamese water for the last time and began the long voyage back to Boston.*

*A few statistics for April and the first three days of May follow: Miles traveled, 5,441; NGFS missions, 22; Rounds fired, 1,550; and percentage of underway time, 87-percent. Our lowest temperature for the month was 80 degrees in our patrol area on 3 April, and the highest was a blistering 96 degrees on the 11th in Subic Bay. There was one advancement (which took place in March): RMCS Quinn made Master Chief, and with it, he became the Senior Chief Petty Officer ("Chief of the Boat") on board. In addition, the April and May promotions include: FN Devine, FN Hooben, and SN Jones.*

*The first three days of April were spent on our old stomping ground, the South China Sea, in route from our liberty in-port in Taiwan to the western coast of Vietnam which by now was quite familiar to all of us. As in our last crossing, the South China Sea was pretty docile, with beautiful weather and calm seas, but who can forget those days in November and December when she was anything BUT docile?*

*At 8 o'clock on the morning of 3 April, we relieved the Cutter Dallas and assumed the barrier patrol approximately 10 miles off the coast. Here, our time seemed evenly split between checking out the many small fishing boats in the area and then trying to avoid their nets which can stretch for miles with no opening in between. That area of the Gulf of Siam remains relatively shallow up to about 23 miles off the coast, so the Vietnamese fishermen take full advantage of it. At night, the area resembled a large city as the boats turned on their small white lights after sunset and fished for most of the night.*

*On the 6th of April, Hamilton became the NGFS ship for the area. Late in the afternoon, we fired our first mission of the month, getting a gun damage assessment of one structure destroyed, six damaged, and one sampan sunk.*

*The following two days were taken up with MEDCAP's. The first on the 7th was at Balus, a small island in the Gulf of Siam not far off the Vietnamese coast. Early in the day, we dropped off our medical team on a South Vietnamese patrol craft for the trip to the island, and then returned for them later in the day.*

*On the 8th of April, the MEDCAP was in the tiny village of Ap Rach Ban, about eight miles up the Song Ong Doc River and down a small side canal. That day, our doctor and his assistants treated over 150 people for various ailments, ranging from the common cold to malnutrition to just plain lack of soap and sanitary facilities. Aside from the medical aspects of a MEDCAP however, it also plays a large part in the joint American-South Vietnamese Pacification Program. Simply by being friendly with these people and with the medical help we are able to give, these semi-isolated villagers are given a favorable view of what we are attempting to accomplish in Vietnam today.*

*Although we were originally scheduled for a trip to Bangkok in April, our plans were abruptly changed when one of our gas turbine reduction gears failed. So, instead of sailing for Bangkok, we departed our patrol area on the morning of the 9th and headed for Subic Repair Facility in Subic Bay on 11 April for a five day in-port. Though certainly not as good as Bangkok would have been, it was still good to set foot on solid ground again. As a Naval Base, Subic Bay has excellent facilities, including exchanges, hobby shops, horseback riding, and servicemen's clubs. On Sunday the 12th, several members of the crew challenged Coast Guard Squadron Three personnel to a softball game. Paced by homeruns from SN Calarco and YN1 Kelly and behind the excellent all-around play of the rest of the team, Hamilton won over "RONTHREE" by a score of 17-6.*

*At noon on 16 April, we departed Subic for Vietnam, and after yet another easy crossing of the South China Sea, we relieved the cutter Dallas as Song Ong Doc gunfire support ship on the morning of the 18th. We were back in the groove by that evening, as we had several emergency calls for fire from troops ashore and fired a total of 20 rounds. Early the following morning, we set flight quarters to receive a MEDEVAC (Medical Evacuation) from ashore via helicopter. After a thorough examination by our doctor, it was found that the Navy evacuee's trouble was not as serious as originally thought. After two days on board, he had made a full recovery and returned to his unit. I wouldn't be too surprised if he joined the Coast Guard when his Navy hitch is completed.*

*At 3 o'clock in the afternoon of the 20th, we had an ammunition UNREP with the USS Pyro. When this was done, we returned to our customary spot off shore from Song Ong Doc and stood by waiting for the next call for gunfire. In the afternoon and evening of 21 April, we fired a total of 326 rounds at enemy targets ashore. Our GDA for this*

*shoot was two enemy killed in action, seven structures destroyed, five structures damaged, and one sampan destroyed. On the afternoon of the 22nd, Hamilton fired another 180 rounds. At 8 in the morning on 23 April, we had an UNREP with the Navy oiler, USS Taluga, for fuel and supplies. Later that same day, we had another NGFS mission, firing 54 rounds."*

*By now our supply of ammunition was getting low, and on the morning of the 24th, we met the USS Pyro to replenish our supply. By the way, I think we could do an UNREP blindfolded after the number we've had—well, almost blindfolded. That afternoon we had a welcome break in routine, as we headed about 90 miles up the coast to An Thoi, which is a Vietnamese-American base. Half the crew was allowed to go ashore, either to the servicemen's clubs, or just to walk around, relax, and take pictures. At the same time, I and my Executive Officer, LCDR O'Brien, were briefed by the local military people on what to expect in the way of NGFS missions and MEDCAP's from then until our departure from the area on 4 May.*

*On 25 April, we were called for two days of special operations. I can't discuss this operation in any detail, but Hamilton received a "Well done" for our performance which was termed as "completely professional and in the highest traditions of the Coast Guard." In two days, we were relieved on station by the USS Turner Joy to assume NGFS duties in IV Corps north of Song Ong Doc. Incidentally, it was interesting to see the USS Turner Joy because she was one of the two destroyers fired upon by North Vietnamese gunboats back in August, 1964, prompting President Johnson to pass the Tonkin Gulf Act which brought the United States into the war on a larger scale.*

*Late in the evening of the 29th, Hamilton received orders to proceed to the Phan Thiet area, which is about midway between the Mekong Delta and Cam Ranh Bay on Vietnam's eastern coast, and assume duties as gunship for the entire area. As far as I can determine, we are the first Coast Guard cutter to be assigned to the Seventh Fleet's Naval Gunfire Support Unit. This assignment is usually reserved exclusively for Navy destroyers which have a great deal more fire power than we do. I guess they must have heard of our fine gunnery record on Market Time. We arrived on the 30th and after firing a mission of 62 rounds (which our air-spotter termed an "Outstanding shoot"), we met the USS Firedrake to take on more ammunition.*

*At 8:30 in the morning of 1 May, we fired the 82nd NGFS mission of our deployment. After only 100 rounds had been fired, we had destroyed 15 enemy bunkers, damaged two, and interdicted 500 meters of V.C. trails. In the afternoon, an Army helicopter came to the ship to brief our gunnery team, and while here she gave several rides around the ship and along the beach. Although we've had many helicopters on board in WESTPAC, this was the first opportunity any of us had had to actually go up in one. Near midnight of the same day, we fired an "H and I" [Harassment and Interdiction] mission of 50 rounds.*

*At 8:30am on 2 May, we fired 111 rounds (destroying 14 bunkers) and at 2:00pm fired 114 rounds in a mission spotted by a U.S. Army plane. At 5 o'clock all hands enjoyed a barbecued chicken cookout on the flight deck, another welcome break in routine. Continuously, from nine that evening until six the following morning, we fired six rounds per hour into a pre-designated area in an H and I mission to soften up the area for a troop insertion on 3 May.*

*On Sunday, 3 May, our last full day in the Combat Zone, we fired 106 rounds in support of helicopter-landed troops. Our GDA on this mission was five bunkers destroyed, nine bunkers damaged, 50 meters of trenches destroyed, and 300 meters of road interdicted. In addition to our other GDA, we'd blown up 4 ammunition caches in the last 24 hours. Our shooting in the Phan Thiht area prompted the U.S. Marine spotter to comment that our "Superior shooting" was among the best he'd seen. Our final shoot brought our total rounds fired to 4,615, and the total NGFS missions to 87.*

*Later in the afternoon, an Army helicopter came out to the ship and took several crewmembers on the grand tour once again. For the rest of the night, we remained about 8 miles offshore and at 6:00am on 4 May departed Vietnam and the gun line for the last time heading toward Subic Bay. Upon our gun line departure, we received the following message from Commodore Johnson, "Your rapid response on a substitute basis much appreciated. We are always happy to have good shooters who want to go where the action is. Well done. You are always welcome back. For the gun line, Commodore Johnson."*

*By the time my next letter rolls around, we should be approaching San Francisco and be only a few weeks from seeing you all again. James H. B. Morton.*



From Captain James H. B. Morton, May 1970, Family-Gram Number Nine

*Dear Families and Friends: Greetings once again. When I last spoke with you, Hamilton had just completed her final patrol off Vietnam and was crossing the South China Sea in route to Subic Bay. As before, the weather couldn't have been better; spring has definitely come to Southeast Asia.*

*After three days of good sailing, we reached Subic Bay on 6 May and during the following five days took on supplies and made last minute repairs in preparation for the 11,000 mile trip home. The Cutter Sherman, one of our sister ships from Boston, arrived on 7 May to relieve us of WESTPAC duties. For the following three days, we briefed her officers and crew on what to expect during her deployment. There is no substitute for actual experience though, and after one patrol on the barrier or gun line, she'll be right in step with the progress, just as in our own case several months ago.*

*On the morning of the 11th, just prior to departing, we had our OUTCHOP Personnel Inspection by Commodore Hoover, the new Commander, Coast Guard Squadron Three. As some of you may remember, I relieved Captain Hoover as Commanding Officer of the Hamilton in June, 1969. Needless to say, he saw many familiar faces and we all enjoyed a warm reunion.*

*So, at nine on the morning of the 11th with our brand new "Homeward Bound" pennant flying, and the strains of "Massachusetts" [by the Bee Gees] playing loudly from the loudspeaker system, a happy ship-full of men departed Subic Bay for home. The trip wasn't over yet though, as we still had several excellent ports to visit on the way, the first being Yokosuka, Japan, near Yokohama and just 35 miles south of Tokyo.*

*The trip to Yokosuka (pronounced YO-KOOS-SKA) took us north from the Philippine Islands through the Taiwan Straits and then the Philippine Sea to Japan. We ran into some bad weather at first, but it later improved to the sunny skies and blue, white-capped seas that we've become accustomed to since the rougher early months of deployment.*

*On 15 May, we arrived at the U.S. Naval Station, Yokosuka, with weather that can be described as close to that of spring and autumn in New England combined—a little hazy but sunny with the temperature in the low 70's. I think everyone was a little surprised at how modern and westernized Japan has become, with her super-highways, electronic gadgets and very high standard of living. Many in the crew took in the World's Fair, EXPO '70, at Osaka, about 250 miles west of Yokosuka on Japan's southern shore. Others took the short trip via train to Tokyo, the world's largest city. And just about everyone took advantage of the Fleet Exchange in Yokosuka, as it was our last chance for ultra-low price photography and stereo equipment. The ship must be at least two feet deeper in the water as a result of all the "cargo" we've brought aboard.*

*On the 19th of May, we headed east once again for the 2300 mile voyage to Hawaii, via Midway Island. The trip began with cool and foggy weather, but soon improved to the blue skies and long swells that the Pacific is both known and named for. On this leg of the trip, we experienced something that many of us will never see again—two Fridays in one week. We crossed the International Date Line on 22 May, and at midnight of Friday number one, we retarded the ship's time to 1am on Friday number two, 22 May. You're a little confused? Well, don't feel badly, as it took us a day or two to get used to it ourselves. Anyway, we got the day back we had lost last fall.*

*On the 23rd, we reached Midway for a fuel stop and a few hours to walk around ashore to see what the small, reef-surrounded island was like. Its most noticed feature is the "gooney" bird, which, as its name implies, is a large, clumsy, gull-like creature that does more sitting and sleeping than flying. For this reason, they made excellent camera subjects and even seemed to enjoy the attention. Midway comes pretty close to the classic notion of a small Pacific island—surrounding reef, palm trees, azure colored water, glistening white beaches, and some sort of exotic wildlife, in this case, the not-so-exotic ridiculous "gooney" bird, which is actually a member of the albatross family.*

*In mid-afternoon, we put to sea again for the two and one-half day trip to Honolulu. As before, the weather was with us, and on the 26th of May, we entered Pearl Harbor for supplies, minor repairs, and final separation from the Navy for whom we had worked for the past nine months. So, for all practical purposes, our Deployment is now at an end, though we still have three weeks to go before returning to Boston.*

*This is probably a good point at which to give you a short recap of our tour of duty in WESTPAC. By the 19th of June, we will have traveled approximately 60,000 miles since departing Boston in August 1969. In seven Operation Market Time patrols, the longest of which lasted for seven weeks, we detected 1,921 vessels, inspected 1,709 of them, and boarded 15. In 87 NGFS missions, the bulk of which took place from January through May, Hamilton fired over 4,600 rounds of 5-inch ammunition. We conducted 38 UNREP's with Navy oiler and ammunition ships, several of which were at night and in rough seas. Flight stations were set some 30 times to recover everything from a large twin-rotor Marine Sea Knight helicopter (the type used for the six VERTREP's we accomplished) to numerous small Army spotter craft.*

*Our medical team conducted seven MEDCAP's, personally treating over 1,000 Vietnamese civilians for various illnesses. During the course of the deployment, Hamilton participated in every conceivable type of operation from search and rescue to infiltration trawler surveillance, from boarding to patrolling two areas in order to release one ship, from providing orphans with clothing to providing gunfire support. We patrolled every Market Time Area except one between the DMZ and the Cambodian border and visited every major coastal town on both coasts of Vietnam. For our efforts we received several messages of recognition from high U.S. Navy and Coast Guard commands. Our final congratulatory message was received on 23 May. It reads as follows:*

*From: Commander, U.S. Navy Seventh Fleet: Sayonara. 1. As you depart the Western Pacific on the long journey to Boston, I wish to express my appreciation to the officers and men of Hamilton for a fine deployment with the Seventh Fleet. Hamilton's versatile crew has shown itself capable of meeting a variety of essential tasks such as Market Time Operation, Naval gunfire support, and station ship Hong Kong, while displaying commendable professional skill and resolute. The officers and men of Hamilton can be proud of their significant contribution to the U.S. Missions in Southeast Asia. Well Done. 2. Best wishes for fair winds and following seas in route to a well deserved homecoming with your friends and loved ones. VADM M. F. Weidner, USN.*

*Well, this about sums up our deployment. From Hawaii, we will head for a three day stay in San Francisco (2-5 June), then south to the Panama Canal. We arrive at the Pacific entrance of the canal on 13 June and will pull in overnight to refuel. We will then transit the canal on the morning of 14 June and should depart the Atlantic entrance point about 6pm in route to Boston. At 10am on Friday, 19 June, just three short weeks from now, you'll glimpse the Hamilton threading her way up Boston Harbor, into the wide turn by Charlestown Navy Yard, and then making the final dash into her old home on Commercial Street.*

*Our colors will be flying, music will be playing, and more than 130 happy men will be lining the ship's rails waiting for the first lines to go over [the others will be running the ship]. It's been a long, busy, cruise but a satisfying one, and I'm sure "Sea Stories" will be told and retold many times of our many experiences while in WESTPAC. Hamilton has a record and a crew to be proud of. I can truthfully say that I'll be sad to see the breaking up of such a fine team on our return to Boston.*

*I hope these newsletters have in some measure kept you up-to-date on what "Your Man on the Hamilton" has been doing this past nine months. In closing, I would like to say thank you for the many thoughtful and sincere letters I've received throughout our deployment.*

*Good bye for now—see you in Boston. James H. B. Morton.*

*The End*



USCGC Hamilton WHEC-715 Awards for the Vietnam Deployment, August 1969 – June 1970

- 1) Vietnam Service Ribbon and Medal—awarded for service in Southeast Asia and contiguous waters or air space from 4 July 1965 to 28 March 1973.
- 2) The Navy Meritorious Unit Commendation—awarded to units with meritorious achievement or service that renders the unit outstanding as compared to other units performing the same service.
- 3) The Republic of Vietnam Campaign Ribbon and Medal—awarded for six months direct combat support or service in South Vietnam between 1 March 1961 and 28 March 1973.
- 4) The Vietnam Civil Action Meritorious Unit Citation—awarded by the Republic of Vietnam to units in recognition of meritorious civil action service.
- 5) The Vietnam Gallantry Cross Unit Citation—awarded by the Republic of Vietnam to units for valorous combat achievement.

## Citation for the Navy Meritorious Unit Commendation

The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in presenting the Meritorious Unit Commendation to Commander Task Force 115 for service as set forth in the following Citation:

For meritorious service during the periods 19 December 1969 to 16 November 1970 and 23 November 1970 to 1 March 1972 in connection with the interdiction of enemy supply lines into the Republic of Vietnam. Maintaining a close vigil over 1200 miles of coastline and more than 64,000 licensed watercraft, Task Force 115 (United States Navy Coastal Surveillance Force) created one of the most effect coastal barriers in naval history. Large quantities of insurgent war materials were destroyed or captured, and even greater amounts were kept out of the hands of enemy combatants. In addition, Task Force units conducted almost daily naval gunfire support missions, completed numerous search and rescue operations, carried out hundreds of psychological warfare missions and medical civic action programs, and conducted training programs for Vietnamese naval personnel which culminated in the turnover of the Coast Surveillance Headquarters and the operational control of the entire inner coastal barrier to the Vietnamese Navy. The professionalism, courage and dedication displayed by the officers and men of Commander Task Force 115 were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

John W. Warner

Secretary of the Navy



## Appendix-A, Rank and Rate Legend for the Coast Guard and Navy

In the military services, all members are referred to by rank and name in correspondence. In the Coast Guard and Navy, officers are referred to by rank and name, and enlisted people are referred to by rate *and* rank and name. Rate is the career field they work in, and rank is their pay-grade. Each pay-grade has a title, and these titles vary from service to service. For the Navy and Coast Guard, they are as follows.

Here are the pay-grades, ranks and abbreviations of the officers aboard the Hamilton:

(W-2, W-3 and W-4) Chief Warrant Officers (CWO)

(O-1) Ensign (ENS)

(O-2) Lieutenant Junior Grade (LTJG)

(O-3) Lieutenant (LT)

(O-4) Lieutenant Commander (LCDR)

(O-5) Commander (CDR)

(O-6) Captain (CAPT)

So, our captain's name was written as CAPT James H. B. Morton, the rank he holds in this story. Fresh out of the Academy (O-1), his name would have been written ENS James H. B. Morton. After his first promotion (O-2), he became LTJG James H. B. Morton. When promoted to (O-3), he became LT James H. B. Morton, and onward, until he advanced in rank to (O-6), Captain.

Here are the pay-grades, ranks and abbreviations of the enlisted personnel aboard the  
Hamilton:

- (E-1) Seaman Recruit (SR)
- (E-2) Seaman Apprentice (SA), Fireman Apprentice (FA) or Steward Apprentice (TA).
- (E-3) Seaman (SN), Fireman (FN) or Steward (TN)
- (E-4) Petty Officer Third Class (PO3)
- (E-5) Petty Officer Second Class (PO2)
- (E-6) Petty Officer First Class (PO1)
- (E-7) Chief Petty Officer (POC)
- (E-8) Senior Chief Petty Officer (POCS)
- (E-9) Master Chief Petty Officer (POCM)

E-1 through E-3 are “Non-rated” ranks, that is, they have not yet completed training in a career field, a rating. Once they become certified in a rating, they are promoted to E-4 and become a petty officer. Depending on what career field they have chosen, “PO” in the E-4 to E-9 petty officer abbreviations above is replaced with that career field’s abbreviation. Here are the ratings and their abbreviations that made up the Hamilton’s crew:

- Boatswain Mate (BM)
- Boiler Tender (BT)
- Commissary (crew’s cook) (CS)
- Damage Control (DC)
- Electrician’s Mate (EM)
- Engineman (EN)

Electronics Technician (ET)  
Fire Control Technician (FT)  
Gunner's Mate (GM)  
Hospital Corpsman (HM)  
Quartermaster (Navigator) (QM)  
Radarman (RD)  
Radioman (RM)  
Steward (officer's cook) (SD)  
Sonarman (SO)  
Storekeeper (supply and finance) (SK)  
Telephone Technician (TT)  
Yeoman (administration) (YN)

I was a radioman, an "RM," and held a rank of petty officer *third* class (E-4). My name was written as RM3 Cole, not PO3 Cole. As a petty officer *second* class (E-5), it was written as RM2 Cole. Had I been a *chief* petty officer (E-7) in the radioman rating, it would have been written as RMC Cole.

If I'd been a quartermaster, a "QM," instead of a radioman, with a rank of petty officer *third* class (E-4), I'd be QM3 Cole. If I'd been a Boatswain's Mate, a "BM," and a petty officer *second* class (E-5), I'd be BM2 Cole and so on for any of the rating abbreviations above.

Here's an example of what it will look like in the captain's letters: YN1 Kelly was awarded the prize for making the most noise. RM3 Cole organized this story. CDR O'Brien was the executive officer. CWO3 Hickey was the electronics officer. FN Hicks was learning to be an engineman, and SN Hassig was learning to be a Boatswain Mate.

Here's the same paragraph using "Mr." instead of military titles: Mr. Kelly was awarded the prize for making the most noise. Mr. Cole organized this story. Mr. O'Brien was the executive officer. Mr. Hickey was the electronics officer. Mr. Hicks was learning to be an engineman, and Mr. Hassig was learning to be a Boatswain Mate.