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Table of Contents
Pg. 2... Why I Liked the Navy
(submitted by Eric Andersen)

Pg. 3......Navy's Deadliest Actions in Vietnam
(submitted by Eric Andersen)

Pg. 4... Youngest United States Serviceman (submitted by Eric Andersen)

Page 4... Note from Editor

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Why I Liked the Navy
(Submitted by Eric Andersen)

I like standing on the bridge wing at sunrise with salt spray in my face and clean ocean winds whipping in from the four quarters of the globe, the ship beneath me feeling like a living thing as her engines drive her through the sea.

I like the sounds of the Navy: the piercing trill of the boatswain’s pipe, the syncopated clangor of the ship’s bell on the quarterdeck, the harsh squawk of the 1MC and the strong language and laughter of sailors at work.

I like vessels of the Navy, nervous darting destroyers, plodding Fleet auxiliaries, sleek submarines and steady solid carriers.


I like sailors, men from all parts of the land, farms of the Midwest, small towns of New England, from the cities, the mountains and the prairies, from all walks of life. I trust and depend on them as they trust and depend on me, for professional confidence, for comradeship, for courage. In a word, they are shipmates.

I like the surge of adventure in my heart when the word is passed “Now station the special sea and anchor detail; all hands to quarters for leaving port,” and I like the infectious thrill of sighting home again with the waving hands of welcome from family and friends waiting pier-side. The work is hard and dangerous, the going rough at times, the parting from loved ones painful, but the companionship of robust Navy laughter, the ‘all for one and one for all’ philosophy of the sea is ever present.

I like the serenity of the sea after a day of hard ship’s work, as flying fish flit across the wave tops and sunset gives way to right. I like the feel of the Navy in darkness – the masthead lights, the red and green navigation lights and stern light, the pulsating phosphorescence of radar repeaters as they cut through the dusk and join with the mirror of stars overhead. And I like drifting off to sleep lulled by the myriad noises large and small that tell me that my ship is alive and well, and that shipmates on watch will keep me safe.

I like quiet mid-watches with the aroma of strong coffee, the lifeblood of the Navy, permeating everywhere. And I like hectic watches when the exacting minuet of haze-grey shapes racing at flank speed keeps all hands on a razor edge of alertness.

I like the sudden electricity of “General Quarters, General Quarters, all hands man your battle stations,” followed by the hurried clamor of running feet on ladders and the resounding thump of watertight doors as the ship transforms herself in a few brief seconds from a peaceful work place to a weapon of war ready for anything. And I like the sight of space age equipment manned by youngsters clad in dungarees and sound-powered phones that their grandfathers would still recognize.

I like the traditions of the Navy and the men and women who made them. I like the proud names of Navy heroes: Halsey, Nimitz, Perry, Farragut, and John Paul Jones. A sailor can find much in the Navy: comrades-in-arms, pride in self and country, mastery of the seamen’s trade. At adolescence can find adulthood.

In years to come when sailors are home from the sea, they will still remember with fondness and respect the ocean in all its moods—the impossible shimmering mirror calm and the storm-tossed green water surging over the bow.
And, then there will come again a faint whiff of stack gas, a faint echo of engine and rudder orders, a vision of the bright bunting of signal flags snapping at the yardarm, a refrain of hearty laughter in the wardroom and chief’s quarters and mess decks. Gone ashore for good they will grow wistful about their Navy days, when the seas belonged to them and a new port of call was always over the horizon.

Remembering this, they will stand taller and say:
“I WAS A SAILOR, I WAS PART OF THE NAVY & THE NAVY WILL ALWAYS BE A PART OF ME”

Ready to re-enlist?

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**Navy’s Deadliest Actions in Vietnam**
*By Richard K. Kolb (submitted by Eric Andersen)*

The US Navy fought the war on the water, in the air and on the ground. Its largest single hostile loss was 22 sailors in a 1969 rocket attack in DaNang.

The US Navy operated on the blue water ocean along brown water inland waterways, in the air and on land during the Vietnam War. Along with carrier operations in the South China Sea, its best-known role was played in Vietnam’s rivers and canals.

Riverine warfare required the services of the “Brown Water Navy” consisting of shallow-draft craft to combat the Viet Cong in the Mekong Delta.

The Mobile Riverine Force included the river patrol boat (PBR), fast patrol craft (PCF or swift boat), assault patrol boat (ATC), command-and-communications boat (CCB) and the patrol air cushion vehicle (PACV).

Naval aviators also flew serial reconnaissance missions and sailors served in several capacities on land as corpsmen, Seabees, and SEALs.

**Deadly Rocket Attack on Loading Ramp**

On Feb. 27, 1969, enemy 12 mm rockets rained death on sailors working the DaNang bridge-loading ramp. The first rockets hit the covered storage area, wounding 13 sailors. Moored at the ramp were LCU (Landing Craft, Utility) – 1500 and the YFU (Harbor Utility Craft, Self-Propelled)-78.

The LCU received a direct hit, detonating the ammo aboard. The explosion ignited a fire, which spread to the nearby YFU. Both ships were destroyed. The casualty toll was 22 KIA and 37 WIA. LSU-1500 was hardest hit with 12 KIA, followed by the YFU-78 with seven IKA. Three sailors of the Naval Support Activity (DaNang) who were standing on the ramp died.
Navy’s Deadliest Actions in Vietnam
(continued from page 3)

Stanley Houlberg, Jr., was then assigned to the YFU-74. “I felt the initial explosion at least two miles away”, he recalled. “The attack happened just after 11:00pm and the fire and explosions lasted close to midnight. The third of three rockets hit the 1500 and both boats went up. The 78 probably had over 300 tons of black powder and projectiles on board; the 1500 about 200 tons”.

Former Lt. Cmdr. John Schroll responded to the call for medical assistance from the naval station hospital. “The fury of the explosion was awful”, he said. “We went across the bridge on foot. Because of the human devastation, we spent much of our effort identifying what was left of the remains. Walking along the ramp, I came upon a pair of combat boots with the feet still inside”.

No other single enemy action caused a greater number of KIAs for American sailors in Vietnam.

This article was excerpted from the October 2007 edition of the VFW Magazine.

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Youngest United States Serviceman
(submitted by Eric Andersen)

In World War II, the youngest serviceman in the United States military was Calvin Graham – age 12. Graham lied about his age when he enlisted in the U.S Navy. His real age was not discovered until after he was wounded!

Calvin Graham

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I apologize for the lateness of this newsletter. We had some computer problems, but hopefully you receive this during the month of September.

Any submissions for the December newsletter, please try to send to me by November 10th—busy month with the Thanksgiving holidays. Thank you so much and hope to see you in El Paso.

Jean Gilliam, Editor