



Deployed

A Destroyer Story

by Bruce Bade

February 2015



FOREWORD

The drafting of this story was undertaken when I began to read the letters my wife and I had exchanged during my several extended deployments in Navy ships. Of course I was reliving those times as I read.

The deployment of USS JAMES E. KYES (DD 787) in 1972 presented a story of particular interest to me. When the letters were written I had a very focused view of my existence but, forty-odd years later, I needed a more comprehensive view of what had happened. Therefore I excerpted from the letters those passages that described what the ship and I had been doing. A compilation of these gave me a better understanding of the deployment.

It was so interesting to me that I wanted to share the compilation with my daughter, who was born after that deployment, with former shipmates, and with a few friends who, I thought, might be interested. The excerpts, however, required some explanation for those who hadn't had the pleasure of serving in a destroyer. The compilation of excerpts thus expanded to a more complete story.

While my memories are still pretty vivid, I was able to rely on some papers I'd kept. For example, I'd kept copies of all the daily ammunition expenditure reports. A bit less anally, I'd also kept some reports and messages that helped me reconstruct the chronology.

This story was never intended to address the home front, either on a personal or political level, nor was it intended to address any of the larger questions attendant to the conduct of the Vietnam war. And it's not intended to be soul-searching or a portrait of individuals. The excerpts from my letters provide a real-time, deck-level picture of what it was like to serve in a destroyer during a particularly active combat phase of the Vietnam war. The expansion on those excerpts became a testimonial to the experience of thousands of destroyer sailors who shared the time and place. That's all.

Bruce Bade
March 2015



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By the Spring of 1972 the United States had drawn down most of its combat forces in Vietnam, leaving on the ground mainly advisors and logistics personnel. In the process that became known as “Vietnamization” the Nixon Administration was extricating the United States from its most unpopular war. President Nixon had just visited China, peace talks were in progress, and it appeared that that the American nightmare of Vietnam was about to come to a close.

Then, in late March, the North Vietnamese launched a massive military campaign on three fronts. It became known as the “Easter Offensive” and was intended to gain military victories and territory that would give North Vietnam increased leverage in the peace talks, which seemed at that time to be coming to a conclusion. In April regular North Vietnam Army forces advanced in large formations across the demilitarized border, overwhelmed the Republic of Vietnam defenses, and took Quang Tri city.

Much has been written about the massive application of air power that the United States employed to support the Republic of Vietnam in this phase of the war. Certainly that was crucial and perhaps decisive. Few people have read, however, about the US Navy surface ships that played a critical role in the defeat of North Vietnam’s effort to gain the military victories and territory needed to influence the peace talks.

This is the story of one Navy ship caught up in the desperate effort to stop the Easter Offensive.

17 July 1972
South China Sea

Dearest Ginger,

Would you believe? Still no mail! Well, hardly any. We received some 2nd + 3rd class mail and I got a J. C. Whitney catalog. Such a deal.

Presently KYES is lying to about 5000 yards off the coast just a mile or two north of Quang Tri city. Among several cruisers and fifteen or twenty destroyers. I've never seen so many ships!

The South Vietnamese are located south of Quang Tri and the North Viets are north of the city. The ships here are in close support of the RVN's, and also generally harass and interdict the N. Viets between the front lines and the DMZ.

Letters

This is a chronological narrative of an arduous seven-month deployment in USS JAMES E. KYES (DD 787), told mostly through excerpts from letters written home by a 29-year-old Lieutenant during that deployment. My wife, Ginger, and I wrote to each other almost every day*. The correspondence we exchanged was not focused on JAMES E. KYES or my professional activities; rather, our letters addressed our two-year old daughter's progress, family matters, finance, thoughts about our future, how much we missed each other, books we were reading, and tender plans I had for Ginger when I got back. Dealing with our relationship and family matters took up most of the correspondence. The excerpts here, about the ship's employment and my activities, were a minor part.

Yet they tell a story of the ships and crews involved in what was certainly the longest period of intense shore bombardment in the history of the US Navy.

Surprise!

In March 1972 the twenty-seven year old GEARING Class FRAM I destroyer USS JAMES E. KYES was preparing to draw its long service to a close. She had served her country well and was berthed in San Diego awaiting formal orders to decommission.

The GEARING Class FRAMs were 390 feet long with a beam of 40 feet. They displaced about 3400 tons and drew about 15 feet at the bottom of the sonar dome. Propelled by twin screws driven by two steam turbines generating 60,000 shaft horsepower, they were exceptionally maneuverable and were capable of

**For those too young to remember: in 1972 there was no personal communication to and from Navy ships at sea other than snail mail. In port, telephone calls, even if one could be arranged, were prohibitively expensive. Letters were the only way we communicated.*

34 knots. Although modernized in the early 1960s primarily for anti-submarine warfare, they retained two of their 5"/38 twin dual purpose (anti-aircraft and anti-surface craft) gun mounts. A wartime complement of around 300 manned the ship.

JAMES E. KYES was a long-serving member of the prestigious "Little Beavers" squadron made famous by Arleigh Burke during WWII. Commissioned in 1946, she was a veteran of twenty deployments to the Western Pacific (WestPac). She had distinguished herself in combat in China, Korea and Vietnam and had participated in important fleet activities throughout her long service. Though she had been modernized in the early 1960s, she was becoming obsolescent and the Navy had determined that fleet modernization demanded letting some of the older ships go.

Preparation for decommissioning had by this time included the transfer of over a third of the crew to other ships and shore stations. No money was being spent to maintain the ship's equipment or to make any repairs. JAMES E. KYES was headed rapidly for the salvage yard or perhaps, if fortunate, to a life in another Navy.

It was not to be.

By late April the Commander, US Pacific Fleet, recognized that Navy assets in WestPac would not be adequate to meet the sudden and dramatic increase in operations to support the Republic of Vietnam in countering the Easter Offensive. West Coast ships were ordered to WestPac and, on the 22nd of May, JAMES E. KYES was informed that instead of decommissioning she would escort the attack aircraft carrier USS ORISKANY (CVA 34) to WestPac as soon as the latter was ready to sail.

To say that this came as a shock to Captain and crew would certainly be understatement.

An Unlikely Assignment

The Commanding Officer of JAMES E. KYES was Commander Stephen W. Reszetar, US Navy. A Naval Academy graduate, he had taken command of the ship only a few months earlier. He had begun preparations for decommissioning and was surprised when the Bureau of Naval Personnel (BUPERS) sent him a recent graduate of the Navy's Destroyer School. With no plans for operations, Captain Reszetar declined to give the new arrival a job.

That new officer was me, of course. I hadn't planned to be there, either, and perfectly understood the Captain's position. Nevertheless, the situation was a bit confusing to both of us and somewhat awkward.

The Naval Destroyer School in Newport, RI, prepared officers with previous destroyer experience to serve as department head in a destroyer. Its six-month curriculum included instruction in operations, engineering, weapon systems, and executive leadership. It was one of the Navy's premier schools. Assignment to it was selective and prestigious. The curriculum was intense and the exams were rigorous. There was also a strong undercurrent of competition among the students, many of whom believed they were destined for exalted rank.

It might not have been made clear at the outset but, as graduation approached, it was learned that the BUPERS would offer assignments in order of class standing. As it happened, my standing was relatively high and I would have my choice of assignments. Of course, the only choices were destroyers, but there were definitely differences. At the top of the list were the most modern guided missile destroyers. In the middle were newer frigates. At the bottom were the old World War II-vintage destroyers.

And my choice was the latter. But that's not how I ended up in KYES.

Fortuitous Opportunity, Unfortunate Diversion

At that point, even with almost seven years in the Navy, I still wasn't sure that I would make the Navy a career. I had joined the Navy in college when it was a certainty that I would serve my country in the military in some way. My dad had served as a Marine during the War and, draft notwithstanding, service to country was a given. When the Commanding Officer of the Naval Reserve Security Group Detachment in Madison, WI, sent me a letter at the beginning of my sophomore year at the University of Wisconsin, his offer seemed very attractive.

It happened that this Commanding Officer was also the head of the Slavic languages department at the University. He had sent letters to students achieving a "B" or above in beginning Russian, saying that the Navy needed linguists -- come and talk. So I did and learned that an enlistee would join the Naval Reserve and begin training to be a Communications Technician, but could apply for the Reserve Officer Program. The latter entailed spending summers at Officer Candidate School in Newport, and I did.

When I graduated from the University in 1965 I was commissioned along with the ROTC cadets. At my induction interview, the interviewing officer asked me what assignment I would like. "In the Security Group, Sir, so that I can put my language skills to good use." The Security Group was the Navy's signals intelligence organization, listening in on the communications of our potential enemies. The interviewing officer, a Commander, said: "Aw, that's for pussies, you want a destroyer." "Yes, Sir." It seemed like a good way to satisfy my military obligation.

The assignment was to USS RUPERTUS (DD 851), a WWII-vintage GEARING Class FRAM destroyer home-ported in Yokosuka, Japan. I was pretty excited -- a destroyer, and an exotic home port! And, at the time, the destroyers operating in WestPac had just begun to take an active role in the expanding Vietnam war. It was a most fortuitous assignment -- and I didn't know the half of it:

RUPERTUS was the most proficient, most efficient, and most effective organization I have ever had the privilege of serving.

RUPERTUS was a great ship but, after satisfying my three years service obligation, I was ready to leave the Navy. The Captain and the Executive Officer had other ideas. They interceded with BUPERS to get me an assignment that would keep me in the Navy. A job in the Navy Headquarters in London, England, did the trick. During my tour in RUPERTUS I had married my high school sweetheart, Ginger, and we thought that three years in London would be a great adventure. It was. When our time in London came to an end without any job prospects, the Navy's offer of Destroyer School seemed attractive to me. By that time we had gained a daughter and, without a job prospect in London, at least another Navy tour would get us back to the States where I could find a civilian job.

So my choice of ship was not going to be made on the basis of a career progression plan. When it came time to choose, we learned that our good friend Jack Tomion, who had been Executive Officer in RUPERTUS, would be going to command of a destroyer -- a GEARING Class FRAM. There was no officer in the Navy I liked or respected more than Jack. He had a great sense of humor and an eclectic mind. Serving with Jack would be a blast. To make it even more attractive, his destroyer, USS BAUSELL (DD 845) would be home-ported in Yokosuka -- my family would have an adventure.

Jack agreed to have me and we thought BUPERS would take it from there. Not so fast. At the time none of the three department heads in BAUSELL was scheduled to rotate, so BUPERS decided I would be "stashed" in JAMES E. KYES until a billet opened up. We regarded this presumably temporary measure as an annoying but survivable diversion.

One does not have to be paranoid to imagine, in retrospect, that BUPERS knew something I didn't and that this really wasn't intended to be a temporary diversion.

Orders to Deploy

When KYES received orders to deploy it became clear that I would not be transferred to BAUSELL. Captain Reszetar made me Weapons Officer and we began hurried preparations for a wartime deployment. At that point a definite date for sailing had not been set. ORISKANY had not planned to deploy, either, and the sailing date would be the date that she was ready to sail. Both ships -- and ORISKANY's air wing -- had to "re-man" to bring the ships' crews up to complement, repair neglected equipment, load stores, and attend to dozens of other important pre-deployment tasks.

Of course, making family arrangements was necessary for many crew members. Expecting to be in San Diego only temporarily, Ginger and I had left our household goods in storage and rented an apartment on a month-to-month basis. Those accommodations were not suitable for her and our daughter while I was deployed and there was no time to make other arrangements. After consulting with my parents we decided that she would go to Wisconsin (where her parents also resided) to live with them for the duration of the deployment.

"MAKE ALL PREPARATIONS FOR GETTING UNDERWAY. THE SHIP EXPECTS TO GET UNDERWAY AT 0900. THE UNIFORM FOR GETTING UNDERWAY IS SERVICE DRESS BLUE'

"STATION THE SPECIAL SEA DETAIL"

It took only two weeks for ORISKANY to get ready to sail. During that time, KYES replaced the four 5" main battery gun barrels, loaded out stores, fixed what could be fixed, and took aboard over one hundred new crew members scavenged from other ships and the shore establishment in San Diego. On 5 June 1972 KYES

sailed from San Diego to rendezvous with ORISKANY and make the 20-knot transit to Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines.

Captain Reszetar let me get KYES underway and conn her out of San Diego harbor. We had not had much time to contemplate what the deployment would bring and little did we know what an extraordinary deployment it would be.

A Fast Transit

The crew barely knew one another, to say nothing about working together. Usually a Navy ship has a pre-deployment workup that includes at least six weeks of "Refresher Training." During that period the ship practices all evolutions and exercises all of the shipboard equipment. JAMES E. KYES had to do that during a fast transit between San Diego and Subic Bay.

As the Weapons Department Head, I reported to the Captain with responsibility for the Gunnery Division, the Anti-Submarine Warfare Division, and the Deck Division. These were responsible, respectively, for maintaining and operating the ship's guns and fire control systems; maintaining and operating the sonar, ASROC and torpedo systems; and maintaining the ship's topsides and performing deck evolutions such as anchoring, mooring, and taking on stores while underway. ENS Rich Pearce was the Gunnery Officer, LTjg Bill Gavin led the Anti-Submarine Warfare Division, and LTjg Paul Zeman was First Lieutenant, responsible for deck evolutions.

There were two other line departments in KYES: LT Chuck Miller led the Operations Department and LT Ken Taylor was Chief Engineer. All three of us, plus LTjg Bill Loomis, the Supply Corps Officer in charge of the Supply Department, were supervised by LCDR Jerry Olson, the Captain's Executive Officer (XO). It was a congenial group.

On 8 June I wrote to Ginger:

...By the time you read this I'll have left Hawaii. We plan to stop there for fuel tomorrow night and leave Saturday morning -- so effectively no liberty there!

We've had good weather. If you figure out the distance from San Diego to Pearl Harbor you will see that we have been traveling very fast to make it by Friday.

I'm sort of settling into my job. There is so much to be done to get the ship ready -- we barely know how to go to GQ -- and I've been very busy, of course. I am standing one-in-four watches, and as Weapons Officer I'm responsible to see that the guns shoot when and where they're supposed to, that the underway refueling detail is organized, that the department as a whole functions effectively. We have shot the guns two days in a row with unerring accuracy -- we hit our target, the Pacific Ocean, on all tries. As Senior Watch Officer, I am responsible for organizing and training all underway and inport watches, a considerable job now that everything has changed (WestPac requires a different set-up for everything).

I think I'm still losing weight -- anyway, I'm not gaining, and I'm eating well at all meals. Must be the exercise. Or lack of beer.

Today I got cholera and smallpox inoculations -- still have to get plague. I don't relish that.

Knowing that one of our primary missions would be naval gunfire support, one of our first tasks was to get organized for that and work through the various gunnery exercises to train ourselves to do it safely and effectively. General Quarters assignments were drawn up, manning the gun mounts, handling rooms, magazines,

and fire control stations. The ship's main battery 5"/38 caliber guns were fired at imaginary targets plotted in the wide Pacific Ocean. Everyone got to do the job he would do when we engaged in combat operations.

ORISKANY and KYES stopped in Hawaii for fuel, arriving on Friday night and departing on Saturday for Guam. On 11 June I wrote Ginger:

At sea, again. Weather is getting warmer. I had the mid-watch last night and it was clear -- just millions of stars, and with no moon you could see every one of them. Makes me want to dream.

Today is Sunday. Every day we retard the clocks one hour because of our westward movement. 25-hour days! When we cross the International Dateline, we lose a complete day. We won't see Tuesday the 13th this year!

The urgency of the transit precluded practicing many of the evolutions that the ship would have to perform during the deployment. Man overboard exercises could only be simulated, the boat could not be launched and recovered, the highline could not be tested, and so forth. Other evolutions, such as underway refueling, were practiced by necessity -- a destroyer ordinarily refueled every three days. Some of these evolutions were indeed learning experiences.

On 17 June I wrote Ginger:

Well, we didn't see Tuesday. Tomorrow we arrive in Guam. It's getting hot -- and it's so humid. I feel greasy all the time. The air conditioners on old Jimmy E. just can't hack the load, either, so even my stateroom is hot and muggy during the day.

We are slowly getting organized, tho' there is still a lot of work to be done. Morale is good, food is fair, laundry is excellent.

If this letter sounds sort of boring it's because transiting the Pacific is not exactly the most exciting thing I can think of. Only moderately interesting events have been the refuelings from ORISKANY, and if they hadn't been so screwed up even that would have been boring. All I do is read pubs, pester division officers to get things done, write memos, sort out papers, etc. And on we steam.

The bridge watch for routine steaming consisted of an Officer of the Deck (OOD), a Junior Officer of the Deck (JOOD), a Boatswains Mate of the Watch, a Quartermaster of the Watch, a Helmsman, a Lee Helmsman, a Phone Talker, a Messenger of the Watch, an After Steering watch, and three Lookouts. The Combat Information Center was manned by a CIC Officer of the Watch, a couple of radar operators and communicators, and a Sonar Watch. A Signalmen or two stood watch on the signal bridge and someone manned the radio room. Machinists Mates manned the two engine rooms, Boiler Technicians manned the boiler room in operation, and Electricians Mates tended to the electrical switchboard.

The bridge, CIC, and the signal bridge communicated over a speaker system. The bridge was connected to the engine rooms, after steering, and the aft lookout by "sound powered" phones consisting of a headset and a mouthpiece that would continue to operate even if electrical power were lost. The Messenger of the Watch stood by to take messages to places that weren't connected. The "1 MC" general announcing circuit enabled the bridge watch to make general announcements to speakers in every occupied space in the ship.

For specific evolutions such as refueling at sea or operating with an aircraft carrier, and for higher levels of readiness, these positions were augmented as necessary for whatever operation was being conducted.

None of the watchstanders on the bridge ever sat down, notwithstanding the two large, comfortable swivel chairs on the bridge. The port chair was reserved for embarked senior officers not part of ship's company, such as a squadron commander. The starboard chair was for the exclusive use of the Commanding Officer, who often occupied it. The Captain also had a small "sea cabin" adjacent to the bridge where he usually slept when the ship was underway.

For transits like this, in company with a larger ship commanded by a superior officer, KYES was assigned a "station" at a given relative bearing and distance from ORISKANY. The conning officer, either the OOD or the JOOD, had the task of maneuvering the ship to maintain this position. Situational awareness was maintained by radar on the bridge and in CIC, by sonar in CIC, and by the lookouts.

Without the distractions and interruptions of time in port, the crew fell into the underway routine and gradually the ship began to feel proficient. By the time we got to Guam, one could sense the new confidence. Personally, I felt fortunate to have served for three years in RUPERTUS, an identical ship, and to have participated in all the evolutions that KYES would have to perform on this deployment. As a result of that experience and the Destroyer School training, I was well qualified to get KYES ready. During this emergency, ad hoc training Captain Reszetar was trusting and supportive, giving gentle advice and letting the officers and crew exercise their skills and judgment.

By the time we reached Guam we were already missing home. On arrival in Guam I wrote Ginger:

18 June 1972

Apra Harbor, Guam

We arrived in Guam at first light this morning, and I received your letters of 8, 9 and 10 June. I'm a little worried at the tone of your letters, and hope that things are getting better for you....

Coming to Guam is sort of sentimental -- Dad fought here during the war, you know. It brought tears to my eyes when we came in and I thought about Dad's friends dying here. I won't have a chance to see the island this trip -- too short a stay. I did go out on the pier and drank a beer, tho'!"

Life in a destroyer can be stressful at times, but it probably doesn't compare to living with a two-year old daughter in the same house as your mother-in-law. From time to time Ginger's letters reflected the stress and frustration of the situation this deployment had thrust her into.

Seeing Guam for the first time was an emotional experience for me. My father fought in the Marianas Campaign with a heavy weapons company in the 2nd Marine Division. He was in the assaults on Saipan and Guam, and in the mop-up operation on Tinian. Though he would occasionally tell some amusing stories about his time in the Marines, he evidently found it too difficult to discuss the combat experience with me. Somehow I did learn that he had lost friends there.

Once a Marine, always a Marine. Dad marched in uniform in all the Memorial Day parades in our small town, along with his fellow veterans. His service had a profound effect on me. In many ways, my service was an attempt to live up to his.

Sometimes being at sea is a transcendent experience. One such time was when ORISKANY and KYES passed through the San Bernardino Strait. As I wrote to Ginger:

*20 June 1972
At sea*

This evening we passed through the San Bernardino Straights south of Luzon (look it up in the atlas) and I think I've just seen the most beautiful evening/sunset of my life. I ran out of film early in the evening, so you'll have to take my word for it!

The islands here are mountainous and rugged, covered with jungle. Several volcanos stand out -- one is called Mayon Volcano, and it is perfectly conical. Smoke drifts from its peak, and it stands out from the land in much the same manner as Fuji in Japan. Near it are large cumulus clouds, catching the last rays of the sun and harboring brief flashes of heat lightning. The water is calm, the sky is deep blue, the clouds and sunset grey, orange, red, yellow, white, mauve, and unbelievably beautiful. The sunset covers nearly half the horizon, and the clouds are even red behind to the east. I can't tell you how much I wish you could see this -- now when I suggest we get a yacht....

The sunsets in the tropics are spectacular and, except for the monsoon season, beautiful sunrises and sunsets are the norm in the South China Sea. During previous deployments in RUPERTUS I had photographed many of them. The evening of the San Bernardino Strait transit was particularly enjoyable because it was a pleasantly warm evening and the ship was just steaming along peacefully in calm blue waters. It was a time for contemplation -- and the last one we would have for some months.

Down to Business

“REVEILLE, REVEILLE, ALL HANDS TURN OUT AND TRICE UP. THE SMOKING LAMP IS LIGHTED IN ALL AUTHORIZED SPACES”

“SET THE SPECIAL SEA AND MOORING DETAIL. THE SHIP EXPECTS TO MOOR STARBOARD SIDE TO AT PIER TWO, NAVAL BASE SUBIC BAY, AT 0830”

ORISKANY and KYES arrived in Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines, on Wednesday, 21 June. After seven years of war, the US Navy installation in Subic Bay was a massive logistics and repair yard facility. I reported to Ginger;

*23 June 1972
Subic Bay*

If you think Wisconsin is hot and muggy, you should try Subic Bay. Unreal!

Perhaps it's the weather, with its effect on appetite -- my 33 trousers are now loose! Even my old whites fit, tho' they're still a little snug.

I got a letter from Jack Tomion, written June 7, when we arrived here. He was still under the impression I'd come to BAUSELL in July, of course, so I wrote him a long letter explaining the situation....

We get under way tomorrow -- only three days in Subic. We plan to be at sea until early August. It looks as if the entire cruise will be one month at sea, one week upkeep in Subic, then back to sea for another month. Unless the war stops. It would be nice to get some decent ports. Subic is not my idea of a great place to go!...

...I brought the ship into Subic. Our berth wasn't ready when we arrived, so we had to go to an anchorage for a half-hour. So I got to anchor the ship, and get it underway from anchor. Then we got a pilot, because the berth we came to was a difficult one -- the Captain and the pilot let

me do it, under their not infrequent advisement. It was fun -- I really do enjoy this business once in a while.

Subic has been mostly flails, of course, since we have only three days to get ready to go to sea. We'll operate with the aircraft carriers for a little while, then go to the gun line.

“Mostly flails.” That’s the sailor’s way of explaining a situation in which there is too little time to accomplish needed tasks, there are constant interruptions with unexpected new demands, things go wrong, and confusion is rampant. It characterizes most inport periods and explains why getting underway is a great relief. Pulling up the brow and taking in the mooring lines separates the ship from that chaotic world, putting her back in an element where she regains some semblance of control over her destiny. There is much truth to the saying “Sailors belong on ships and ships belong at sea.”

So, for me, there was little regret in leaving Subic behind. Time to do what the ship had been preparing to do. As we steamed toward Vietnam, I told Ginger:

28 June 1972

South China Sea

Tomorrow we go to war (for pay purposes -- the ORISKANY flies a milk run or two into S. Vietnam to qualify for combat pay for the month of June). I should say today, since it's 0200 -- I just got off watch. We did our first night refueling tonight, and it went relatively well. Had a full moon and calm seas, so conditions couldn't have been much better. The CO conned alongside, and he blew his approach. So nobody else's mistakes were pointed out too noisily!

Yesterday and today were spent plane guarding (following) the ORISKANY while she practiced landing and launching aircraft. From now on she will be flying strikes.

...Nothing else going on. Tell Dad I got two Marines in my Department in Subic. They are Redeye missile shooters, and they are supposed to shoot down attacking missiles and jets with their Redeye anti-aircraft missiles. Hope they can. Neither one is old enough to shave.

Redeye was a first generation man-portable surface-to-air missile system (MANPAD, for “man portable air defense”). It was deployed aboard destroyers lacking anti-aircraft missile systems for defense against North Vietnam MiGs. In April a MiG 17 had attacked USS OKLAHOMA CITY (CLG 6) and USS HIGBEE (DD 806), bombing HIGBEE and destroying her after 5” gun mount. Miraculously, there were no casualties aboard HIGBEE but thereafter the threat needed an answer. Older destroyers like JAMES E. KYES and HIGBEE, lacking missile systems, depended upon the 5” guns for air defense. Ordinarily that is a potent defense at sea but, in close proximity to the coast of Vietnam, there was insufficient time to bring them to bear when MiGs, hugging the terrain, popped up over the water. When close to land the Marines, trained to use Redeye, stood constant, excruciatingly boring watches on JAMES E. KYES weather decks. Fortunately, they were never called upon to fire their weapon.

“STATION THE PLANE GUARD DETAIL”

KYES operated with ORISKANY as an element of Task Group 77.4 in the Tonkin Gulf for two weeks at the end of June and the beginning of July. Operating with aircraft carriers was the least demanding of the missions assigned to destroyers in the Vietnam theater. In addition to screening the carrier against air and submarine threats, a destroyer was stationed 1500 yards astern of the carrier in “plane guard” station whenever flight operations were in progress. The intent was to

rescue pilots who went into the drink during launch and recovery operations, which rarely happened.

Out in the Tonkin Gulf with an aircraft carrier the threat was diminished and the ship could be operated in four-section watches, giving the crew time to carry out routine work such as preventive maintenance. Ordinarily these operations required only two (out of four) boilers, enabling the crew to perform maintenance on the unused boilers. Occasionally low winds would require the carrier to steam at high speeds to get wind over the deck for launching heavily laden strike aircraft, and that required the destroyers to put more boilers on line. Nevertheless, operations with aircraft carriers were usually routine and predictable. A bonus was regular delivery of mail.

It was a good way to break in the crew for fleet operations.

All good things come to an end, however, and so it was for JAMES E. KYES. As we left ORISKANY I wrote to Ginger:

*8 July 1972
South China Sea*

...Just a short note to let you know I'm still here. No mail since I last wrote, and the outlook is not good. We've detached from ORISKANY to go on the gun line, and mail will be even slower (?) there. We will be on station tomorrow, and I'll be shooting the guns.

And that's about it. No excitement. Captain doesn't harrass me, nor does the XO, so things go rather smoothly. I have tended to harrass a couple of my officers lately -- Paul Zeman (1st LT) about UNREP details and Rich Pearce

(big tall guy, Gunnery Officer) about record keeping on our ammunition.

Otherwise things are just plain normal. I'm getting a little irritated about the mail system, however....

Mail was very important but its delivery was always a problem. Most of the crew depended on mail for morale. Unfortunately, schedules in WestPac were chaotic during this deployment and mail delivery was spotty at best. It would be flown in to Subic Bay, then out to an aircraft carrier by Carrier Onboard Delivery aircraft, then by helo to the recipient ship or a replenishment ship for further delivery. If one missed the replenishment ship, or detached early from the aircraft carrier operation, the mail would end up chasing the ship for days or weeks. Because of these conditions, people received letters from home out of order -- that undoubtedly led to some strife in communication with loved ones.

“SET THE SPECIAL SEA AND REFUELING DETAIL. THE SMOKING LAMP IS OUT THROUGHOUT THE SHIP”

A destroyer depends on others for more than mail, of course, and at sea it acquires those things by conducting underway replenishment, or UNREP. Destroyers got fuel, food, and ammunition from a variety of service force ships: oilers, stores ships, ammunition ships and even fast combat support ships that could provide everything. For fuel the ship had to steam alongside the oiler long enough to get the rig over and pump the fuel, usually an hour or so. Stores and ammunition were also delivered by connected replenishment (CONREP): a cable between two ships is kept in tension and loads transferred on a pulley system.

The larger stores and ammunition ships often had helicopters (CH-46 Sea Knights) for delivery of food, spare parts, and ammunition -- the helicopters deposited these items on the destroyer's DASH flight deck. This method was called vertical replenishment, or VERTREP. The skill of the helo pilots was beautiful to behold.

Whether by CONREP or VERTREP, stores and ammunition had to be struck below by hand. UNREPs were consequently all hands evolutions. With many sailors topside to manage the rigs and handle stores or ammunition, there was always the hazard of injury or man overboard, especially in heavy weather. My harassment of LTjg Zeman, who as First Lieutenant was responsible for the sailors and equipment employed in UNREPs, was focused on making sure that the equipment was in top-notch condition and that safety measures were defined and drilled into the crew.

KYES conducted one hundred UNREPs during this deployment. It is a source of some pride to note that there were no serious injuries or loss of material in any of them, despite the fact that many were conducted in awful weather.

Firing the Guns in Anger

“GENERAL QUARTERS! GENERAL QUARTERS! ALL HANDS MAN YOUR BATTLE STATIONS. SET CONDITION ZEBRA THROUGHOUT THE SHIP. GENERAL QUARTERS”

Upon detachment from ORISKANY, KYES was sent to Task Group 70.5.4 to provide naval gunfire support to forces ashore. The first assignments were in Military Regions II and III, around the mouth of the Saigon River and somewhat further north. Later, KYES joined a large number of ships on the “gun line” near Quang Tri city just south of the Demilitarized Zone. The gun line was an undefined area off the coast of South Vietnam near Quang Tri city. In the summer of 1972 the US Navy had stationed a large number of cruisers and destroyers there to provide naval gunfire support to Republic of Vietnam forces defending Quang Tri.

By 9 July KYES was providing naval gunfire support at the rate of several missions and about 100 rounds of 5” ammunition per day. On 12 July I wrote to Ginger:

...Would you believe? Still no mail. It's out here somewhere.

We have been on Naval Gunfire Support for several days. On our way here, while refueling, we had to conduct an emergency break-away because our steering failed. The next day we were to have a conference with the spotter, who flew out in a helicopter we were not prepared to land. So we spent the rest of the day anchored in Vung Tau, and sent the boat in after him. The boat crapped out. We began shooting the next evening and had problems with the gun mounts -- firing circuits shorting out, ammunition hoists malfunctioning, etc.

I forgot -- when we refueled the oiler's probe malfunctioned and spilled oil all over us.

And I've had about 3 hours of sleep a night for the last two nights.

Other than that, things are just peachy. Haven't heard any news for about 1 1/2 weeks (no newspapers and nothing has come in on the radio). Just sort of floating along out here...

Operations on the gun line were more demanding of crew and equipment than operations with the carriers. As KYES began to conduct fire missions the weaknesses in the gun and fire control systems manifested themselves with frustrating regularity. The shock of firing the guns quickly shook loose or broke anything that was vulnerable. Once a casualty was addressed and the equipment repaired, however, reliability rapidly increased: either the equipment was given a more or less permanent fix or we learned how to fix it quickly the next time it failed.

I wrote again the same day:

Would you believe? Still no mail!...

...Presently KYES is lying to about 5000 yards off the coast just a mile or two north of Quang Tri city. Among several cruisers and fifteen or twenty destroyers. I've never seen so many ships!

The South Vietnamese are located south of Quang Tri and the North Viets are north of the city. The ships here are in close support of the RVNs, and also generally harass and interdict the N. Viets between the front lines and the DMZ. Apparently there is no lack of targets. We fired almost continuously from 2100 last night until 0500 this morning for an airborne spotter who claimed we were doing all sorts of damage -- secondary explosions, fires, etc. Occasionally a flight of B-52s drop a load in the area (every 3-6 hours), and that is an awesome thing to behold. The entire ship shakes, and we're ten miles or so from the bombing. I can't conceive of what it must be like to be under those bombs.

I'm standing "port and starboard" watches, as is most of the crew. Six on and six off. My job is controlling our gunfire (i.e., telling the guns where and when and how much to shoot). I hope that this letter doesn't sound too warlike, but I guess that there is no other way to describe what's going on here. I haven't developed any qualms about doing the job -- neither do I find it particularly exhilarating.

USS GLENNON (Ty Sigler) is stationed next to us presently and fired along with us for the same spotter last night. Mike Kenslow's ship (MULLINEX) is here, Joe Neal

(STRAUS), too. Probably others, but I can't remember off hand.

I'm going to have to stop and get some sleep or I won't make it through the next watch...

The Arc Light strikes by the B-52s were indeed awesome and were conducted regularly, especially at night.

Fellow graduates from my Destroyer School class were present in ships on the gun line -- it was almost like old home week there. All the ships were constantly firing missions. It was demanding and, for many of the crew, very physical work. "NOW STATION THE SPECIAL SEA AND REARMING DETAIL. THE SMOKING LAMP IS OUT THROUGHOUT THE SHIP"

Expenditure of ammunition meant that it had to be replenished. An ammunition ship was stationed ten or fifteen miles off the coast and constantly rearmed the destroyers. On the 15th KYES rearmed from USS NITRO (AE 23), taking on several hundred projectiles and as many propellant charges. Rearming required each 55 pound projectile and each 40 pound propellant charge to be hand-delivered into the ship's magazines, passed sailor-to-sailor in a chain from the weatherdeck to the magazines.

Rearming proceeded as follows: the ammunition ship would steam on a steady course at about twelve knots. The destroyer would pull up alongside and a shot line would be sent over, usually propelled by a pneumatic line thrower. The destroyer would then haul over a heavier line, then the wire cable over which the ammunition would be carried. The cable would be secured to the destroyer's superstructure and kept at appropriate tension by an operator at a cable winch on the ammunition ship. Ammunition pallets would be sent from the ammunition ship to the destroyer in web slings and deposited on deck by slacking the cable. Sailors would detach the sling from the cable and move the pallet out of the way using a

hand pallet truck. Usually a web sling full of retrograde propellant canisters and empty pallets would make the return trip to the ammunition ship. This was repeated until all the ammunition was transferred, whereupon the rig would be sent back to the ammunition ship and the destroyer would pull away to strike the ammunition below on the way back to the gun line. It was hard work.

Replenishing stores, fuel, or ammunition required the destroyer to keep station on the replenishment ship, maintaining exactly the same speed and a constant distance. Constant small changes to the destroyers speed and course were required. Except in the most dangerous situations, Captain Reszetar gave the job of conning the ship to the junior officers to give them experience in this essential skill. Executing a smart approach was crucial to the ship's reputation: the destroyer would approach the replenishment ship at a relatively fast closing rate, pull up alongside, and smartly slow to the replenishment ship's speed, sometimes using backing orders. It was an art. Likewise, a smart break-away upon completion was the mark of an accomplished destroyer. These maneuvers were, after all, being observed by the commanding officer of the replenishment ship, invariably senior to the destroyer's skipper. Word gets around...

Almost all fire missions were indirect fire; that is, the targets were not in a line-of-sight of the ship. A typical fire mission might go like this: a destroyer would be assigned a fire support area and would steam slowly within the area awaiting a call for fire. Communication with ashore fire control parties -- invariably identified by an organization code name followed by "Two Six Charlie" -- was by VHF radio. Fire missions were conducted without encryption, that is, "in the clear," but usually the spotter and the ship conducted a coded authentication before conducting a new mission. The "call for fire" request would come in and the communication would proceed something like this:

Twister [ship's call sign], **this is Cactus Two-Six Charlie** [shore party or airborne liaison call sign], **Fire Mission, Over.**

Two Six Charlie, this is Twister, Roger, Over.

This is Two Six Charlie, Fire Mission, Target: Troops in the open, Grid 16584327, Altitude One Five, Bearing 025, One Gun, Main Armament, High Explosive, Fuse Quick, At My Command, Over.

This is Twister, Roger, Fire Mission, Target troops in the open, Grid 16584327, Altitude One Five, Bearing 025, One Gun, Main Armament, High Explosive, Fuse Quick, At My Command, Out.

Ready, Over.

Ready, Break, Fire, Over

Fire, over. Shot... Splash, Out.

Right Five Zero, Drop One Hundred, Repeat, Over.

Right Five Zero, Drop One Hundred, Repeat, Out.

Ready, Over.

Ready, Break, Fire, Over.

Fire, Over. Shot... Splash, Out.

Two Guns, Four Salvoes, Fire For Effect, When Ready, Over.

Two Guns, Four Salvoes, Fire For Effect, When Ready, Out.

Shot... Splash... Rounds Complete, Out.

This is Two Six Charlie, End of Mission. Troops dispersed, Six Kilo India Alpha, Four Whiskey India Alpha, Over.

This is Twister, Roger, Out.

Here's how it usually worked on a FRAM destroyer with WWII-vintage fire control and guns: Upon receiving a call for fire, the ship increased its level of readiness, usually by going to General Quarters, and repositioned as necessary. When the target was within range of the guns, the ship would begin to steam slowly on a steady course that brought its guns to bear. Personnel in the Combat Information Center (CIC) would plot the course and speed made good over the ground and the reciprocal would be given as "target course and speed" to the Fire

Control personnel operating the fire control computer. This gave the fire control computer a head start on the solution, awaiting the precise range and bearing to the target.

Once the target was plotted on a chart in CIC, its range and bearing would be sent to the fire control room ("Plot") and would be entered into the fire control computer: "Bearing 286, Range niner five four seven, on my mark...mark." This was repeated until the computer generated a solution and the fire control personnel would report "Ready." Meanwhile, the gun mount being used would get ready, preparing the type of ammunition requested by the shore party.

When all was in order, the ship would report "Ready" to the shore fire control party (it was a matter of combat effectiveness -- and of pride and reputation -- to get to "Ready" fast). The spotter would give the command to fire when he was ready to adjust the shots. The ship would report the discharge of each spotting round and, with a "time of flight" derived from the fire control computer, give the spotter a five second warning before the round was to hit: "Splash, out." That enabled the spotter to keep his head down except when necessary to view the impact.

The spotter would adjust the fire along his "Bearing" to the target. Aboard ship the crew used a device with a rotating disc of plexiglass to convert the spotter's adjustment to that along the ship-target line. "Right five zero, Drop one hundred" might translate into "Right seven five, Drop four five" for orders to the fire control computer.

Once the fire was adjusted onto the target, the spotter would call for "Fire for Effect." The ship then expeditiously fired the requested number of salvos. Often "Fire for Effect" was repeated as necessary to deal with the target, with adjustment as needed. The mission ended with a damage assessment report from the spotter.

There were many variations on this method, particularly in the ways the ship located itself in relation to the target, such as anchoring in the mission area to eliminate errors in calculating ship course and speed or using a fire control radar range and bearing to a point ashore and feeding the computer directly. Ships became very proficient and the naval gunfire liaison parties ashore became familiar with each ship. Variations also included using airborne spotters. A variety of munitions were called for: illumination rounds at night, impact-fused high explosive, time fuses to achieve fragmentation air bursts, variable time fuses to achieve air bursts, white phosphorus for smoke or to start fires (or sometimes fired as an air burst to frighten enemy troops at night), and rocket assisted projectiles (RAP) for extended range. Armor piercing projectiles were available but rarely used, though base fuses with a capability for a slight delay after impact were sometimes used to avoid premature detonations in the jungle triple canopy.

Much of the ammunition was from WWII production and there were occasional malfunctions. Over half of the illumination rounds failed to perform properly. Probably one in twenty proximity-fused projectiles exploded prematurely, often within a few hundred yards of the ship. Every once in a while a propellant charge would fail to fire, in which case it was necessary to use a "clearing charge" to get the projectile out of the hot barrel as quickly as possible. Sometimes that didn't work -- especially when the problem was the gun and not the propellant charge -- and there was danger of the projectile "cooking off" in the barrel. That caused high anxiety and a fire hose was immediately brought into play to cool down the hot barrel. Once the projectile was rammed and had engaged the lands in the barrel it could not be backed out, so the high anxiety persisted until the fault was corrected and the projectile could be fired.

Targets included troops, ammunition dumps, vehicles, even roads. At times shore fire control parties requested "Harassment and Interdiction" fires, or H&I, usually at night to keep enemy forces awake or to prevent their movement.

The work was sometimes relieved by receipt of mail or some other good news.

“MAIL CALL. DIVISION MAIL PETTY OFFICERS LAY TO THE POST OFFICE TO PICK UP DIVISIONAL MAIL”

20 July 1972
South China Sea

You won't believe this -- today we received mail! Real letters!

...We've dealt very little death and destruction today. This is getting old and it is surely going to be another week and a half before we leave here (here meaning the gun line).

23 July 1972
South China Sea

Yesterday we fired over 500 rounds in support of a South Vietnamese helicopter insertion near Bon Son Pass. To date we've fired well over 1600 rounds "in anger." Which means we've also had to replenish that many (and they come in two pieces -- projectile and propellant). A lot of hard work. We are just the "via addressees" between the ammo ships and the beach.

...The ammo ship we rearmed from today sent over some real ice cream, so tonight we had ice cream and blueberries. First real ice cream since God knows when. Guam, I think.

...This month we've received mail (first class) on the 4th and the 20th. Hope things improve. With so many schedule changes our mail just doesn't catch up with us. We even know where it is, usually, but just can't get it.

It's flown out from Subic to one of the carriers, then transferred to an oiler or ammo ship for further transfer to us or to another ship for transfer to us. If the ships don't happen to meet, the mail has to be transferred to another one, etc. Sometimes a helicopter from a carrier or large UNREP ship makes a delivery. Outgoing mail works in reverse. I hope you're getting my letters....

KYES had departed the gun line on the 21st to support the RVN effort to reopen the coastal road at Bong Son Pass but was back on the gun line until departure for upkeep in Subic Bay on the 26th.

Rain

It was raining hard when KYES arrived in Subic on July 28th and my letters home commented on the relentless rain that kept up through the ship's upkeep period there:

*1 August 1972
Subic Bay*

...It is still raining (pouring). The rain has not let up -- at all -- since we pulled in here five days ago. It is getting just a little depressing....

*5 August 1972
Subic Bay*

Still raining. It has rained here for well over 30 days, and it's causing problems. The local economy has about had it -- no food, no communication (roads are out everywhere), in some cases, no water (believe it or not!). Cubi Point is one place affected by the water -- a reservoir was polluted

or destroyed by a mud slide or something, so no water services. They closed the Cubi Officer's Club.

Life goes on. But I can't get very happy about it. This God-awful constant downpour is just depressing....

This upkeep period -- the first port call in over a month -- was the first maintenance opportunity the ship had been given since well before leaving San Diego. We had expected to carry out a lot of deferred maintenance with the assistance of the shipyard in Subic. It was pouring rain when we arrived and it rained without stopping until we left ten days later. The shipyard was crippled, the logistic support activity was a mess, and the ship just kept getting soaked inside and out. KYES was in worse condition when she left Subic than she was upon arrival, if that's possible.

The Filipinos had it worse. It rained for 37 days and some remote villages were completely cut off and partially submerged. Navy helos provided some help by delivering food and water to some of these villages but the suffering was terrible.

Schedule Changes

KYES was back underway on the 9th of August, when I reported to Ginger:

9 August 1972

South China Sea

We are enroute to the "gun line." By the time you get this we may be elsewhere. Hope it's with a good aircraft carrier that delivers a lot of mail.

I've been appointed the investigating officer to inquire into the case of a Conscientious Objector aboard KYES. I'll probably agree with him. I can't muster a lot of argument

for fighting -- this damned war has produced more C.O.s than the last two, I'm sure....

“Gun damage assessments” -- that is, reports of the observed effects of the firing missions -- were required for each fire mission. These were reported to KYES at the conclusion of each mission over the VHF radio circuit and usually heard on speakers in CIC and on the bridge. These included reports of enemy casualties. Everyone on board knew what the ship was doing and at least one sailor found it unbearable. A Yeoman Third Class and an outstanding sailor, he decided he was a Conscientious Objector. The Captain assigned me the job of conducting the required investigation to determine the sincerity of the sailor’s stated beliefs. Obviously, the burden of establishing the Conscientious Objector status was heavy or every unhappy sailor would claim the status to get out of the Navy -- this was, after all, in the days of the draft. I did not find the job very easy, nor was it at all enjoyable.

KYES went back to the gun line for a few days and was then sent up to Yankee Station to escort USS AMERICA (CVA 66). That good deal lasted only one day and evidently my frustration was mounting after more than a month at sea. In my 13 August letter to Ginger I commented on the tiresomeness of my stateroom, which was a four-bunk gray metal box about 10 feet by 12 feet without portholes, shared with a couple of other officers. It was beneath the DASH flight deck, so when the sun was shining it got hot. The cabinetry and bunks were haze gray aluminum, the bulkheads were painted a light vomit green, the deck was deep green vinyl tile, the door was a green fabric curtain. The gray overhead accommodated cable runs and plumbing. My work desk was set into the bulkhead along with my hanging closet and drawers; the desk “door” dropped down to present a writing surface. The aluminum chairs bounced around the room when the ship rolled. All this was illuminated by two four-foot “daylight” fluorescent lights.

As senior officer in this stateroom I claimed a lower bunk. This was palatial compared to crew's quarters, below the main deck, where the sailors bunked three deep in large berthing areas and each had a small locker. Forget privacy, not to mention comfort.

13 August 1972
Gulf of Tonkin

War is hell. Yesterday after only three days on the "gun line" (that marvelous creation of U.S. Navy organization just off the coast by Quang Tri city) the old J.E. KYES was detached to escort USS AMERICA (CVA 66) on Yankee Station in the Gulf of Tonkin. As Senior Watch Officer, I saw my chance and made up a superb watch bill without my name on it, and the Captain bought it! From port and starboard to no watches at all! Finally I can get some paperwork done.

Maybe not. Because today we are being relieved here to go to Northern SAR (Search and Rescue) way up in the Gulf by Hai Phong to escort the USS LONG BEACH (CLGN 9). That means more augmenting our watches to increase our readiness to fight off all the nasty Commy Pinko Hippy Red villains from North Vietnam on a moments notice. And that means I'll probably be standing one in three (four on and eight off). Shit.

And that's about it. We didn't even have much excitement down by Quang Tri -- just shot a few rounds into what has to be the most shot-up section of the world by now....

[several paragraphs here commented on the war but are too intemperate to include]

...Can't even get a sun tan here in the Gulf. It's overcast. Really sort of dreary.

[several more paragraphs here commented on the war but are too intemperate to include]

...Here I sit in my room trying to think of something to tell you about. I look around and see pubs, papers, gray drawers and cabinets -- God is it old! The whole damned ship is 390 feet long. And the same as RUPERTUS so how can I be interested?...

...Just had a little break -- XO bullshitted me for a half-hour. He can talk your leg off. Absolutely amazing. I've never seen anyone bullshit so well. He has it down to a fine art -- you know, when the victim begins to look bored or walks away, or when present story runs out of steam, quick as a wink change subjects and off again. Amazing. He never runs out of stories.

And I've played around with a Condition III watch bill. Object is to have a watch which can react to a threat -- air attack or PT boat attack, most probably -- and get a few rounds out while everyone else is waking up and getting to General Quarters. You want as few people on watch as necessary, so that others can do essential work and get some rest. On the other hand, the ship must be ready. Have to consider individual abilities as well. It's like a big puzzle, where you have to figure out the holes as well as the pegs. What fun...

Escorting cruisers in the northern Gulf was more strenuous than escorting aircraft carriers but it was easier than the gun line. The cruisers were stationed in the northern Tonkin Gulf in support of Operation Linebacker, the air interdiction campaign against North Vietnam in response to the Easter Offensive. They

performed several functions there: search and rescue for pilots who ditched or ejected coming out of North Vietnam, air traffic control for Navy strike packages, and “delousing” of returning Navy strike packages (that is, making sure no MiGs infiltrated the Navy formations returning to the carriers on Yankee Station). The latter mission controlled an area called PIRAZ, for Positive Identification Radar Advisory Zone.

Cruisers were required for these functions because they had helicopters for search and rescue, were equipped with the sophisticated radars and other electronic equipment needed for the mission, and were armed with air defense missile systems. They were not, however, well equipped to deal with threats such as the motor torpedo boats possessed by the North Vietnamese. Consequently destroyer escorts were needed and the destroyer mission became known as “riding shotgun” for the cruisers. I characterized the task in a letter to Ginger:

*15 August 1972
Gulf of Tonkin*

Still here, guarding the USS LONG BEACH against evil filthy Commie Pinko rats. Boring as can be. The ship is in Condition II (port and starboard watches), but I've got it good -- I'm rotating one in three with the XO and the OPS officer as evaluator (we make all the really BIG decisions), six on and twelve ! off. I'm even getting some work done.

I've come down with a cold. Had a headache last night and should have known -- I never get headaches. Today I'm plugged up, runny nose type. I'm not alone -- half the officers have it in one form or another....

I wish I had some of my books. I've been trying to dope out a series of questions to ask my Conscientious Objector. I must "actively and critically" examine his

beliefs, and I am trying to recall some ideas from such books as "Social Contract" and "Man, the State, and War." I can't even remember the author of the latter, and I could really use some of his concepts. The religious end of this business I can handle, but the philosophical I need help. Must read some of those books again.

No mail yet (still?). We must have a lot floating around out here somewhere. A helo comes around here every day, but I don't think anyone's figured out we're up here yet. We weren't originally scheduled to do this job, and only came here because another ship had equipment problems. Scheduling out here is a joke. Nobody knows where they'll be from one day to the next. Except that it probably won't be in port.

Respite

By the 17th of July KYES was back on the gun line firing missions and rearming, this time from USS VESUVIUS (AE 15). On the 20th KYES was sent south to again support the 2nd ARVN Division, as I related to Ginger:

*20 August 1972
South China Sea*

...We were sent south yesterday, and now we are alone off Chu Lai, providing gunfire support for the 2nd ARVN Division. Not too strenuous... Our mail is still behind us...

Weather couldn't be better, though. It's calm and sunny, and Vietnam is very pretty. Green mountains, white clouds and blue sky, with lots of native fishing boats all over. Too bad there's a war here.

This area (around Chu Lai) has been VC controlled since WWII. I probably wrote you the same thing in 1965 when RUPERTUS was here. Last night the refugee camps and the military compound were under mortar and rocket attack -- we could see some of the rounds impacting. U.S. has only a few advisors and liaison people left here. Yesterday afternoon our spotter, a Navy LTjg, came out to the ship for a briefing, and told us that the RVN commander (a colonel) was more interested in chess than in fighting VC. So goes the war.

This relatively relaxed assignment lasted a few days during which the ship enjoyed fine weather and manageable fire missions, expending around 100 rounds a day and going out several times to refuel from oilers and rearm from ammunition ships. This independent duty had the additional advantage of not having a superior officer in close proximity.

*22 August 1972
South China Sea*

Still in the same place -- somebody must have forgotten about us.

Mail situation continues to suck. A helo was supposed to bring some of our mail from DaNang to Chu Lai yesterday, but didn't....

...We have had no observed fire missions, and shoot perhaps one or two unobserved Harassment/Interdiction missions in the middle of the night. Much better than port and starboard. But we're scheduled to leave here Friday for more exciting assignment.

23 August 1972
South China Sea

Bonanza! It finally arrived! Two cards, four letters, a poem/painting! With ten photos! Great! Wow!

The helicopter that was to bring our mail from DaNang this morning did not, and morale took an even deeper dive. But this evening we saw the MOUNT HOOD, an ammunition ship, out our way and the Captain decided he wanted to VERTREP (transfer by helo) some ammo, so out we went. By some unimaginable stroke of luck, the MOUNT HOOD's helo went into DaNang for us and brought out about a ton of mail....

I'll take care of myself in Subic, as you ask in your 14 August letter. Alcohol poisoning is greatest danger. I wonder if you can understand that after a month on the stupid ship one simply feels compelled to go out and just get absolutely rotten drunk when the ship pulls into port. Especially in Subic, which just plain sucks. Subic is worse for my morale than staying at sea.

VERTREPs of ammunition were becoming the norm. Employing CH-46 Sea Knight helicopters, the newer ammunition ships and fast combat support ships could transfer ammunition much faster than the "alongside" or "connected" method employing ship-to-ship rigs. The VERTREP method did not require the ships to be in intimate proximity, so it was also safer -- especially in heavy weather. The CH-46 pilots were extraordinarily skilled and watching them transfer ammunition was like watching a well-choreographed ballet. They would come to a hover over the deck of the ammunition ship, sailors would hook up a sling of palletized ammunition, and they would swoop over to the destroyer and deposit the ammunition on the destroyer's flight deck. Sailors would unhook the sling and, while they were moving the ammo out of the way the helicopter would go back, pick up another pallet, and return.

My disparaging remarks about Subic do not reflect the attitude of most sailors. Subic Bay is adjacent to the city of Olongapo, where the beer was cheap and the bar girls plentiful. Entertainment included talented singers and exotic floor shows. Sailors loved the place.

*25 August 1972
South China Sea*

Still off Chu Lai and nothing new.

Yesterday some sailors were welding above my stateroom, and some sparks came through the overhead, setting fire to my "burn bag" (for discarded classified messages) and my laundry bag. Lost a khaki shirt and several T-shirts and shorts. The smoke from the burn bag filled after officer's country. What a mess.

Weather has been absolutely gorgeous lately. Practically no wind, clear skies, incredibly blue clear water, and hot. We spend the day slowly steaming back and forth trying not to run over fishing boats and fishing net markers.

*31 August 1972
South China Sea*

...Last night one of our evaporators (we have two) suffered a casualty and so we're now hurting for water. Not badly, but it's a little annoying. Less showers.

In a week we'll be in Subic! Oh, boy! Can't wait. Actually I'll welcome the change -- just to quit standing watches for a while, and to be able to get away from the ship. I hope it's not raining there -- the place is bad

enough without that. Even the VD rate is up, with syphilis the most rapid gainer (don't worry about me...). And drugs are a problem, though the Philippines government has been cracking down lately. With the rain and attendant water problems, I understand there is a growing cholera threat. What a lovely place to visit.

By late August the heavy operating tempo was beginning to take its toll on KYES. The evaporator casualty was a sign that the lack of maintenance was catching up. Shortage of water was a serious problem: fresh water is needed to feed the boilers for propulsion and, of course, for crew sustenance and sanitation. When at sea sailors take "Navy showers" by wetting down, shutting off the shower and lathering up, then rinsing -- it is a serious infraction of rules to take a "Hollywood" shower at sea (strictly enforced by peer pressure). The evaporator casualty meant that instead of one Navy shower a day, we got a Navy shower every other day.

"MAKE ALL PREPARATIONS FOR HEAVY WEATHER"

And by late August the weather was beginning to deteriorate.

*2 September 1972
South China Sea*

...Today we are evading a typhoon which is going through the South China Sea and the Gulf of Tonkin. All of the ships of the gunfire support task group are in one formation: fourteen destroyers in a circular formation around the NEWPORT NEWS (an 8" gun cruiser, the only one left in the Navy). It's sort of like those pictures you see of WWII....

...I'm reading Russian -- borrowed a book from Paul Zeman -- to try to get back in the groove. I'm surprised that I remember anything, but actually I am doing all right....

*3 September 1972
South China Sea*

Happy Anniversary -- wish I could take you out to dinner. Particularly so because we are still involved in typhoon evasion here, constantly taking heavy rolls which tend not only to wear one out but also to empty the contents of one's desk onto the deck quite regularly.

Today is Sunday, of course, and holiday routine is being observed aboard KYES. But we replenished stores this morning from USS MARS, and in the transaction received some mail....

...You should try to write when rolling around like this (hang on with toes and one hand, write with the other!).

KYES departed the gun line on 4 September and headed for Subic Bay and some badly needed rest and maintenance. At that time the crew had been planning for a six month deployment and hoped to be home for Christmas. Sailors like to count the days but the schedule for the fourth quarter of calendar year 1972 had not yet been published.

*7 September 1972
Subic Bay, PI*

...At this point I don't know whether I will be home for Christmas or not (we're not sked to return to San Diego until 23 December....

10 September 1972

Subic Bay

...I woke up terribly hung over yesterday morning (I'd gone to the club in uniform for dinner and planned to come home early -- made it back at 0230 thoroughly polluted -- saw Larry Wagenseil at the club -- etc.) and the Messenger of the Watch came in and told me that the CO of the BAUSELL wanted me to come over for coffee. BAUSELL was moored alongside!

So I've had a chat, and dinner last night, with Jack Tomion. He is as usual. Nancy and daughter are apparently doing OK in Yoko. Jack still wants me to come to BAUSELL. He will be aboard longer than expected. The OPS officer will be ready to leave in March, so I'd take over that job... I met virtually the entire BAUSELL wardroom last night -- they're a happy bunch, and quite obviously like Jack a great deal. I'd really like to join them, love. Unless this silly war stops, destroyer duty anywhere is going to be miserable....

...And guess what. Jack T has a bunch of classical cassettes, so right now I'm using Dewey Meter's equipment to record some. BAUSELL is leaving tomorrow, so I have to do them now....

...OK, it's Monday and I can't seem to get this letter written. In-port periods are so confusing -- so much to do in such a short time. I'm just all mixed up, and keep getting interrupted....

Attached is a clipping from today's plan of the day. Hope you understand what it means. The 23 December date was one the Captain had been given by someone in CRUDESAC. We're hoping it's going to work out that way,

but seven months is now standard deployment, and we left June 5.

Seeing Jack Tomion was an unexpected pleasure. At that time I still had hopes of joining BAUSELL and moving my family to Yokosuka.

The week in Subic went fast but the crew got some needed liberty and the ship got some needed repairs -- including, thankfully, repair of the inoperative evaporator. The first assignment upon going back to sea was carrier escort duty in the Tonkin Gulf, a welcome respite from the gun line.

*14 September 1972
South China Sea*

Out again. We're with KITTY HAWK, escorting to Yankee Station. We're scheduled to operate with the AMERICA from tomorrow until the end of the month.

That was seven days in Subic. Now we'll be out for forty days.

BAUSELL got underway this morning, too, so I've been able to talk to Jack quite a bit. He says to say hello.

My writing is not good because we're doing 25 knots and it's a bit rough.

Also saw Mike Reynolds. He is CO of USS IMPERVIOUS (MSO 449) out of Guam. He is LCDR (spot promotion), and married again.

We had a ship's picnic on Grande Island (in Subic Bay) on Tuesday. Beer, hot dogs, burgers, soft ball and swimming. I'm stiff from softball and swimming.

16 September 1972

Gulf of Tonkin

...I finished my investigation in conscientious objector case. I recommended approval of his discharge.

17 September 1972

Gulf of Tonkin

I'm really in intellectual limbo. I can't bring myself around to thinking -- very lazy, indeed... I'll have to read another "good" book. I'd really like to have our library handy. Wonder when we'll see it again?

23 September 1972

Gulf of Tonkin

...The CINCPACFLT Quarterly Employment Schedule for the Second Quarter, Fiscal Year 1973 came today. You guessed it. KYES is still out here at Christmas.

24 September 1972

Gulf of Tonkin

Should have known. Not only were there no rays for holiday routine today, but by the time we got our cook-out started we hit some rain squalls and the wind had picked up considerably. Tonight we're rolling, just enough to make life miserable.

On 29 September KYES replenished ammunition from USS SANTA BARBARA (AE 28) and departed Yankee Station for Operation Linebacker. The surface Navy's contribution to the Linebacker interdiction mission involved naval gunfire strikes on logistic and transportation targets in North Vietnam. The objective

was to stop the flow of troops and material to the combat zone, much of which was transported south by water or by roads and rail close to the coast. A task unit of from two to four ships would perform the strike mission. Targets were assigned beforehand and were usually logistic sites such as fuel dumps, supply dumps, ammunition dumps, railroads, and barges. At the appointed time, the ships would set General Quarters, steam toward the targets at 30+ knots, turn to parallel the beach, and fire on the targets. In destroyers like KYES, that involved repeated four-gun salvos that shook the daylight out of the ship. Upon completion of the firing mission the ships would turn together and zig-zag away from the beach at 30+ knots, hoping to avoid the shore battery response.

At the time, I questioned the efficacy of these missions. Certainly I wasn't in a position to understand their relevance in the larger scheme of things -- it's possible they had an effect of which I wasn't aware. Nevertheless, I wasn't impressed by the importance of our targets, nor was I very confident that we did much damage to them. Very occasionally we'd get a secondary explosion that confirmed we'd hit something valuable. All things considered, these strikes probably did hamper North Vietnam's efforts to supply its forces around Quang Tri and every little bit helped.

After some of those missions I tore out portions of the chart to save the pieces upon which targets had been plotted. These chart fragments show the islands of Hon Matt, Hon Me, and Hon Nieu (modern map transliteration spells these differently) with the targets plotted in red pencil. Because these islands were not the site of important logistic infrastructure, the targets were probably plotted as possible shore batteries, using available intelligence -- a precaution in case we needed to fire counterbattery (and I probably saved them because they were the source of hostile fire). The islands can now be easily viewed on Google Maps. It seems likely that our plotting of the targets was slightly off, judging from the clearly visible roads and installations on Google Maps. Never mind: the inherent inaccuracy of our guns and normal dispersion probably meant that we sufficiently blanketed the area.

The Linebacker missions were exceptionally hard on the ship and the crew.
The reports to Ginger tell the story:

*30 September 1972
Gulf of Tonkin*

This will be a short one, since we are going to General Quarters in a few moments to conduct a "strike."

Our job now is strike operations against logistics in N. Vietnam. Same thing we did on RUPE five years ago. With about the same effect, I imagine....

...Our operations now are very demanding and exhausting. I haven't had a decent night's sleep in days, and probably won't get one for another week or so. Very tired. I tend to get bitchy -- must watch myself!

*2 October 1972
Gulf of Tonkin*

It's really only just 2 October -- ten past midnight, actually. We are going to GQ for a strike at about 0200 or so, and I've just stayed up.

The name of the operation we're in is Linebacker -- when I was out here in RUPE it was called Sea Dragon. Same deal. Run in and shoot up suspected logistics sites and run back out. There are better ways to make a living.

*2 October 1972
Gulf of Tonkin*

...Tonight we're storm evading, so there won't be any strike missions. Full night in the bag. A storm is working its way through the Gulf, and the weather is really sort of

miserable: rain, visibility very restricted, seas gray and confused, heavy swell.

4 October 1972
Gulf of Tonkin

Still very rough here. Waste cans have spilled all over my stateroom and the place is a shambles. Can't do anything; it's all I can manage just to hang on most of the time. Every time I open my desk it's a mess, so there is no use trying to do any paperwork. Not that I have any motivation, anyway.

We conducted several missions again last night -- up all night again.

5 October (same letter)

It's 0200 and we've just completed a mission and are waiting for the next which is at 0300....

If Jennifer thinks her Grandpa Bade curses she should hear her Daddy. We recently began a "couth" club to clean up language amongst the Wardroom. I am treasurer of an endeavor which collects a nickel from any member using the word "Fuck" in any of its variant forms. We have been going for only several days and I already have lots of money, not the least of which has been contributed by this writer. It may help -- it's more expensive than smoking! Proceeds go to drinks at the next port. At least you get some of the money back!

I guess I've told you that Christmas looks out -- our sked now appears to have us in San Diego in the first

week of January. Christmas in Subic Bay, of all places! I think I'd rather be at sea....

...Morning. We will be replenishing from USS MARS in a little while...

7 October 1972
Gulf of Tonkin

It's 0215 and we are between missions on this fine morning off the coast of North Vietnam. On our last mission we obtained some secondary explosions for our efforts, and in addition I got a few hours of sleep before that mission, so I'm feeling particularly good this morning.

If the schedule doesn't change, we've only two more days of this. Then probably the gun line down south....

...My life has been singularly unexciting lately. Do you realize that KYES has been on this strike business for over a week and has yet to be shot at? Either they've run out of ammo or they are shaking in their boots at the very thought of the mighty JAMES E. KYES. Either way, I like it just fine this way.

7 October 1972
Gulf of Tonkin

It was a beautiful day today in the Gulf and I even got some rays this afternoon. It's 2200 now and we will be going in for our first strike of the night in a few minutes. Tonite we're up near Hai Phong. Three strikes spaced out perfectly so that there won't be any sleeping. And in the morning we refuel and rearm (always holiday routine on Sunday -- refuel, rearm, etc..!).

We went back into our "old" watch system and I'm more or less off the watch bill again -- and everyone else is in four sections. Good for a little rest, anyway. We are at GQ three times a night, and it gets old in a hurry.

Yesterday (we have heard) there was an accident on the NEWPORT NEWS killing 19 people. Suspect an explosion in a gun turret, but haven't heard any details. Looks as if we're a bigger threat to ourselves than the Commie Pinko Rats.

In fact, there had been an explosion in the number two 8" gun turret in USS NEWPORT NEWS (CA 148), killing nineteen sailors and injuring others. A round had gone off before the breech was completely closed. This tragic incident reminded the entire fleet of the inherent danger -- and consequent need for assiduous observation of safety precautions and maintenance procedures -- in employing naval guns.

NEWPORT NEWS was the last heavy cruiser in the Navy's inventory in 1972. She was an achingly beautiful ship.

*9 October 1972
Gulf of Tonkin*

It's 0045 and we've just completed our last strike mission on Linebacker. Two strikes scheduled for later this morning have been cancelled, and we are to be detached at 0500 to proceed to our next job -- gun line near Quang Tri city.

We didn't make it without being fired at by shore batteries, however. Yesterday morning (at about 0230 or so) we were conducting a strike just north of Hon Ne (island), and as we began to retire several batteries on the island --

and perhaps a few on the mainland -- opened up at us. We took several rounds close aboard -- one gave the Captain, who was on the bridge wing, a salt water shower -- but none of the three ships was hit. We returned the fire in fine style, and it was all very exciting. People topside could see the muzzle flashes from the shore batteries and our own shell bursts on the island, and of course everyone could hear the incoming rounds detonating in the water around us. From my station in CIC (I am Gun Control) all I could see was the chart -- but it was rather exciting anyway because I had to give directions to the gun system, and since I'm on the same circuit as the Director Officer I got a blow by blow description of the scene over the sound powered telephone. I think that prior to this action, I was the only one aboard who had seen hostile shore battery fire before. Winston Churchill once said something like "There is nothing quite as exhilarating as being shot at without effect." It's quite true.

Yesterday was Sunday, and after being up all night at GQ we UNREPed all day -- started with ammo at 1000, fueled at 1130 and transferred some freight afterwards, completing at about 1445. I had hoped to grab some rays -- beautiful day, holiday routine -- but by the time we finished it was too late. I don't think we've had more than one or two Sundays since we left San Diego that we didn't UNREP.

10 October 1972
South China Sea

Today your tape arrived, along with your letter of 28 September and one from Flossie and Mike. In spite of having

only about five hours sleep in the past 48 hours, I'm overjoyed. I love to hear your voice!

We are back on the gun line by Quang Tri city. What a drag. Long hours, hard work.

12 October 1972

South China Sea

Another day on the gun line -- nothing new. Just a short note before I crap out. I was up all night last night, holding periodic reveille on the Commie Pinkos.

14 October 1972

South China Sea

We've moved again. We're now down south a ways, near My Trang (if that helps). It's still northern S. Vietnam, but much prettier country than that up by Quang Tri, and also a bit quieter here. Only two ships in the area, for starters. But being a bit more remote also means poorer mail service....

...How would you like to know our long range schedule? It's classified, of course, so don't tell anyone I told you.

28 Oct-3 Nov Kaohsiung

05 Nov-10 Nov Subic

04 Dec-10 Dec Hong Kong

23 Dec-25 Dec Subic

13 Jan-Indef San Diego

Ship will probably be decommissioned in mid-April. I hope I'll be off by mid-January!

Kaohsiung, Taiwan's major sea port on the southern end of the island, had been hosting US Navy ships since the Korean War. At various times during the Vietnam war the Navy stationed a destroyer tender there, and that was the case in late 1972. KYES was scheduled for upkeep in Kaohsiung supported by USS BRYCE CANYON (AD 36), which had maintenance and repair capabilities beyond those possessed by individual destroyers. Kaohsiung was an excellent port for liberty, as well, (it was my favorite in WestPac) and KYES was very anxious to get there.

*15 October 1972
South China Sea*

Sunday. I had the watch from 0600-1200 but got out for a while to get a few rays this afternoon. I've just come down from the Signal Bridge, where the rays are.

This is our last day here. Has it been two or three days? I can't remember. We have received another schedule change -- I guess this place here was too good to be true -- and we go back up to Linebacker tomorrow.

So it's back to "war." I'd like to put my feelings about this war, and my participation in it, down on paper, but I have a difficult time organizing my thoughts. There are so many facets.... And it has penetrated so many aspects of American life...

Quite fundamentally, I feel and believe that the war is an American tragedy. The government's policy -- grand strategy -- has gone from bad in the 1950s to worse in the '60s to absurd in the 70s. The government's actions, mostly the executive branch but not excluding Congress or for that matter the American public -- have been too often dishonorable and dishonest. We have been blind, stubborn,

egoistic, wrong, misguided.... I think we have shamed our country -- it may be too late to help that, but we must stop the insanity before it completely engulfs us.

On the other hand I have no difficulty rationalizing my part in this mess. Sometimes I feel I should do a Daniel Ellsberg -- at least to some degree -- but I'm either too lazy or lack the courage. Anyway, I don't feel the guilt that he does. On my level of involvement, the moral questions don't really present themselves -- it's a military function, and I certainly don't consider the Communists white knights just because the US is so screwed up.

18 October 1972
Gulf of Tonkin

What a day! I don't even know where to start!

We are again on Linebacker, but this time it includes surveillance of the anchorage near Hon La island (there are many Hon islands -- "Hon" means island). A Chinese merchant ship is anchored there, and it is loaded with rice destined for N. Viet troops near the DMZ. We are part of a task unit tasked to prevent, slow down, or make more difficult the transfer of the rice to the mainland. Presently it is being floated in to the beach on the tide in 100 pound plastic bag covered bundles. Today our boat went out and sank about seven tons of rice by cutting them open.

But what a day. I started off with the 18-24 watch last night. Then GQ for a strike mission at 0500. Watch 06-12, during which we put the boat in the water to sink rice, anchored to take another ship alongside to transfer mini-psy-op radios (it didn't work), picked up the anchor,

picked up the boat. Afternoon, the Commodore (boss of the operation) came over in his boat and bullshitted us for 30 minutes, then we went out and transferred the radios by highline, after which we rendezvoused with a stores ship to replenish. Now we're on our way back to join up and conduct a strike. I'll be on watch until midnight, and then we have two strikes between 00-06 (GQ), after which I go on watch from 06-12. So you can see my prospects for sleep are not good -- four hours (3 1/2 really -- had to take a shower last night) last night, maybe one or two tonight, and tomorrow afternoon we'll probably refuel.

It will go on like this for about a week. This is what they mean when they say one must have endurance.

20 October 1972

Gulf of Tonkin

Things have slacked off a bit (mostly because they had to) and life is nearly bearable again. Let me give you the schedule (mine) for the last few days, mostly so I can read this later and remember.

170600-1200	On watch/UNREP
171200-1800	UNREP
171800-2400	On watch
172400-0500	3 1/2 hours sleep
180500-0700	GQ, strike mission
180700-1200	Boat, sink rice bags, anchor, watch, etc.
181200-1800	Boat, DAVIS alongside, radio transfer, UNREP with SAN JOSE
181800-2400	UNREP, watch, GQ
190001-0600	Two GQs

190600-1000	UNREP
191000-1800	Five hours sleep (slept thru one UNREP!)
191800-2400	Watch, GQ
200001-0600	Three house sleep, GQ
200600-1200	Watch
201200-1800	Three hours sleep
201800-2400	Watch

That's it up till now. 14.5 hours sleep in last 90. But during one 52 hour period I had only 3 1/2. I think I can get along on four out of 24, and do very well on five each night. I hope I can do it when I'm ashore, too -- think of all I would accomplish!

We've gone to Condition III, with the ship in three section watches. I'm sort of "port and starboard" with the OPS officer in an "on call" status, which means that every other six hours I'm liable to have to go up and assist the watch.

The odd hours confuse my sense of time, and I feel as if I've been on this operation for a week. It is difficult to place events in their proper "time" -- I think we were shot at on a mission on the 19th. Maybe we've been shot more than once -- I can't remember. Closest rounds haven't been any closer than about 50 yards from the ship.

21 October 1972
Gulf of Tonkin

Another day...without a shower. We have been on "water hours" ever since leaving Subic in the middle of September. Up until several days ago we usually got a

shower every day -- the showers were opened for an hour or so every day. However, our water situation has become worse, and we have been unable to authorize showers for several days. A washcloth only does so much, and I'm beginning to need a shower.

We got a new Commodore today -- COMDESRON 25 relieved COMDESRON 21 as Commander Task Unit 77.1.1 (consisting of three destroyers, one of which is KYES). CDS 21 was an unadulterated asshole who was so unorganized even he admitted it. But he nearly broke his arm patting himself on the back, and was so impressed with himself that he came across as a pompous ass. I was thoroughly unimpressed with the man, both personally and professionally. CDS 25 seems to be a cooler head.

The mail situation is improving -- a helo from the ENTERPRISE brought your letter of 13 October today -- it was mailed on the 14th and that's only a week ago!

22 October 1972
Gulf of Tonkin

Today I finally received your letter of 4 October. I wonder where it's been.

You asked in your letter whether I was a career officer. I suppose so. At least for planning purposes. But it doesn't mean that if something better comes along I'll be too dedicated to quit.

The weather just turned lousy and we're bouncing around like crazy. It isn't so bad out here in good weather, but it's really miserable if you have to fight all the time just to stand up....

...We will UNREP in a few minutes (naturally -- it's Sunday!) so I'll get this in the mail.

27 October 1972
Gulf of Tonkin

We're still here on Linebacker. God, it seems like it's been two months! BAUSELL was supposed to relieve us yesterday, but somewhere way back in the relieving chain GRAY couldn't get underway and so the whole process got slowed down. Will be here until tomorrow night, when hopefully we'll be able to leave for Kaohsiung.

This has not been the most enjoyable of times. In addition to GQ all night every night, the Northeast Monsoon is getting into full swing and the weather is miserable. Add water problems -- we haven't had showers for I don't know how long -- and you can see that times are bad. The engineering plant needs work badly, too. Today we lost the load and went dead in the water only five miles from Hon La -- we had to anchor for five hours while the snipes put the plant back together. In case you don't clearly understand, this is unthinkable. But the old girl is 27 years old and we've been out 44 days working the hell out of her.

Plus there has been no water for the laundry and I'm out of skivvies.

Rumors abound on the peace settlement. We still keep shooting -- scheduled for three missions tonight. We've been shot at regularly and recently quite accurately -- one of the Chiefs picked some shrapnel off the deck this morning, which means they came pretty close.

We haven't had mail for a while, either. Probably won't get any until we get into Kaohsiung -- which should be Tuesday -- no, Monday, but might be Tuesday.

KYES was kept on station because USS GRAY (FF 1054) was unable to leave Yokosuka owing to a pump casualty. GRAY was one of the new KNOX-class frigates that had little of the equipment redundancy built into the WWII vintage destroyers like KYES -- one pump casualty would probably not have kept KYES in port.

“Lost the load” is Navy for an electrical outage, in this case extended to mean a total power and propulsion failure. The ship had lost steam pressure that powered both the propulsion system and the ship’s electrical generators. This engineering casualty was indeed unthinkable; in fact, practically unheard of. To make matters worse, the ship was well within artillery range of North Vietnam.

The crew was exhausted from the heavy operations tempo and the ship’s steam system was deteriorating for long lack of maintenance. The engineers manning the single boiler that was on line had let it lose steam pressure, the regaining of which is a lengthy process. The ship had no main propulsion and no electrical generation. The emergency diesel generators failed to start, leaving the ship in the dark and without radio communication.

The root cause of the situation was lack of maintenance, compounded by exceptionally heavy use. Steam system leaks were using water faster than the ship could make it. Prior to this event, the only maintenance availabilities were the ten days in Subic Bay way back in July/August (during which it constantly poured rain) and a short week in Subic in early September. The Operation Linebacker strikes were particularly hard on the crew and the propulsion system because they required full power with four-boiler operations every night.

Under normal steaming conditions, at least two of the four boilers could be off line for maintenance (the ship could do 27 knots on two). The strike missions required four boilers for higher speeds. Because these missions were conducted every night, the boilers never cooled down enough to permit maintenance.

When the engineers got one of the diesel generators on line, the Captain called the Officer in Tactical Command on the secure Primary Tactical Circuit (the secure UHF radio circuit). He reported our situation and the OTC responded: "Stand by to take a tow if necessary. Meanwhile, we'll continue our business as if nothing is wrong."

He added: "I'm not your administrative commander, but I think you should file a CASREPT (Casualty Report)."

The Captain then called the Chief Hospital Corpsman to the bridge and asked him to give the Chief Engineer a tranquilizer. The Chief Engineer, LT Ken Taylor, had been up for about 36 hours trying to keep the very tired steam system operating. He was duly tranquilized with an injection. That was an amazing decision by the Captain in those circumstances.

The engineers got steam back up in relatively short order and KYES weighed anchor. In another amazing act, the Captain did submit a CASREPT to the Type Commander (Commander, Cruiser Destroyer Forces Pacific in San Diego). The subject line was "CASREPT STEAM SYSTEM NR 2 ENGINE RM." I believe that was the first time such a major, extensive casualty had been officially reported.

The mini-psyop radios were another story. These were small, cheap, one-channel radios that were tuned to a US propaganda channel. KYES was tasked to put them in the water near North Vietnam, where they were supposed to float ashore and presumably enable the information-starved North Vietnamese to obtain accurate information on the state of the war. We thought it was stupid, and that the

North Vietnamese authorities would probably not treat kindly any of their citizens found in possession of one of those things. Deploying the radios put in harm's way the crews of the destroyers tasked with deploying them because the ship had to steam close to the coast to drop off the radios.

Taken alone, this operation would probably not have been considered folly. On the folly-redden landscape of the Vietnam war, most of us saw it as one more example of wastefulness and misguided policy.

Morale in KYES was suffering badly at this point because of the schedule change keeping the ship on Linebacker longer than expected. Combined with the water shortage and general deterioration of the ship's propulsion system, this extension was very bad news, indeed. But there was some glory:

Press release, Chief Fleet Coordination Group, Saigon,
27 Oct 72

USS OKLAHOMA CITY (CLG 5), at sea Oct 26

This guided missile light cruiser, flagship for Vice Admiral James L. Holloway III, Commander Seventh Fleet, returned to the waters off North Vietnam Wednesday and Thursday to lead three other destroyers during a gunfire strike north of the Demarkation Line.

The strike unit was comprised of the OKLAHOMA CITY, the guided missile destroyer USS COCHRANE (DDG 21), the destroyer USS JAMES E. KYES (DD 787), and another guided missile destroyer.

Late Wednesday night the four-ship strike unit shelled petroleum, oil and lubricant tanks 17 miles north-northwest of Vinh, an ammunition storage area 20 miles north-northwest of of Vinh, a highway bridge 22 miles north-northwest of Vinh and a storage area 24 miles north-northwest of that city.

The Task Unit encountered hostile fire from a coastal defense site as she shelled the ammunition storage area. The OKLAHOMA CITY responded with counter fire from her five-inch guns as she shelled the primary target with her six-inch guns.

The destroyer COCHRANE sustained minor shrapnel damage to her superstructure during the Wednesday mission. None of the crew members were injured.

In the early morning hours Thursday, the gunfire strike unit shelled a barge repair facility near the Song Ca river three miles south-east of Vinh, a petroleum products storage area two miles east of Vinh and a transshipment point. The ships again encountered hostile artillery fire. None of the U.S. ships were hit.

Liberty! Upkeep!

KYES was finally detached on 29 October.

*29 October 1972
South China Sea*

The weather is nice and we're on our way to Kaohsiung at 20 knots! Right now we're just south of Pratas Reef, where the FRANK KNOX went aground in 1965. One must be careful around here.

Even before we get to Kaohsiung "they" are trying to screw up our schedule. We argued with the local Admiral for some additional upkeep because we badly need it, and he agreed to schedule us into Subic for a few days after the Kaohsiung visit. Now his scheduling officer wants to keep us in Kaohsiung for a couple of days longer and cancel Subic.

“SECURE THE SPECIAL SEA AND MOORING DETAIL. SET THE REGULAR INPORT WATCH. ON DECK, SECTION II”

“LIBERTY CALL. LIBERTY COMMENCES FOR SECTIONS I AND III TO EXPIRE ON BOARD AT 0100. NOW LIBERTY”

31 October 1972

Kaohsiung, Taiwan

We arrived here yesterday morning, and after a day of flails I finally got on the beach at supper time -- had a few beers, a good Chinese meal, and few more beers and didn't even get drunk. Today I had the duty, so tomorrow will be a big shopping day -- books, tapes and records are still the same good deal here.

7 November 1972

Kaohsiung, Taiwan

I'm still here, spending money like a drunken sailor. And I haven't even been drunk. This has to be the soberest port visit I've ever had.

8 November 1972

Kaohsiung, Taiwan

Duty tonight, thank goodness. I can't take much more liberty -- glad we get underway the day after tomorrow. This noon I picked up on some more of the Captain's graft -- the manager of the Kennedy Hotel, where the ship had a party last night, gave a luncheon for the Captain and several officers, and I went along. This time it was Mandarin style,

with Peiping duck, prawn, duck soup, sweet and sour pork, etc., etc.. One of the best meals I've had here....

...We screwed up our mail and haven't had any for several days. The officer who sends our mail routing messages forgot to send one after we were extended here, and all of our mail has been sitting in Subic Bay. I hope we'll get some tomorrow before we sail on Friday. I think we're still missing some back mail from somewhere, too.

I heard rumors that Nixon took 49 states out of 50. If that's true I guess you're not doing any celebrating at the McKenna's.

KYES arrived in Kaohsiung in deplorable condition, inside and out. But the upkeep period in Kaohsiung was an absolute delight. The Chinese were welcoming, the weather was beautiful, Kaohsiung's food was fantastic, and the working hours were normal. The crew worked hard to repair equipment and clean up the ship, but there was enough liberty for everyone.

Back to Work

"TURN TO. COMMENCE SHIP'S WORK"

|| November 1972

Gulf of Tonkin

So much for Kaohsiung. I ate so much the last night in that I was sick when we got underway yesterday. Kobe beef Chinese style, fried duck with pineapple sauce, fried groupa (fish), clear soup, fried rice Cantonese style, beer -- all really delicious and I couldn't stop eating! I was absolutely bloated....

...We weren't even 12 hours out of Kaohsiung when we received our first schedule change. We were to have gone to the gun line, down by Quang Tri and the DMZ, and because of another ship's equipment casualty we were told to go to North SAR (search and rescue) as "shotgun" for the JOUETT. Now it appears that we may not go there, either, but to Linebacker instead. Christ, that's all we need.

It appears that we may be in Hong Kong for nine days vice the originally scheduled five. That will probably change, too.

Our mail hasn't caught up with us yet, and with these schedule changes it's likely to chase us around for a while longer....

14 November 1972

Gulf of Tonkin

Still on Linebacker -- what else -- doing the same old shit. Tonight we will fire over 200 rounds on these missions. The weather has been absolutely gorgeous. Sunny, calm days, and very calm, clear nights with a beautiful bright moon. Makes me think of my Ginger.

Some of the mail has caught up with us....

16 November 1972

Gulf of Tonkin

We fixed up the ship in Kaohsiung and now have a continual supply of fresh water. So I'm staying clean. My insides have yet to recover from the change in diet, though. And I was one of among at least 50% of the crew who came

down with a short-lived case of the runs -- it hit me the day we got underway, and only lasted for a day....

...The weather has taken a turn for the worse -- cloudy, grey, and we're rolling again. It was too good to last, I suppose.

“STAND BY FOR HEAVY ROLLS WHILE THE SHIP IS CHANGING COURSE”

By mid-November the northeast monsoon was in full swing. The sky was overcast most of the time, it frequently rained, and the Tonkin Gulf and South China Sea were churning. KYES remained on Linebacker until the 20th, expending increasing amounts of ammunition in what appeared to be an intensifying operation.

On the 21st KYES was sent back to the gun line where there was intense activity. The fighting around Quang Tri was intensifying, the rains slowed down resupply of the ARVN's artillery ammunition, and the overcast prevented the use of close air support. Navy ships were all the fire support the ARVN had left and they were using it heavily.

*22 November 1972
South China Sea*

What a time we've had for the past two days! We're back down on the gun line -- so is everyone else, looks like some kind of a big deal. Everyone is shooting like crazy.

On the way down from Linebacker (on the 20th, I think) we had to refuel and rearm. The weather is lousy now, with heavy seas and strong winds and frequent rain. When we got up to rearm at 0300 yesterday morning, it was pouring, and of course the ship was rolling badly. We refueled instead, in the rain and in the dark, then after first

light we began to rearm. It took a couple of tries -- the first time we were yawing so badly we over-tensioned the after rig and broke it -- pulled a baxter bolt right out of the deck. And they are static tested at 50,000 lbs! We changed course and tried again, and it took us most of the day to take on about 600 projectiles and as many powders. Naturally everyone was soaked, hungry and exhausted by afternoon.

So we reported to the gun line and were immediately assigned targets. We fired 245 rounds in the afternoon, then left station to replenish stores from the USS MARS, which we did after dark.

When we returned at about 0300 this morning to station we fired another 312 rounds.

Then we left station to rearm, and spent the morning and most of the afternoon receiving another 600 projectiles and 600 powders by helicopter from USS FLINT. Rolling heavily all the while. I am ready to resign, particularly because during all the rounds we fired we suffered every conceivable gun casualty -- just about drove me up the proverbial wall. And because my stateroom looks like the aftermath of Typhoon Freda. Gunfire concussion shakes overhead lights loose, rolling empties out drawers and desks (catches for which may have worked ten years ago). AND I AM GODDAMN TIRED OF JUST HANGING ON.

This is really unreal. I'm writing it to you mainly because some day when I'm thinking how great it was to be in good old WESTPAC I'll be able to look at this and remember just how badly it SUCKED.

The weather and the relentless fire missions were wearing out man and machine. The operations were manpower intensive. In the Combat Information Center, sailors communicate with the shore fire control party, navigate the ship, plot targets, and send orders to Fire Control Plot. In Fire Control Plot several sailors operate the fire control computer and fire the guns. In a 5"38 gun mount the ten-man crew manually loads each round and disposes of hot expended propellant casings. Below, a couple of sailors keep the ready service ammunition hoists filled, manually taking projectiles and propellant charges from a hoist from the magazine. More sailors move the ammunition around the magazine. Far above, in the Fire Control Director, a crew of four stands by to direct fire at visible targets. Damage control teams stand by to address calamities. All of these stations are connected by sailors on sound-powered phones (and I can attest that one's ears get sore after six hours of wearing the head phones).

Meanwhile, sailors must carry on the ancillary tasks that keep the ship running. The engineers must continue to test and correct feed water for the boilers, the gunners mates must keep track of ammunition expenditures and receipts, the cooks must keep meals coming and keep track of stores, someone has to do the laundry, magazine temperatures must be monitored, operational reports must be compiled and sent, berthing compartments have to be cleaned, and some preventive maintenance tasks have to be completed. Standing a watch or manning a battle station did not relieve a crew member from attending to his normal duties.

“SWEEPERS. SWEEPERS, MAN YOUR BROOMS. GIVE THE SHIP A CLEAN SWEEPDOWN FORE AND AFT. SWEEP DOWN ALL DECKS, LADDERS AND PASSAGEWAYS. EMPTY ALL TRASH IN CONTAINERS ON THE FANTAIL. NOW SWEEPERS.”

Thanksgiving Day
23 November 1972

Happy Thanksgiving! I hope you are having a pleasant day today.

It's raining here, but the seas have calmed a little and we are no longer rolling so badly. We have been quite busy. Since 2300 last night we have fired 825 rounds. We are out of shore bombardment ammo (it's 1500). At 1800 we will rearm, taking on over 800 projectiles and as many powders. Happy Thanksgiving.

In a few minutes I plan to go up to the Wardroom and partake of Thanksgiving turkey and trimmings. We will have our Thanksgiving Dinner, anyway!

I don't think the fleet can continue to shoot at this high rate. Resupply of ammo will be a problem after a while. Perhaps there will be a cease-fire soon. Saturday? That would be all right, even if it means no combat pay for December!

....I just returned from Thanksgiving Dinner: turkey, dressing, sweet potatoes, peas, salad, nuts, pumpkin and mince-meat pie, etc. Could think of more enjoyable surroundings but can't deny that the food was good....

...We haven't had mail for a while -- don't know when we'll get any, either....

My letter to Ginger on 24 November revealed the stress that the deployment was imposing on both of us:

24 November 1972
South China Sea

...You probably noticed that I got a little upset over some of your letters. I'm sorry if I did, but all I need is depressing, bitchy letters while I'm at sea 90% of the time, rolling around, getting damn little rest, working and worrying my ass off and getting it shot at regularly. Contrary to what you seem to believe, this is not a vacation. I really wonder what you think I'm doing over here. I don't suppose you think I'd rather be at home with my family than standing in the rain at night for six hours trying to see to it that nobody gets hurt while carrying around 55 lb. high explosive projectiles on decks that are wet, dark and alternately tilted at 20 degrees to port & starboard. We are doing inherently dangerous jobs under practically impossible goddamn conditions. It's part of my job to see to it that the troops don't get discouraged, and I try to maintain an "all in a day's work" attitude and smile a lot. But that's not the way it is and I resent having it called a vacation....

26 November 1972
South China Sea

We're still at it. Yesterday we fired 900 rounds. The big question is will the guns crap out before the people? It will be close. At this rate of fire gun casualties mount -- there is no time to do routine maintenance on them and things start to go wrong. As for the people, they are either on watch or ammunition handling parties most of the time, and when they are not, the guns firing keep them from getting much sleep.

This afternoon we VERTREPped 1799 pieces of ammo. It took about five hours. We have had nine UNREPS in the last five days.

At least the weather is a little better. We had sunshine most of the day today. Seas are still a little rough, though.

Statistics: 4250 rounds fired since leaving Kaohsiung (two weeks ago). 2700 or so in the last five days. Total of about 9700 since leaving San Diego.

I'm thinking about you when I have time to think. Time seems to move so slowly -- it seems as if we've been on the gun line for a month! This was to have been our shortest line period, but it's beginning to seem like the longest!

27 November 1972
South China Sea

...I'm getting worn out and bitchy. The ship constantly rolls in the heavy seas -- it's annoying, exhausting and damned near unbearable. Can't do anything -- even sit down and write a letter. The ship takes a roll and the desk empties out in your lap. Shit.

Well, in a week we'll be in Hong Kong...

30 November 1972
South China Sea

...We're still here and the weather is really lousy. I thought I would catch pneumonia yesterday after standing in a cold rain for five hours of rearming. I took a hot (Navy)

shower and went to bed for a while (also took two vitamin pills) and I survived.

All this shooting and rearming have put my paperwork way behind. I hope I won't have to be too busy in Hong Kong.

2 December 1972
South China Sea

This deployment is developing all the characteristics of Catch 22. We were to have been detached at 0800 this morning to go to Hong Kong. It's now 2030 and we're still shooting. We now hope to be detached at 1800 tomorrow. One less day in Hong Kong.

The reason we are being kept here is that all the newer ships are crapping out. Many 5"/54 ships have gun casualties, and our old 5"/38 guns just keep shooting. Last night we completely used up all of our ammunition before we were detached to rearm. This morning we took on 900 projectiles and 1100+ powders -- it will probably be gone by tomorrow.

We are shooting so much because of two factors. The "pre-peace" land grab has accelerated the action in the DMZ area, and the South Vietnamese are having difficulty supplying ammo to their artillery because of the heavy rains. We are doing the job normally done by artillery.

No mail for days now. We may get some tomorrow -- otherwise it will be Hong Kong, if we ever get there....

...Weather is still lousy. Morale is not the highest around here. Busting ass every day is bearable if you can count on it ending soon -- getting extended here when

everyone was all psyched up to get out of here did not go over well at all. It's getting to the point where it's difficult to laugh about it.

This latest schedule change was once again because of equipment failures in newer ships. The newer destroyers had two single-gun 5"/54 caliber gun mounts. Those guns featured more automation -- that is, more complexity and more things to break. In heavy use they were prone to hydraulic casualties. The destroyer escorts, also newer ships, had only one single-gun mount and if it broke they were out of business.

The WWII-vintage GEARING Class FRAM destroyers like KYES had two twin 5"/38 caliber gun mounts (MT 51 and MT 52) for a total of four guns. They could swap parts around, cannibalizing inoperable guns to keep the others shooting. If a mount went down, and ammunition was running out in the operable mount's magazine, the crew would carry ammunition from one end of the ship to the other to keep the operable mount supplied. All of this required a lot of work, of course.

Because of their durability, the older destroyers were often the only ones left firing. On the "gun line" the Gunners Mates in KYES were kept busy 24/7 repairing the guns. A rammer would be taken from MT52 to keep MT51 firing; when MT51 ran out of ammunition the rammer would go back to MT52. If MT52 suffered a mount casualty and only MT51 was able to fire, ammunition from MT52's magazine would be hand-carried to MT51's magazine. Several times parts broken beyond repair were replaced with parts hand-made in the machine shop by our machinists mates. The sailors did incredible things to keep us shooting.

None of the destroyers had more than one fire control computer. In the GEARING Class ships it was the Mark 1A, an incredible pre-WWII electromechanical analog computer with gears, integrators, motors and what-not. It

was fairly robust but did break from time to time. The Fire Control Technicians in KYES did magical things to keep the computer operating.

At the end, however, even the super sailors couldn't manage to keep KYES going. The gun mounts finally succumbed to hydraulic system failures. The nearly thirty-year-old copper hydraulic lines could take only so much hammering from constant gunfire shocks before they started to crack. We kept patching them but eventually ran out of hydraulic fluid, which was evidently in short supply in WestPac.

*3 December 1972
South China Sea*

We are finally on our way. We didn't make it until the end, though. Up until today, in spite of numerous gun casualties, we were always able to keep at least one gun shooting. Today at 1500, three hours before we were to have been detached, we ran out of guns. Both gun mounts were inoperative owing to hydraulic system casualties (hydraulic fluid transmission lines -- copper tubing -- break and then you are kaput until you can repair or replace them).

So they detached us early to head for Hong Kong. I was a bit disappointed that we had to crap out at the last minute. I was hoping to be able to say that in spite of the amount of shooting -- undoubtedly the most the ship has ever done in a like amount of time -- we were able to meet all our commitments. As it happened, we were unable to fire all the targets we had been assigned.

*But it feels good to be on our way out of there.
No mail today...*

...I've been getting along on about two hours of sleep a day for the past four or five days. Think I'll turn in (I left myself off the watch bill!)

Hong Kong

6 December 1972

Hong Kong

...We had a tragedy on our first night in Hong Kong. In spite of very thorough and intensive indoctrination of the entire crew warning all hands to stay away from drugs in Hong Kong, one sailor died from what appears to be an overdose of heroin. The heroin available here is of exceptionally high quality, and in fact practically pure. Apparently it is easy to overdose.

There seems to be little sympathy for the sailor who died. The crew feels that he was warned and died through his own stupidity. He was not exactly the clean-cut likable type, anyway (and fortunately -- I think -- he was not in my Department), and from reading some of his letters during an inventory of his personal belongings it became apparent that he had been a regular drug user. Whatever, it is a shame and a tragedy and, god knows, an administrative flail of major proportion.

There seems always to be those few who ignore the advice given them. This incident is a particularly poignant reminder. We lectured, printed gouge sheets, played tapes over the general announcing system, etc. ad infinitum for days before arriving in Hong Kong, specifically warning against drugs and incidents with local people. The Captain personally talked to the crew twice on the announcing system, telling the crew

of the deaths of four other sailors in Hong Kong from drug overdose in the past five weeks. One really wonders what these kids are thinking. Just how do you protect them from their own stupidity short of locking them up on board?

Enough of that depressing subject. I certainly do not grieve the fellow's death. I'm glad I'm not the Casualty Assistance Calls Officer who has to inform his next of kin. How could I politely tell his mother that he was a dumb asshole who did himself in on heroin?

We are having Mary Soo Side Cleaners do a job on our sides. For the privilege of picking up our garbage and operating a Coke concession on the fantail, plus some old mooring lines and a considerable quantity of brass (cartridge cases, projectile nose caps) she cleans and paints our sides. They needed it desperately! About ten or twelve women do the work -- they are all middle age or older, and scrape, sand and paint twice as effectively and efficiently as twice as many sailors!

As I recall, our stay in Hong Kong was work. KYES was assigned there as SOPA ADMIN -- Senior Officer Present Afloat for Administration. That meant that KYES was responsible for liaison with the local authorities for all US Navy ships visiting Hong Kong and was responsible for constituting and managing shore patrol. The crew also had to clean up, repair and paint the ship after a month at sea.

Hong Kong had been a favorite port for WestPac sailors since the Korean War. In addition to being a beautiful place, it was a cosmopolitan city, it was exotic, and it was affordable on a sailor's pay. Certainly it was a popular liberty port during most of the Vietnam war and I had enjoyed a number of happy visits in the 1960s. Dozens of tailors would offer to stitch a bespoke suit in a couple of days. Even custom shoes could be had for a good price. There were many superb restaurants

and one could get fresh air and exercise walking around Victoria Peak, enjoying great views of the harbor and Kowloon. By 1972, however, things had changed. Prices had been driven up by newly affluent Japanese tourists and drugs had become a serious problem. While it was still a beautiful place, some of the enjoyment had gone out of a port visit.

The death of a sailor did nothing to improve the experience. There did not seem to be any regrets about leaving Hong Kong.

Nevertheless, there was little enthusiasm for returning to the gun line.

12 December 1972

Hong Kong

And it's absolutely freezing today! I'll have to wear a bridge coat for Sea Detail today. We get underway at noon -- enroute to the gun line at the DMZ. For only six days!

14 December 1972

South China Sea

...I think it's the prospect of the gun line for the next six days. It will be the last six, and so it should be easy, but somehow it seems like a great effort. I'm just not up for it at all -- don't think anyone else is, either. Everyone just wants to be on the way back home....

...The northeast monsoon is still keeping the seas churned up here, and it looks like another fun week of rolling around. It's almost too much to bear. You know, seven months is too long!... I guess I shouldn't complain too

much -- some of the aircraft carriers have been out here for ten months, and some of the cruisers are going on a year.

While in Hong Kong the gunners mates had made repairs to the hydraulic systems and both gun mounts were operational. Yet KYES was able to fire only three of its four guns because it had only three useable rammers. The one useable left gun rammer could be installed in either the MT 51 left gun or the MT 52 left gun -- a critical flexibility.

*16 December 1972
South China Sea*

We're back and it's the same old shit. We reported yesterday morning, started shooting, and then went out to rearm (in the rain) and refuel. Weather is lousy. It's now 0400 and we are in the middle of a night mission -- we're cheating, actually, by not firing all of assigned targets right away, but saving a few for later so that we don't have to report completion. That way they won't assign us more targets.

I'm port and starboard for shooting (afternoons and mids) which means that from noon to 1800 I stand at a table with phones on and worry a lot, and do the same thing from midnight until 0600. We will probably UNREP in the morning, so you can see sleep is catch-as-catch-can....

...Right now we are back down to one operational gun, praying that it will hold out. The old ship is just barely hanging in there.

16 December 1972

South China Sea

Still at it. We're managing to keep one gun up. Hanging in there by the barest thread. And after shooting all night we went out and refueled and rearmed -- you guessed it -- in the rain.

...Now it's 17 December! I went to bed at 8:30 last night expecting to be awakened around midnight to start shooting. I woke up for breakfast at 5:30. That's the way I like to see this time fly by!

Today is Sunday. We UNREP every Sunday. We'll have to start shooting soon to use up some ammo so we don't break tradition.

18 December 1972

South China Sea

I'm happy today -- more so than I've been in the last month or so. Lots of contributing factors: The sun came out today! The seas are calm! We are over the hump!

We rearmed today, of course, but it was almost easy without salt spray, rain, wind, and the deck rolling and pitching.

Only three more nights and two more days of this and we leave for Subic. The shorter we get the happier I am.

20 December 1972

South China Sea

One more night. We've completed our last at-sea refueling, hopefully our last at-sea rearming, and tomorrow should see our last VERTREP for food. We've completed

nearly 100 UNREPS -- and we've rearmed more times than we've refueled!

We had a rather nasty accident today. Rich Pearce wanted to fire the .50 cal. machine guns for practice to use up some of the ammo, and one of the guns malfunctioned. A cartridge discharged before getting all the way into the chamber, and parts of the cartridge badly cut up the leg of the man who was firing the gun. It could have been worse.

A large batch of parcel post and 2nd class mail was picked up from NITRO today -- I now have all the October and November issues of my various magazines! Can't imagine where they have been all this time. I wonder if any 1st class mail is missing.

Speaking of mail, we will get some tomorrow -- the NIAGARA FALLS is going to VERTREP our food to us and she will also have our mail....

The sailor who was injured in the gun malfunction was air medevaced because his injury was severe. In an extraordinarily impressive feat of airmanship an Army UH-1 Huey helicopter came to the ship at night and landed on the flight deck, which was never intended to accommodate a manned helo. It was pitch dark except for the Huey's landing lights and the Huey's rotors were inches from the ship's superstructure. That substantially elevated my estimation of the US Army.

Outa' Here

*22 December 1972
South China Sea*

The war is over for us, and I've survived intact, thank God.

There are great things done under the Pacific sun
By the greyhounds of the sea
The starlit nights have seen great sights
But the grandest they even did see
Were the days and nights of a ship that fights
The venerable, proud JAMES E. KYES
Yes, 22 May was a beautiful day until we got the word
You may shed a tear, but pack your gear
You sail with the roost of the bird
We gnashed our teeth and screamed our curse
But hold silent your futile rage
And all turned to and did their best
Five-a-June we were underway
Up and down the coast of a troubled land
was where our duty was done
From MR III to Haiphong and back
We followed the call of the gun
We know storm-tossed seas and tropical sun
and the grey of a wet monsoon
And the giggling girls and the quench of our thirst
and the neon of Kowloon
The last of a breed, the old JAMES E.
the real DDS are few
We've known her trials and felt the wiles
we loved her as sailors do
Yet some may deride and hold us in jest
and shake us off with a toss of the head
But an ancient mariner once said to me
Neptune knows the best of the best
So fare ye well all those who remain
our job is well-nigh done

*We're homeward bound thru froth and foam
for a rest that's been hard won
There are great things done under the Pacific sun
By the greyhounds of the sea
The starlit nights have seen wild sights
But the wildest they have ever seen
Were the days and nights of a ship that fights
The venerable JAMES E. KYES*

Foregoing was composed by Ken Taylor. Sort of sums up the deployment.

I'm on the 04-08 watch and it is a glorious night with stars, a full moon and a glassy sea....

Tomorrow we arrive in Subic, where we will be until the morning of the 26th. Then underway for Guam. I'm on the way home.....

Shortly after KYES left Vietnam behind, the Paris Peace Accords ended the fighting -- for the time being. The wisdom of the Vietnam war has been questioned ever since and the military strategy and tactics are still matters of debate. At the time, however, these questions were of no practical matter to the destroyers playing a role in stopping the Easter Offensive. There is no doubt that they were called upon in a desperate situation when, because of the monsoon weather, they were the only effective fire support assets, nor is there any doubt that the missions they were given were crucial in deciding the battle around Quang Tri. The North Vietnamese suffered a very costly defeat, losing thousands of soldiers. Denied their strategic objective of military victory and territorial gain, they stayed at the negotiating table instead of seeking total conquest.

KYES had done her duty. She had fired 14,000 rounds in anger -- over 400 tons of high explosive projectiles, each one handled with care by the sailors. Some statistics reveal the operational tempo of the deployment:

Days in Combat Zone	131
Days CVA escort Gulf of Tonkin	26
Days Naval Gunfire Support RVN	65
Days LINEBACKER/HON LA Surveillance	31
Days in transit in Combat Zone	9
Days inport/Percent	47/21%
(a) Days inport Upkeep/Percent	30/13.6%
(b) Days inport Leave & Liberty/Percent	8/04%
(c) Days inport Miscellaneous/Percent	9/04%
Total Deployment	7 months 9 days

Underway Replenishments

<u>Type</u>	<u>Number</u>
Ammunition Ship (AE)	43
Oiler (AO)	38
Stores ship (AFS)	9
Aircraft Carrier (CVA)	5

KYES received the customary accolades. In fact, she had provided exemplary service, in large part because she had a superb Commanding Officer. Captain Reszetar commanded by walking around. He knew every one of the three hundred in the crew. I never heard him raise his voice once in the seven month deployment. He tolerated a lot and he trusted his crew; they responded by performing at their best. I could not have been luckier than to serve under his command.

Owing largely to Captain Reszetar's enlightened approach to command there were very few disciplinary problems in KYES. There were none at all in my Department. It probably helped that we were too busy most of the time to get into any mischief. The sailors in my Department were uncomplaining (well...), hard working, and skilled at what they had to do. I could not have asked for better.

Though every one of the crew deserves credit for their performance during this deployment, one petty officer in the Weapons Department stood out. The leading Gunners Mate, Gunners Mate First Class Ferris, worked untold hours keeping our guns in commission, performing far above the call of duty.

23 December 1972

Subic Bay, PI

So much happened today -- I don't know where to start!

We arrived here at 0700 and off-loaded some ammunition, then arrived at our berth at 1100. Hundreds of parcel post packages and many bags of mail awaited us. I received your letters of 13 December (with all the Christmas cards) and 18 December, plus the cheese package, which I immediately donated to the Wardroom mess. We will eat with some class for a change (up to now it's been Kraft process!).

25 December 1972

Subic Bay, PI

...This has been an eventful inport period. On Saturday night I got drunk at the Club, went out for a breath of fresh air, and passed out (or fell asleep, whichever suits you). At 0300 the police threw me into the paddy wagon and delivered me to the ship. I think I was still drunk at 1000 on Sunday morning.

But I spent Sunday on the beach at Grande Island, the recreation area in the middle of Subic Bay. We swam, snorkeled, and drank beer on the beach. Very relaxing, but I

was really tired after so little sleep and so much fresh air and sunshine. Last night I had dinner at the Club and intended to come back to the ship early -- finally gave up and came back at 0230. So I'm still tired.

*Tomorrow we are underway for San Diego at 0700!
At last!*

29 December 1972

Guam, Mariana Islands

It's good to be heading East! We're very busy, trying to accomplish the million and one things which must be done before we arrive in San Diego. Customs forms, customs inspections, material inspections, awards nominations, reports, plans for San Diego, inventories, and on and on. It's harder than fighting the war.

We came to Guam at 25 knots, and the weather was a little rough. We slow down a little now for the next leg to conserve fuel. It doesn't look like it will be a smooth transit.

The voyage back to San Diego was not smooth. KYES steamed in company with USS SHELTON (DD 790), USS HOEL (DDG 13), and USS GRAY (FF 1054). The four destroyers were trying to make progress at 20 knots in heavy seas. Basically that amounted to a lurching trip: on every swell the bow buried itself in the sea, the ship shuddered, and anyone standing up was thrown forward. We just braced ourselves and hung on -- nobody wanted to slow down.

USS JAMES E. KYES was decommissioned in March 1973. I will admit to shedding a few tears. She was a good ship and served her country well, commanded during her last deployment by a right good Captain and served by a right good crew.

“TAPS. TAPS, LIGHTS OUT. THE SMOKING LAMP IS OUT IN ALL BERTHING SPACES. ALL HANDS TURN INTO YOUR BUNKS. MAINTAIN QUIET ABOUT THE DECKS. TAPS”

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Epilogue

I never did make it to BAUSELL.

Shortly after she was decommissioned, the former USS JAMES E. KYES was transferred to Taiwan and became ROCS CHIEN YANG (DDG 912) in the Republic of China Navy, where she would be extensively modified and serve for another three decades. An unlikely set of circumstances allowed me to step aboard one more time shortly before she was finally retired.

In 2003 the new Bush Administration adopted a policy of strengthening Taiwan. The Clinton Administration had generally tried to keep from antagonizing the PRC, but Secretary of Defense Don Rumsfeld had recently served on the “China Commission” and didn’t much care for the PRC. The Defense Department therefore became more inclined to accommodate Taiwan’s requests for help in modernizing its military establishment.

One area in dire need of reform and modernization was Taiwan’s military procurement system. It was stovepiped, with each Service in possession of its own large procurement organization, and it was inefficient. Taiwan requested a dialog with the DoD’s acquisition policy organization to learn best practices. It fell to me, in my position as a Senior Executive in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, to manage the dialog.

Defense acquisition is a many-faceted enterprise, with specialized organizations to deal with purchasing, research and development, program management, contracting policy, and so forth. I determined that the dialog would become effective only if the senior leaders on each side got to know their

counterparts and established individual channels of communication. Consequently, we organized a small conference of two-star level officers and civilian equivalents. The first meeting was held in Taipei in October 2003.

I led the DoD delegation, comprised of a half dozen Senior Executives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense representing the various acquisition specialties. We met our counterparts in Taiwan's Defense Ministry, visited their organizations and facilities, and discussed a variety of acquisition issues. Our counterparts were military general officers -- my delegation counterpart and host was an army Lieutenant General and the officer in charge of our conference was an extraordinary gentleman, Rear Admiral Wu, Wei-Rong.

Taiwan's army and air force procurement and R&D establishments were in the Taipei area but the navy establishments were in southern Taiwan around the port of Kaohsiung. To visit them, the Ministry of Defence arranged to fly us down to Kaohsiung in the Defence Minister's personal aircraft.

The US delegation was asked to depart for that trip very early in the morning. Some in the US delegation grumbled about the early departure and suspected the reason. The Defense Ministry knew I'd served in JAMES E. KYES and I suspected the trip to Kaohsiung might involve a visit to CHIEN YANG -- but nothing was said. Of course, when we arrived in Kaohsiung, a bus transported us directly to the piers and pulled up alongside CHIEN YANG.

It turned out our early departure was driven by CHIEN YANG's need to get underway at 0900. Our party, which included Rear Admiral Wu and his boss from the Defense Ministry (a Vice Admiral), arrived at around 0800 and was met by the local commander, another Vice Admiral. So I was piped aboard along with three admirals. While I'm sure my American colleagues were duly impressed, I suspected that I was the most unpopular visitor imaginable: preparing for and hosting a visit of three senior admirals is a tense evolution for any ship, particularly one that is in the process of getting underway.

It was a nostalgic visit for me, of course, and a real treat to be able to walk the decks and take a sight through an alidade on the bridge. Curiously, I thought the

ship had shrunk because I had to bend over to look through the alidade. Then I realized that the Chinese had built up the deck with a five-inch platform.

The Chinese got a great kick out of introducing me to the ship's Weapons Officer -- the same job I'd had -- who was a woman!

The captain presented me with a ship's ball cap and a framed commissioning pennant. I could have spent hours crawling around the ship but it was gently pointed out that CHIEN YANG was getting underway and we'd have to leave.

The Chinese are generous to a fault and love to give gifts. In my close relationship with the Taiwan Defense Ministry over the years I received many small official gifts and a couple of large ones. One is worth mentioning.

In 2007 I led another delegation to Taipei for a week-long conference. At the concluding plenary session, attended by thirty or forty people, the Chinese rolled in a large box covered by a velvet cloth. This was the Taiwan delegation's official gift to the US delegation. When it was unveiled, it revealed a brass ship's bell with the inscription "USS JAMES E. KYES (DD 787)."

I was flabbergasted. A US Navy ship's bell is the premier naval artifact and is removed from the ship upon decommissioning. I could not understand how the Chinese came into possession of the ship's bell from KYES.

It turned out that they did not possess the ship's bell from KYES: our host and my long-time friend Admiral Wu, Wei-Rong was now a Vice Admiral in charge of the shipyard and he had cast a new bell.

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Glossary

Arc Light = code name for bombing strikes conducted by US Air Force B-52s

ARVN = Army of the Republic of Vietnam

B-52 = US Air Force heavy bomber

Bon Son Pass = (Bong Son Pass) road that passes between hills south of the town of Bong Son, about forty miles south of Quang Tri city

CDS = COMDESRON

CH-46 Sea Knight = medium lift, tandem rotor helicopter, the Navy's standard utility helo from 1964 to around 2000

CIC = Combat Information Center. Space or spaces within ship where surveillance and situational awareness information is collected and analyzed.

CINCPACFLT = Commander in Chief, US Pacific Fleet, a four-star Admiral whose Headquarters were at Pearl Harbor

CLG = Light Guided Missile Cruiser

CO - Commanding Officer

CONDITION ZEBRA = material condition of highest readiness for combat in which the ship is completely compartmentalized by, among other things, closing all watertight doors.

CONREP = Connected Replenishment, a method of UNREP employing cables strung between ships.

COMDESRON = Commander, Destroyer Squadron, an administrative command and usually a Navy Captain (O6) responsible for a group of four to six destroyers. In an operational setting such officers were often the Officer in Tactical Command (OTC) of several destroyers, some of which might not be in the same officer's squadron.

CRUDESPAC = Commander, Cruiser-Destroyer Force, Pacific Fleet, a command located in San Diego responsible for the administrative control (as contrasted to operational control) of all the cruisers and destroyers in the Pacific Fleet

CVA = Attack Carrier. Largest and most capable aircraft carriers equipped for strike operations.

DD = Destroyer. Class of small combatant ships equipped to perform air defense, surface warfare, and anti-submarine warfare.

DASH = Drone Anti-Submarine Helicopter. When the GEARING Class destroyers were modernized in the Fleet Rehabilitation and Modernization (FRAM) program in the early 1960s they were equipped with two drone anti-submarine helicopters, along with a hangar and flight deck. This flight deck was not large enough to accommodate manned helicopters but served as an excellent platform for VERTREP. By 1972 KYES no longer had the DASH aircraft.

DMZ = Demilitarized Zone between North and South Vietnam

ENS = Ensign, the lowest officer rank (O1)

ENTERPRISE = USS ENTERPRISE (CVN 65), the first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier

FRAM = Fleet Rehabilitation And Modernization. Many GEARING Class destroyers were modernized in the early 1960s. Lengthened twenty feet to accommodate the new Anti-Submarine Rocket system (ASROC), provided with a flight deck for the Drone Anti-Submarine Helicopter (DASH), and equipped with several other new systems, the FRAM destroyers gained a lease on life for another fifteen or twenty years.

FRANK KNOX = USS FRANK KNOX (DD 742)

GQ = General Quarters or battle stations

Holiday Routine = ship's schedule for Sundays and Federal Holidays, during which ship's routine work was suspended. Other days, by contrast, were full work days regardless of watch-standing obligations.

JOUETT = USS JOUETT (DLG 29), a guided missile ship subsequently designated a cruiser

LCDR = Lieutenant Commander (O4)

LT = Lieutenant (O3)

LTjg = Lieutenant Junior Grade (O2)

MiG 17 = Soviet-built jet fighter aircraft, employed by North Vietnam

Military Region = area of operations; Vietnam was separated into four Military Regions with MR I the northernmost and MR IV the southernmost.

MT 51 or MT 52 = shorthand designation for the 5"/38 main battery gun mounts;
MT 51 was the forward mount, MT 52 was the after mount

NIAGARA FALLS = USS NIAGARA FALLS (AFS 3), a combat stores ship

Port and Starboard Watches = two section watches for high-readiness Condition II situations. In KYES they were ordinarily six hour watches.

OTC = Officer in Tactical Command

Pubs = publications, such as Naval Regulations

Round = gun ammunition consisting of one projectile and one propellant charge

RVN = Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam)

Senior Watch Officer = the senior officer required to stand watches underway and in port. He was responsible for managing the watch bill that assigns officers and crew to the various watch positions. Underway watches usually included an Officer of the Deck and a Junior Officer of the Deck on the bridge and a Combat Information Center Watch Officer in CIC.

Task Group, or TG = Naval organization just below Task Force

UHF -- Ultra High Frequency, line-of-sight radio frequency used for tactical communications

UNREP = Underway Replenishment

VHF = Very High Frequency, a band used for tactical radios; used for beyond line-of-sight communication between ships and shore fire control parties

VC = Viet Cong, or Vietnamese Communists

VD = venereal disease

VERTREP = Vertical Replenishment, a method of UNREP using helicopters.

WWII = World War II

XO = Executive Officer, the second in command of a ship

Yankee Station = the area in the Tonkin Gulf from which Navy aircraft carriers conducted strikes against North Vietnam

Yokosuka = city on Honshu, Japan, south of Yokohama and a site of a major US Navy Base and shipyard. The US Navy home-ported an aircraft carrier, the cruiser that served as flagship for Commander, Seventh Fleet, and several destroyers in Yokosuka.



**Refueling from
ORISKANY**

Vietnam



Rearming

**KYES arrived in Kaohsiung
in deplorable condition**





**Heavy Weather
Refueling**



Ammo on flight deck

Admiral Wu's gift



