



After gunfire missions we had to "police brass" or clean up the spent powder casings lying on the deck. The cases were ejected at the rear of the 6 inch turret and 5 inch gun mount. We didn't have time to deal with them while firing, and you wouldn't want to be on deck close to the guns anyway. The brass powder cases were packed into the powder shipment cans we received them in. They were sent back to the ammunition ships when we did an underway replenishment to restock with ammunition. Sometimes the brass was just thrown overboard.

October 8, 1972 The long-standing diplomatic stalemate between Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho finally ends as both sides agree to major concessions. The U.S. will allow North Vietnamese troops already in South Vietnam to remain there, while North Vietnam drops its demand for the removal of South Vietnam's President Thieu and the dissolution of his government.

October 9, 1972 Received hostile fire from shore batteries. Qualified for the Navy Combat Action Ribbon. The principal eligibility criteria is that the individual must have participated in a bona fide ground or surface combat fire-fight or action during which he/she was under enemy fire and his/her performance while under fire was satisfactory. Personnel aboard a ship are eligible when the safety of the ship and the crew were endangered by enemy attack, such as a ship hit by a mine or a ship engaged by shore, surface, air or sub-surface elements.





No Letup Yet in Offensive *Hanoi Position Improved by '72 Drive*

By RICHARD PYLE
SAIGON (AP) 10-11-72 —
Although falling well short of the shattering victory that apparently was its ultimate goal, Hanoi's 1972 offensive in South Vietnam has greatly improved the Communist side strategic position for a settlement—military or political. And while battlefield reverses

have forced numerous changes in the original plan, there are no signs that the North Vietnamese campaign is letting up. Instead it is moving into a new phase. The lull that followed the recapture of Quang Tri by the South Vietnamese last month has ended in a new surge of Communist attacks. "The Communist units are rebuilding their former base areas

to maintain their presence and to declare, "We're here," said one U.S. officer. "They are here to stay."

Some 408,000 persons were officially listed under Communist control at the end of August, the most recent month for which such figures have been disclosed. This is only 2.1 per cent of South Vietnam's total of 19 million, but it is 11 times more than were listed under Communist control when the offensive began. And U.S. experts say many areas where the South Vietnamese claim to have regained the edge are actually no man's land. South Vietnam has also suffered uncounted thousands of civilian casualties, more than one million refugees, and military casualties that far exceed any similar period of the war. Reliable military informants place the number of government troops killed at more than 35,000 — more than twice what has been publicly acknowledged — and the wounded at well over 100,000.

Allied officials say nearly 100,000 Communist troops have been killed, but this is based on estimates as well as body counts which also are not necessarily reliable.

Morale in some South Vietnamese military units fell dangerously low during the grimmest period of April, May and June.

Military commanders say it has improved since then, largely, perhaps, as the result of the failure of the Communists' siege of An Loc, the repulse of the invasion of Kontum, the forestalling of a major assault on Hue, and — most importantly — the recapture of Quang Tri, the only province capital to fall. Thieu has used the crisis to acquire near-dictatorial powers, declaring martial law, suspending the 1967 constitution and assuming the right to rule by decree for six months.

Overall, however, the consensus appears to be that the situation is stalemated and that no major changes in the status quo are likely, particularly in the northern region, where the rainy season is just beginning.

. "Neither side has the muscle to fight the other and the elements, too."

October 14-15, 1972
En- route to Singapore.

October 16-20, 1972
Our ship arrives in port for a protocol visit in Singapore. A complete change of pace came in mid-October when OKLAHOMA CITY once again functioned principally as a command ship by making a protocol port visit to Singapore. When the ship entered Singapore on 16



October it was her first protocol visit since January 1972 when she visited Hong Kong.





October 21-22, 1972 En- route from Singapore to the Vietnam combat zone. The command ship proceeded south where she crossed the Equator on October 22, 1972 to initiate her slimy "Pollywogs" into the mysteries of the deep. With a full crew of "Shellbacks", OKLAHOMA CITY turned her bow north and headed for Vietnam to finish the month providing naval gunfire support.

In order to show you the sheer fatigue and exhaustion of such a brutal ordeal I have located some photos on the internet taken from the Oklahoma City's crossing the line ceremony in 1979. By then it must have been a "Kinder, Gentler, Navy" as the sailors were allowed to wear thick kneepads to protect themselves from injury.



The last ten years has seen this initiation become even more controversial as the Navy has suffered from a multitude of political and social setbacks related to hazing, discrimination, and sexual harassment against women and men in the military. Current Navy policy has all but eliminated any events such as I experienced many years ago.

Here's how the Secretary of the Navy [Instruction 1610.2, dated 1 Oct. 1997] now spells out the policy concerning military functions which involve initiations or other similar ceremonies:

Military customs and traditions have long been an integral part of the Navy and Marine Corps. Though in the past some hazing has occurred in conjunction with ceremonies, initiations or rites of passage, these activities, if properly supervised, can be effective leadership tools. ...Graduations, chiefs' initiations, "crossing the line" ceremonies, and others are only meant to celebrate and recognize the achievements of individual Sailors or Marines or those of entire units.... Service members must be able to work together, building-up, encouraging, and supporting their shipmates. Hazing behavior that is degrading, embarrassing or injurious is unprofessional and illegal.

Commanders must be aware of all ceremonies and initiatives conducted within their organizations and take proactive steps to ensure that these activities do not violate this policy.

Hazing is defined as any conduct whereby a military member or members, regardless of service or rank, without proper authority causes another military member or members, regardless of service

or rank, to suffer or be exposed to any activity which is cruel, abusive, humiliating, oppressive, demeaning, or harmful. ...

Hazing can include, but is not limited to, the following: playing abusive or ridiculous tricks; threatening or offering violence or bodily harm to another; striking; branding; taping; tattooing; shaving; greasing; painting; requiring excessive physical exercise beyond what is required to meet standards.....





Kiss my What ?????



October 22, 1972 Operation Linebacker #1 ends. U.S. warplanes flew 40,000 sorties and dropped over 125,000 tons of bombs during the bombing campaign which effectively disrupted North Vietnam's Easteride Offensive.

During the failed offensive, North Vietnam suffered an estimated 100,000 military casualties and lost half its tanks and artillery. Leader of the offensive, legendary General Vo Nguyen Giap, the victor at Dien Bien Phu, was then quietly ousted in favor of his deputy Gen. Van Tien Dung. 40,000 South Vietnamese soldiers died stopping the offensive, in the heaviest fighting of the entire war.

October 23-24, 1972 Conducted Naval Gunfire Support near the DMZ and gunfire strikes in North Vietnam. Received hostile fire from shore batteries. 60 naval gunfire missions resulting in the expenditure of 619 five inch rounds and 2,405 six inch rounds against the enemy were completed during the month of October. During this time the ship received additional hostile fire from enemy shore batteries which again qualified the crew for the Combat Action Ribbon.





October 26, 1972 For the past several months I continued to correspond with the Navy Postal Clerk detailer from Washington DC. While my transfer from the ship was inevitable due to the over assignment of postal clerks aboard, it was still a long shot as to whether or not the Navy would let me transfer back stateside with so many other ships operating in the same area. My previous trip to Washington and personnel contact with the Detailer Office seemed to pay off because I then received transfer orders to a stateside ship if I was willing to incur the cost of travel back to my duty station at no expense to the Navy. I decided not to risk a transfer to another ship in the area and accepted the orders.



My time aboard the Okie Boat, from June – October of 1972, also unknowingly earned me a Navy Unit Commendation which was not awarded to me at the time because the official commendation covered unit activities for service anytime between April – December 1972 and the ribbon had not been awarded prior to my permanent departure from the ship. It wasn't until April of 2003 that I was officially awarded the Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon by the Navy Personnel Command, Retired Records Section.

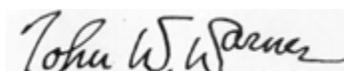
The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in presenting the
NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION to

USS OKLAHOMA CITY (CLG-5)

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

For exceptionally meritorious service from 5 April to 4 December 1972 while participating in combat operations in Southeast Asia. Operating in an intense combat environment, USS OKLAHOMA CITY demonstrated the highest level of combat readiness and proficiency while providing close naval gunfire support for Republic of Vietnam forces in Military Region One and in the conduct of naval gunfire strikes against the enemy in North Vietnam. In April 1972, while acting as a task unit commander, OKLAHOMA CITY planned and led many daring strikes against enemy stowage areas, supply routes, and enemy emplacements in North Vietnam. These strikes were executed with a high degree of professionalism in the face of intense hostile fire from shore batteries and the constant threat of enemy aircraft. By their courage, perseverance, and dedication, the officers and men of USS OKLAHOMA CITY reflected great credit upon themselves, their ship, and the United States Naval Service.



And so, just like that, my time on the “Okie Boat” was over. It had been a tough, miserable way to spend the better part of my youth but I am still very proud of this service to my country and will never forget those days I was a sailor on the, “*Grey Ghost of the Vietnam Coast*”.

Today the legacy of this classic old warship is only a memory. In 1979 the ship was finally decommissioned and put in mothball storage at the Bremerton Naval Station in Washington. In 1992 it was taken out to sea and sunk for target practice. I am told that it didn't go down without a fight and took several modern day rounds of ammunition to sink it.



Decommissioned USS Oklahoma City CLG-5 in mothballs.



Thirteen years after it was decommissioned the ship was towed out to sea where it was used for target practice during an international navy training exercise.

By ROBERT MCCOCKRAN, Times-Herald staff writer

Following a major cleanup at Mare Island, the guided missile cruiser formerly commissioned as the USS Oklahoma City, will begin its final journey this week.

The ship, which saw action in World War II and the Vietnam War, will be towed to Pearl Harbor for final preparations, before heading to Guam for a "sink exercise" in March, said Pat Dolan, deputy director for congressional public affairs of the Navy's Sea Systems Command.

As the flagship of the commander of the 7th Fleet, the USS Oklahoma City was home ported in Yokosuka, Japan, but made trips to Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Subic Bay and Vietnam.

The cruiser was considered a "nerve center" because of its sophisticated electronics and communications equipment. If the president needed to get in touch with an admiral or an admiral needed to communicate with the rest of the fleet - consisting of between 80 and 100 ships - the Oklahoma City had the wherewithal.

The Oklahoma City was also the last ship in the U.S. Navy to have teakwood decks and mahogany handrails - for the benefit of the admirals and hundreds of dignitaries that it hosted.

The USS Oklahoma City is 610 feet long, has a beam of 66 feet and a top speed of 30 knots. In earlier years, it had a 1,200-member crew. The cruiser served 11 straight years in the West Pacific after it was re-commissioned for the Vietnam conflict.

In December 1979, it was decommissioned in San Diego and towed to Bremerton, Wash. In 1992, it was towed to Richmond for preparations as a target ship to test new weapons systems.

Last spring, the cruiser was transferred to Suisun Bay Reserve Fleet.

According to information supplied by the association, the USS Oklahoma City earned two Battle Stars during World War II and 13 Battle Stars, three Meritorious Unit Citations and a Navy Unit Citation in the war in Vietnam.

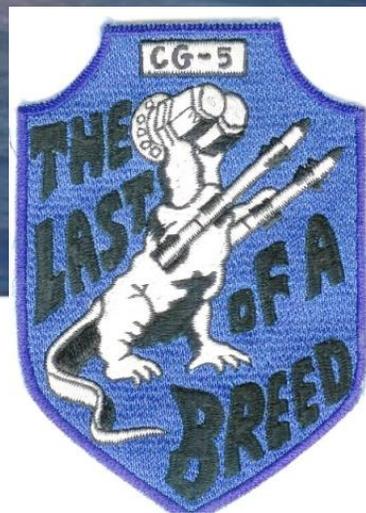
Built at the Philadelphia Navy Yard, the USS Oklahoma City was originally commissioned Dec. 22, 1945 and joined the 3rd Fleet the following May as part of the task forces that supported the victory in Okinawa.

In the closing days of World War II, it served as a screen for aircraft carriers and participated in the bombardment of the Ryukyu Islands and Japan mainland.

The ship was first decommissioned in 1947. It was re-commissioned Sept. 7, 1960 after it was modernized and converted at Hunters Point to fire Talos missiles. It could carry 46 missiles.

During the Vietnam War, the Oklahoma City's mission was to provide anti-aircraft protection for carriers and bombard Viet Cong shore positions to assist the Marines near Da Nang and Chu Lai.

When the North Vietnamese overran Saigon in 1975, the cruiser was used as a helicopter landing port to evacuate people.





Quoted from the Press Release for MTX 99 "The ship was still afloat on the final day of the exercise. With USS Columbus (SSN 762), Republic of Korea Submarine Lee Chun (SS 062), and several attack aircraft were in position to take another shot at the old vessel. Lee Chun shot a torpedo, scoring a direct hit. Twenty-five minutes later, at approximately 11:03 a.m., the former Seventh Fleet flagship disappeared below the surface, sinking down in 6,000 feet of water."



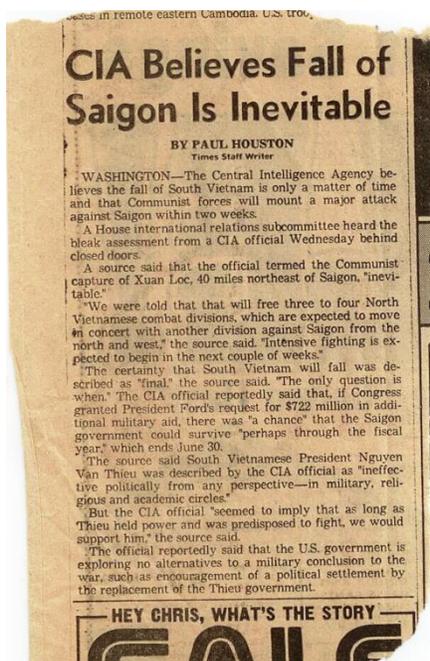
This concludes my Vietnam service and because the 17th formal U.S. military campaign of the Vietnam War called the “Vietnam Ceasefire Campaign” had been underway since 30 March, 1972, I was now entitled to wear a third bronze campaign star on the ribbon portion my Vietnam Service Medal. This was the last U.S. military campaign of the war and later ended 28 Jan.1973.



VIETNAM CEASEFIRE CAMPAIGN - On 30 March 1972 the North Vietnamese Army launched its greatest offensive of the entire war. The enemy deployed the greatest array of troops and modern weapons to date in a major effort to end the war with conventional forces and seized considerable territory in an effort to exercise control of key provinces throughout Vietnam.

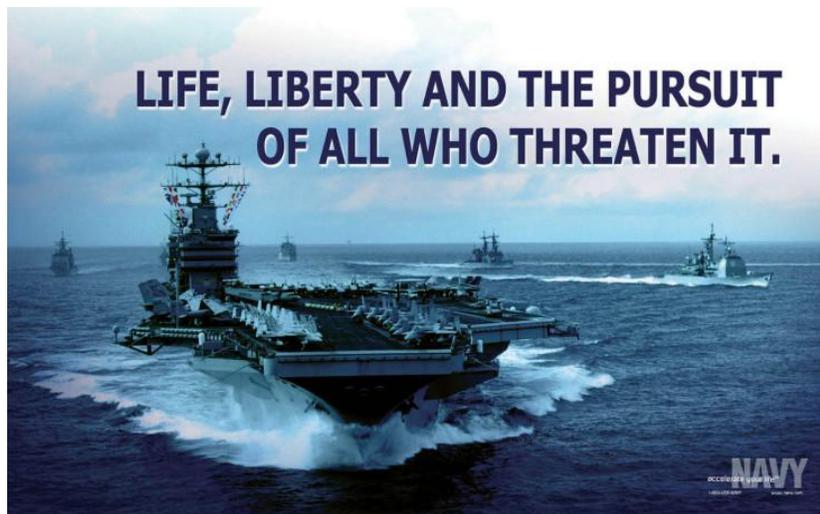
During this critical period the Vietnamization program continued in the face of the North Vietnamese invasion and the successful counterattack by the armed forces of the Republic of Vietnam. Recapture of Quang Tri City on 16 September 1972 marked the complete failure of the enemy to hold any of the targeted provincial capitols. Massive aid replaced materiel lost during the spring counteroffensive.

US combat and combat support operations were conducted in support of RVNAF ground operations during the North Vietnamese invasion and the counteroffensive including intensive interdiction of enemy supply routes into Vietnam. Since US ground forces had been reduced to seven battalions, the US ground combat role was limited to defense of key installations. [Soon after the Paris Agreements were signed and all U.S. and North Vietnamese troops were withdrawn. North Vietnam then re-invaded South Vietnam as the South Vietnamese army quickly collapsed and the county reunited under Communist rule.]



President Nixon would go on to get re-elected by the biggest presidential landside to date and order a second bombing offensive in North Vietnam called Linebacker II . It would be the most intensive bombing campaign of the entire war with over 100,000 bombs dropped on Hanoi and Haiphong. By early 1973 the Paris Peace talks were concluded. Under the terms, the U.S. agreed to immediately halt all military activities and withdraw all remaining military personnel within 60 days. The North Vietnamese agreed to an immediate cease-fire and the release of all American POWs within

60 days. An estimated 150,000 North Vietnamese soldiers presently in South Vietnam were allowed to remain. Vietnam was still divided. South Vietnam was considered to be one country with two governments, one led by President Thieu, the other led by the Viet Cong, pending future reconciliation. In 1975 the North Vietnamese Army invaded the rest of South Vietnam. On April 30, 1975 the war was finally over as North Vietnamese troops poured into Saigon encountering little resistance. By 11 a.m., the red and blue Viet Cong flag flew from the presidential palace as South President Minh broadcast a message of unconditional surrender.



BUT MOST OF ALL I AM PROUD TO SAYTHAT I WAS A SAILOR ONCE !



I Was a Sailor Once

I liked standing on the bridge wing at sunrise with salt spray in my face and clean ocean winds whipping in from the four quarters of the globe -

I liked the sounds of the Navy - the piercing trill of the boatswains pipe, the syncopated clangor of the ship's bell on the quarterdeck, harsh , and the strong language and laughter of sailors at work.

I liked Navy vessels – gleaming warships, sleek submarines and massive aircraft carriers.

I liked the proud names of Navy ships: Midway, Lexington, Saratoga, Coral Sea, Valley Forge - - memorials of great battles won and tribulations overcome.

I liked the tempo of a Navy band .

I liked liberty call and the spicy scent of a foreign port.

I even liked the never ending paperwork and all hands working parties as my ship filled herself with the multitude of supplies, both mundane and to cut ties to the land and carry out her mission anywhere on the globe where there was water to float her.

I liked sailors, officers and enlisted men from all parts of the land, farms of the Midwest, small towns of New England, from the cities, the mountains and the prairies, from all walks of life. I trusted and depended on them as they trusted and depended on me - for professional competence, for comradeship, for strength and courage. In a word, they were "shipmates"; then and forever.

I liked the surge of adventure in my heart, when the word was passed: "Now Hear This" "Now set the special sea and anchor detail - all hands to quarters for leaving port," and I liked the infectious thrill of sighting home again, with the waving hands of welcome from family and friends waiting pier side

The work was hard and dangerous; the going rough at times; the parting from loved ones painful, but the companionship of robust Navy laughter, the "all for one and one for all" philosophy of the sea was ever present.

I liked the serenity of the sea after a day of hard ship's work, as flying fish flitted across the wave tops and sunset gave way to night.

I liked the feel of the Navy in darkness - the masthead and range lights, the red and green navigation lights and stern light, the pulsating phosphorescence of radar repeaters - they cut through the dusk and joined with the mirror of stars overhead. And I liked drifting off to sleep lulled by the myriad noises large and small that told me that my ship was alive and well, and that my shipmates on watch would keep me safe.

I liked quiet mid-watches with the aroma of strong coffee -- the lifeblood of the Navy permeating everywhere.

And I liked hectic watches when the exacting minuet of haze-gray shapes racing at flank speed kept all hands on a razor edge of alertness.

I liked the sudden electricity of "General quarters, general quarters, all hands man your battle stations," followed by the hurried clamor of running feet on ladders and the resounding thump of watertight doors as the ship transformed herself in a few brief seconds from a peaceful workplace to a weapon of war -- ready for anything.

And I liked the sight of space-age equipment manned by youngsters clad in dungarees and sound-powered phones that their grandfathers would still recognize

I liked the traditions of the Navy and the men and women who made them. I liked the proud names of Navy heroes: Halsey, Nimitz, Perry, Farragut, John Paul Jones and Burke. A sailor could find much in the Navy: comrades-in-arms, pride in self and country, mastery of the seaman's trade. An adolescent could find adulthood.

In years to come, when sailors are home from the sea, AND SO WE ARE,--We still remember with fondness and respect the ocean in all its moods - the impossible shimmering mirror calm and the storm-tossed green water surging over the bow. And then there will come again a faint whiff of stack gas, a faint echo of engine and rudder orders, a vision of the bright bunting of signal flags snapping at the yardarm, a refrain of hearty laughter in the wardroom and chief's quarters and mess decks.

Gone ashore for good we grow humble about our Navy days, when the seas were a part of us and a new port of call was ever over the horizon.

**Remembering this, We stand taller now and say, " I WAS A SAILOR ONCE."
Unknown-**

