

# **USS WILHOITE**

**DE-DER 397**

**January February March, 2023  
Newsletter**

## **REMINDER - 2023 DONATIONS ARE DUE**

Wilhoite Shipmates:

Hey Guy's I have not received enough interest in 2023 reunion in the San Diego area. So far I have only 6 have said they were coming and only 3 of those were from West Coast and we have 6 active members from OR, WA. Those that said they would come I have not heard from. It takes time to plan something and We can't do it in about 3-4 weeks time. I need to start now. We need at least 20 to get discounted tickets and hotel/motel rooms. Plus I have to track down transportation. So please let me know by February 15, 2023 if you are planning on coming. If I don't have at least 20-25 by the 15th, we will not have a 2023 reunion unless someone else wants to do it. Then it will fall on Tom Morrissey's shoulders for 2024 in Lincoln, NE. I am enclosing another form to fill out for your interest to help me decide on what you want to do and I need that back as soon as possible.

I'm enclosing another form for any that did not fill out one before. This for a special quilt made especially for you for your service to your country. In some areas they are running behind and it may take month or so to receive and you need to have patience.

For those that have not received their quilt, but filled out form, please let me know, so I can follow up on them.

We had 4 winners on the contest. Cindy Thompson, Ray Markley, Bob Johnson and Fred Genetti.

"Smooth Sailing"

Liz



## DUES PAID UNTIL 2023

**As you can see several have not paid their dues for 2023. This will be last newsletter unless dues/donations have been received by the March April May newsletter. If you think you have paid for 2023, then please let either Dana or myself know.**

Alcorn Michael (2023)	Markley Ray (2023)
Baker Billy (2022)	Mauldin Connie (2022)
Berry David (2022)	Morlock Fred (2022)
Bunker Rita (2022)	Morrisse Tom (2022)
Caldwell Brenda (2023)	MullinJames (2022)
Caldwell John (2023)	Murphy Obie (2022)
Candor Raymond (2022)	Owens William (2023)
Cusato Paul (2023)	Parker David (2023)
Dougher Thomas (2022)	Payne Gary (2023)
Dutchuk John (2023)	Payson David (2023)
Dyson Al (2022)	Payton Johnny (2023)
Frederiksen Geri (2023)	Pohl Art (2023)
Gennetti Fred (2023)	Rider Elisabeth (2023)
Gergens Steve (2023)	Robinson Lee (2023)
Hagee Charles (2023)	Ruel Donald A. (2023)
Hawes Eugene (2022)	Shanahan, Jr John (2023)
Heller Richard (2022)	Shuck Donald L. (2023)
Horch Linda (2023)	Silhan Peter (2023)
Huf Roland (2023)	SmithRaymond (2023)
Huml Vincent (2023)	Syverso Norris (2023)
HydroJohn (2023)	Thompson Ross (2024)
Johnson Robert (2023)	Throm Larry (2023)
Knight James (2022)	Torriglia Paul (2026)
Layton Geoffrey (2022)	Valiant Martha (2023)
Long Leroy (2022)	Yonkofski Ben (2023)



## USS WILHOITE ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

### **President**

Tom Morrissey  
3240 South 76th  
Lincoln, NE 68506  
Phone: (402) 483-6889  
Email: tommorri2010@hotmail.com

### **Vice President**

Lee Robinson  
2382 County Rd 207  
Brookeland, TX 75931-5202  
Phone: (409) 698-9332  
Email: bjr3645@sbcflbal.net

### **Treasurer**

Dana Alcorn  
12863 W. Vernon Ave.  
Avondale, AZ 85392  
Phone (602) 570-3262  
Email: alcomcpa@msn.com

### **Secretary**

#### **Temporary Secretary**

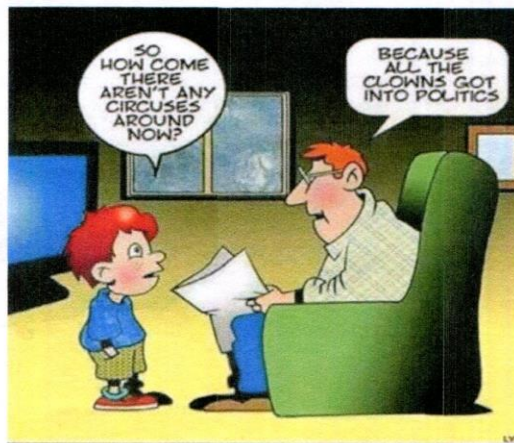
Elisabeth Rider  
1501 So 12th Street  
Rogers, AR 72756  
Phone: (479) 280-2776  
Email: sailingaway1976@gmail.com

### **Chaplain**

John Caldwell  
610 Saddle Ridge Ave.  
Durham, NC 27704-1237  
Phone: (919) 471-4513  
Email: bcaldwell@nc.rr.com

### **Historian**

Bill Endter  
7902 Sailboat Key Blvd. # 405  
South Pasadina, FL 33707  
Phone: (703) 323-8297  
Email: eendter@cox.net



# SHIPMATES NEWS



# GO NAVY





## **WILLIAM OWENS**

**(On left)**

I joined the Navy on the delayed entry program and boarded a bus from Steubenville, Ohio to Pittsburgh, PA on Nov 10, 1966. The day before Veterans Day. A group of us from surrounding towns were put on a train from Pittsburgh overnight to Chicago. Spent 13 weeks at Great Lakes Naval Training Center. Got orders to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

At Pearl Harbor, myself and three guys from my Boot Camp company went aboard the USS Wilhoite DER 397 around 23:00. Spent 2 years aboard, two West Pac cruises during which time making Market time patrols off the coast of Vietnam searching junks for weapons and ammunition. We patrolled the Taiwan Straits. Traveling to Maui, Guam, Hong Kong, Sasebo, Japan, Subic Bay Philippines, Kaohsiung and Keelung, Taiwan, DaNang, Qui Nhon and Nha Be Vietnam until I made BM 3. While on patrol in Vietnam our ship chased a North Vietnamese Trawler until it went aground on a sand bar. At which time during the night we returned fire along with a destroyer, A Coast Guard cutter and numerous helicopter gunships.

The next morning jets were dropping napalm around it. The trawler was later found to have millions of rounds of ammunition and arms while ashore a battalion of North Vietnamese waiting for it. Our ship received the Navy Unit Citation for its action. Good Ship, good Captain and good crew.

## **WILLIAM OWENS**

**(cont)**

Shortly after making 3rd class I received orders to go to Vietnam and at the time we were off the coast of Vietnam. While on 30 days leave I met a lady who would later become my wife. Flew to California for survival training at Camp Pendleton, CA and later flew to Saigon, Vietnam. Got transferred to Naval Support Activity Hha Be Vietnam. Spent a couple weeks on the local rivers delivering supplies and recovered an abandoned PBR and brought it back to base to be repaired. On another trip on the river we exchanged fire during two firefights with VC. After returning to base I was put in charge of spray painting boats, jeeps and buildings until I made BM 2. Put in charge of the Sail Loft at that time until leaving for home on January 21, 1970.

Flew into Pittsburgh and there waiting along with my Dad was the girl I met on leave. Joined the Naval reserve to finish my 6 years. After several years I received a letter from the late Frank Roche about the reunions. Attended our first in Norfolk, VA. Been married 51 years with two children and two granddaughters.

I enjoyed the Navy and the shipmates. Miss the sea and the salt air.



**DON SHUCK**

**1957-1961 BMSN**

In 1957 I joined the Navy and went to San Diego for my boot camp.

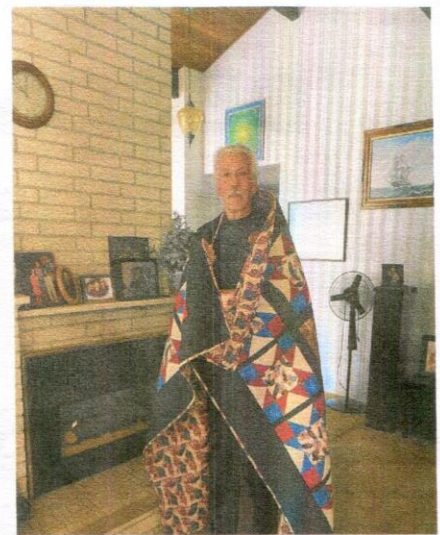
After boot camp I was stationed at ISCF at Pearl Harbor for 3 or 4 months. Then to the DER Bristol 327 in Pearl for 2 1/2 years. In early 1960 I was transferred to the Wilhoite and west on to Deep Freeze 61. I was discharged in June 61.

After the navy I went into floorcovering until I retired February 2007.

Married my High School sweetheart and were married 57 years until her death 2020. We have 4 sons, 9 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren.

I now and always have lived in Colorado Springs.





**JAMES KNIGHT**  
**1964-1970**  
**BURIEN, WA**

### **DAVID PARKER'S WRITEUP**

I was in the navy from early 1960 to 1964. I think I remember your husband Liz, a 1st Class BM not sure though. I spent 3 months on housekeeping in Hawaii, Bonham Air Station then the next 3 1/2 years was spent on the USS Wilhoite as 3rd class snipe engineman A Gang.

On my first week on the ship myself and a few others went to town and had a few beers. When we got back to the ship we came aboard ship by climbing the forward bow lines. The Officer of the day caught us and we got a little extra duty.

I remember beating the USS Enterprise in baseball. They sure didn't like it.

Another time we were bringing in items for the stores and we directed 8 watermelons to #2 Engine room and we ate them. They were suppose to be for the Officers. They announced no Liberty until they were returned. Some of the shipmates were pretty upset, but we could not return them. A little friction from the married men.

Some friends that I remember are Robert Rice, Robert Craftan, Richard Lacy, Mike Farbr, Jim Goodwin, Otis Jennings, JJ Wadsworth, Keith Orem, Herman Husband, Joe Garthis, Forrest Fuller.

One bad experience that I had was on mid-watch two young men got into some trouble and were going to be dishonorably discharged. They were doing extra duty in the Engineroom. I was to keep watch on them and caught one hanging and had to cut him down. The other one had cut his wrist. That was a bad experience for me and I had to have a couple of drinks after that. Too many things like this happened or I might had stayed in the Navy. I could write a book on my time on the Wilhoite and Navy Times.

I was only 16 when I enlisted. When I got out did a little bar tending, brakman on railroad in Champ., IL. Sold insurance, had a Orkin office then sold wholesale wine and whiskey from 1969 to 2009 in Ft. Smith and Northwest Arkansas. Married my wonderful wife Jenne in 1966. We have 3 children, Richard, Philip and Melissa. 9 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren and not one ugly one in the bunch.

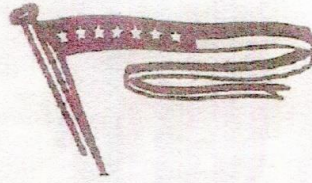


# DECOMMISSIONING CEREMONY

USS WILHOITE  
(DER-397)







Ceremony on the occasion of  
the

Decommissioning

Invocation

National Anthem

Remarks and Readings of Orders

LCDR D. H. GRIFFIN, USN

Decommissioning Ordered

Securing the Watch

Sounding of Retreat and Hauling Down of the Colors  
and Commission Pennant

Presentation of Colors and Commission Pennant

Decommissioning Report

Acceptance of Ship and Remarks

Benediction





#### BIOGRAPHY OF LIEUTENANT COMMANDER D. H. GRIFFIN, USN

Lieutenant Commander D. H. GRIFFIN, USN, assumed command of USS WILHOITE (DER-397) on 31 December 1967 in Apra Harbor, Guam, during the WILHOITE's return to Pearl Harbor from deployment with the U. S. SEVENTH Fleet. He came to WILHOITE from duty as Executive Officer, USS STRONG (DD-758).

Lieutenant Commander GRIFFIN was born in New York, New York and upon completion of elementary and secondary schooling, he enrolled in Brown University in September of 1952. It was at Brown University that Lieutenant Commander GRIFFIN entered the Navy through the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps program. He participated in that program through graduation when he was awarded a Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry and was commissioned an Ensign in the regular Navy in June 1957.

Upon commissioning, Lieutenant Commander GRIFFIN received orders to the USS BROWNSON (DD-868) where he was assigned the billet of Damage Control Assistant and later as Engineering Officer. In 1960, Lieutenant Commander GRIFFIN was ordered to the USS ABILITY (MSO-519) where he served as Executive Officer until 1961. Completion of this tour of duty as Executive Officer brought Lieutenant Commander GRIFFIN to his first command.

From 1961 until 1963, Lieutenant Commander GRIFFIN served as Commanding Officer of the USS FRIGATEBIRD (MSC-191) operating out of Little Creek, Virginia. Upon completion of this tour of duty, he was subsequently ordered to his first tour of shore duty. Lieutenant Commander GRIFFIN served from 1963 until 1966 in the Bureau of Naval Personnel in Washington, D.C. and from there was ordered to duty as Executive Officer of the USS STRONG (DD-758). Lieutenant Commander GRIFFIN will report to Commander, U.S. SEVENTH Fleet as Aide and Flag Secretary.

Lieutenant Commander GRIFFIN is married to the former, Miss Gail Schriver of Whitmire, South Carolina. They currently reside with their three children in Honolulu, Hawaii.



## **FORMER COMMANDING OFFICERS**

### **Commanding Officers of the USS Wilhoite (DE 397)**

LCDR Eli B. Rotn USN, 82734. from 16 December 1943 to 15  
December 1944

LCDR Robert W. Whales, USNR, 102026, From 15 December 1944 to  
8 February 1945

LCDR Raymond W. Dudley, USNR, 102751, from 8 February 1945 to  
7 March 1945

LCDR Robertson G. Moore, USNR, 97868, From 7 March 1945 to  
7 December 1945

LCDR Charles R. Horch, USNR, 108097, From 7 December 1945 to  
25 January 1946

LCDR Jack E. Kennedy, USN, 123727, from 25 January 1946 to  
19 June 1946

### **COMMANDING OFFICERS OF USS WILHOITE (DER-397) RECOMMISSIONED 29 January 1955**

LCDR Lambert V. Forde, from 29 January 1955 to \_\_\_ October 1955

LCDR Dan "J" Rienstra, Jr., USN, from \_\_\_ October 1955 to  
29 May 1958

LCDR R. D. Mc Crary, USN, from 19 May 1958 to 7 November 1959

CDR Charles H. Willis, USN, from 7 November 1959 to 22 July 1961

CDR Robert L. Thorson, USN, from 22 July 1961 to 29 July 1961 to 29 July 1962

CDR Frank C. Mead, USN, From 29 July 1962 to 31 December 1963

CDR Howard N. Kay, USN, from 31 December 1963 to 22 August 1965

LCDR James E. Fernandes, USN, from August 1965 to 2 December 1966

LCDR Rdyrl E. Hays, USN, from 2 December 1966 to 31 December 1966

LCDR David H. Griffin, USN, from 31 December 1967 until decommissioned in 1969



## HISTORY OF USS WILHOITE (DER-397)

USS WILHOITE (DER-397) is a radar equipped destroyer escort designed primarily for patrolling and searching. This type vessel has proven most useful as a patrol unit on Operation MARKET TIME off the coast of South Vietnam and in the Taiwan Straits as a part of the long established neutrality patrol.

WILHOITE was initially commissioned on 16 December 1943 at Houston, Texas and is named for an early World War II Naval Hero, Ensign Thomas M. WILHOITE, USNR, who was killed while piloting a Navy fighter plane during the 1942 invasion of North Africa. USS WILHOITE (DER-397) was first assigned to Atlantic convoys as convoy escort in 1944. While on this duty, WILHOITE had the distinction of being in the longest single World War II engagement with an enemy submarine. WILHOITE sunk the submarine after a 20 day battle and was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation.

WILHOITE was transferred to Pacific waters for further escort duty at the end of hostilities in the Atlantic. When World War II ended, she was decommissioned and placed in the Atlantic Reserve Fleet.

WILHOITE was converted to a radar picket escort and, on 2 September 1954, was recommissioned as DER-397. She joined Escort Squadron FIVE based in Seattle, Washington and worked as a unit of the Continental Air Defense Command. In March 1959, WILHOITE was transferred to Pearl Harbor and operated as a unit of the Distant Early Warning (DEW) line. In 1961, she was attached to Operation DEEP FREEZE and served as a Rescue and Navigational Aid Ship in the cold waters near the Antarctic continent.

When ships were no longer needed for Distant Early Warning, WILHOITE was reassigned in May 1965 to general duty with the U. S. SEVENTH Fleet. One month later she made her first cruise as a unit of the U. S. SEVENTH Fleet and commenced her MARKET TIME patrols. Since then, she has deployed annually from Pearl Harbor in May or June and returned the following January. During the first two years, duties were confined to MARKET TIME patrols of the coast of South Vietnam to prevent the infiltration of weapons and ammunition to the Viet Cong by way of the sea.

These cruises have included visits to Hong Kong, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, Bangkok, Subic Bay, and Japan. The home port time in Pearl Harbor was utilized in repair, training, and preparing for the next cruise with the SEVENTH Fleet. In 1967, the SEVENTH Fleet operations of the DER's were expanded and, in addition to the MARKET TIME patrols, WILHOITE also was assigned Station Ship Hong Kong and a unit of the Taiwan Straits patrol.

During the 1967 deployment in July, WILHOITE became involved as a major unit in the capture of a North Vietnamese trawler attempting to infiltrate automatic weapons and ammunition to the Viet Cong. The trawler, with its cargo intact, was passed to the Vietnamese by the U. S. Navy and later put on display in Danang, South Vietnam. Several personnel of the WILHOITE were awarded medals by the government of South Vietnam and the Navy Achievement Medal with Combat device by the U. S. Government for this action.

In June of 1968, WILHOITE once again deployed to the SEVENTH Fleet where she participated in three patrols with Operation MARKET TIME, two patrols as a unit of the Taiwan patrol, and one tour of duty as Station Ship Hong Kong before returning to Pearl Harbor in February 1969. During this deployment, WILHOITE was commended for outstanding performance by Vice Admiral W. F. BRINGE, Commander, U. S. SEVENTH Fleet, Rear Admiral W. T. RAPP, Commander, Patrol Forces, U. S. SEVENTH Fleet, and Vice Admiral HSIEH Chuan-Nien, Commander of the Chinese Fleet.



DECOMMISSIONING PROGRAM

ROSTER OF OFFICERS AND MEN UPON DECOMMISSIONING

LCDR D. H. GRIFFIN, USN  
LT W. H. TREDICK, USN

LT P.L. WATKINS, USN	LT R.P. KURTH, USN
LTJG "J""B" ABSTON, USN	LTJG P.A. SILHAN, USNR
LTJG R.L. NORVELLE, USNR	LTJG D.M. RUSH, USNR
LTJG G.W. LAYTON, SC, USNR	LTJG P.P. WILLIAMS, Jr., USNR
LTJG S. BISHOP, USNR	ENS C.E. HUGGINS, USNR
ENS A.J. SIMMS, USNR	

ENCS R. T. WIXSON, USN

ENC C.L. FREDERICK, USN	EMC J.J. GRENNAN, USN
ETC C.V. MC KERNS, USN	SHC W.K. STEWART, Jr., USN
CSC W. RALPH, USN	EMC M.C. NUESTRO, USN
STC L.O. HANSON, USN	DRC F.H. ANGOE, USN

RM1 D. M. WISELY, USN

EN1 R.L. NAY, USN	EM1(SS) J.D. JONES, USN
IC1 E.J. PLAZA, USN	SK1 C.J. SMITH, USN
EN1 L.A. JARRINS, USN	EN1 B.E. SARGENT, USN
RD1 G.A. BURRIS, USN	YN1 R.W. NOLEN, USN
HM1 W.E. WEST, USN	RM1 W.H. GREENE, USN
SM1 W.S. HUMMEL, USN	DC1 A.B. MC HALE, USN
SD1 B.G. PASION, USN	SM1 C.H. SANTIAGO, USN

CS2 L. B. BISHOP, USN

QM2 S.D. AUSTIN, USN	PC2 D.E. BEYER, USN
GMG2 J.L. BLANKENSHIP, USN	CS2 O.S. CABATBAT, USN
EN2 R.D. CANNON, USN	RD2 R."D" CHAPPEL, USN
EM2 B.L. CROSSWHITE, USN	QM2 T."D" EATON, USN
RM2 S.M. EBERSOLE, USN	MM2 C.L. GRAY, USN
ETN2 R.L. HARDING, USN	EN2 L.K. HARPER, USN
EN2 D.E. HORVATH, USN	IC2 R.D. JOHNSON, USN
EN2 E.J. LLOYD, USN	EN2 L.W. LONG, USN
IC2 R.A. MARKLEY, USN	RM2 S.J. RADJENOVIC, USN
QM2 D.K. RHODES, USN	BM2 F.J. ROCHE, USN
RD2 T.M. MORRISSEY, USN	BT2 L.G. ROGERS, USN
EN2 T.L. STEGER, USN	MR2 J.A. STEINFORT, USN
ETR2 C.T. STORY, Jr., USN	RM2 B.W. YONKOWSKI, USN

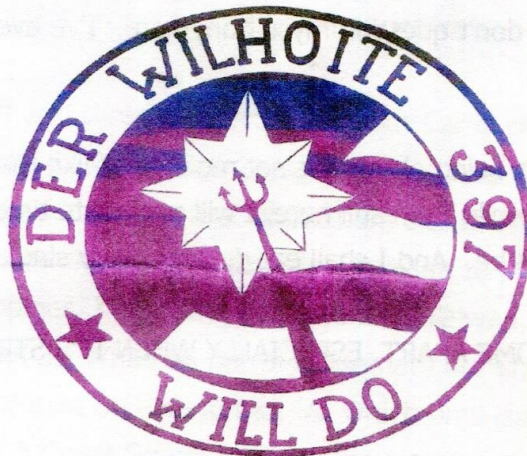
SHL3 T.W. ARLEDGE, USN	EN3 R.L. BEED, USN
SM3 A.K. CECIL, USN	SK3 R.L. CHRISTENSEN, USN
SHL3 B.R. DAVIDSON, USN	ETR3 R.J. ERCEK, USN
PC3 J.W. FOX, USN	EM3 R.S. GRUBB, USN
EN3 H.E. HAFER, USN	RM3 R.A. HERMAN, USN
RD3 D.L. JENSEN, USN	EN3 J.G. LEISER, Jr., USN
RD3 D.R. LUAT, USN	EN3 D.E. MIDGORDEN, USN
BM3 R.E. MONTGOMERY, USN	EN3 D.L. MYERS, USN
YN3 W.F. PAPPENFUS, USN	EM3 D.D. RODARTE, USN
EN3 M.S. STOKES, USN	SD3 V.I. SARMIENTO, USN
STG3 T.E. THOMPSON, USN	SFP3 D.L. WEDDING, USN
SFP3 R.K. WERMELSKIRCHEN, USNR	SK3 W.W. WILLIS, USN
ETN3 J.A. YEANEY, USN	

DECOMMISSIONING PROGRAM

ROSTER OF OFFICERS AND MEN UPON DECOMMISSIONING (CONT'D)

SN D.C. ABRAHAM, USN  
FA J.L. BEATTIE, Jr., USN  
TN W.C. CAMERA, USN  
SN F.J. DZINDZIO, USN  
SA R.E. FLINT, USN  
SN E.E. GIFFORD, USN  
SA G.C. INTERMANN, USN  
FA M.J. JACKSON, USN  
SN T.M. JONES, USN  
SN R. KELLER, USN  
SN D.G. LEWIS, USN  
FA T.L. LOVE, USN  
SA W.G. LYONS, USNR  
FN M.M. MALONE, USN  
FN D.G. NASHATKA, USNR  
SA A. PAEZ, USN  
SN M.V. PERRY, USN  
SN R.L. SMITH, USN  
RDSN A.I. STREITMAN, USN  
FN R.K. TUCKER, USN  
FN R.L. WEEMS, USN

STCSN D. A. BARE, USN  
FA G.B. BEERS, USN  
EMFN J.L. CARAL, USN  
SA J. FAZIO, USN  
SN T.D. GIDDENS, USN  
TN G.G. HERMOSA, USN  
FN F.W. JACKSON, Jr., USN  
FA R.E. JONES, USN  
FN M.M. KACZMAREK, USN  
SA J.E. KIST, USN  
SA L.R. LOUK, USN  
FN J. LUCIANO, USN  
FN P.D. MACPHEARSON, USN  
SA J.R. MUELLER, USN  
FN A. NINNO, USN  
SA L.O. PATTERSON, USN  
SN A.J. ROBERTS, USN  
SN E.E. STILWELL, USN  
TN P.N. TAMBAC, USN  
SA A.J. WARTELL, USN





## **SOMETHING TO REMEMBER**

As I've aged, I've become kinder to myself, and less critical of myself. I've become my own friend. I have seen too many dear friends leave this world, too soon; before they understood the great freedom that comes with aging.

Whose business is it, if I choose to read, or play on the computer until 4 a.m. or sleep until noon? I will dance with myself to those wonderful tunes of the 50's 60's and 70's, and if I, at the same time, wish to weep over a lost love, I will.

I will walk the beach, in a swim suit that is stretched over a bulching body, and will dive into the waves, with abandon if I choose to, despite the pitying glances from the jet set. They too, will get old.

I know I am sometimes forgetful, but there again, some of life is just as well forgotten. And, I eventually will remember the important things.

Sure, over the years, my heart has been broken. How can your heart not break, when you lose loved one, or when a child suffers, or even when somebody's beloved pet passes? But, broken hearts are what give us strength, and understanding, and compassion. A heart never broken, is pristine, and sterile, and will never know the joy of being imperfect.

I am so blessed to have lived long enough to have my hair turning gray, and to have my youthful laughs be forever etched into deep grooves on my face. So many have never laughed, and so many have died before their hair could turn silver. As you get older, it is easier to be positive. You care less about what other people think. I don't question myself anymore. I've even earned the right to be wrong.

So, to answer your question, I like being old, It has set me free. I like the person I have become. I am not going to live forever, but while I am still here, I will not waste time lamenting what could have been, or worrying about what will be. And I shall eat dessert every single day (if I feel like it).

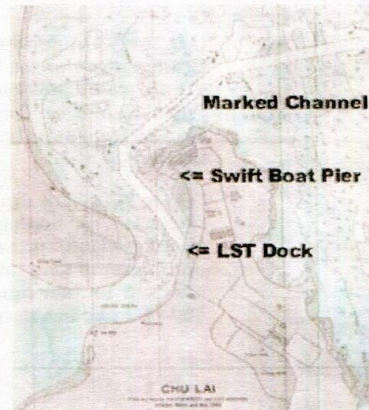
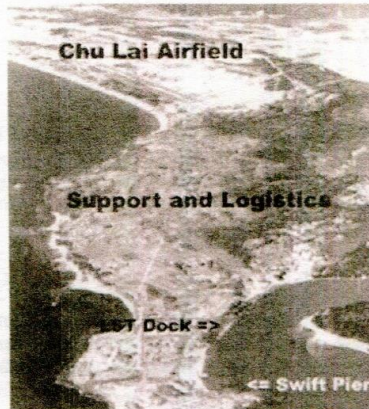
**MAY OUR FRIENDSHIP NEVER COME APART, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT'S STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART!!!**

**Laugh when you can  
Apologize when you should  
And let go of what you can't change  
Life's too short to be anything.....but happy!**

# COASTAL DIVISION 16, CHU LAI, REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

10/2/22, 6:02 PM

Gmail - Fw: Vol. 2 No. 13



Years after the war ended, LT j.g. **Bob Shirley** (RIP), skipper of PCF-45 out of Chu Lai, created a very special website. In the site he provides a great deal **Swift Boat history**. I invite you to visit - [Coastal Division 16 - Chu Lai](#) (click on the link). The peninsula where the Swift Boat Pier is located was called **Rosemary Point**. For orientation, the black and white photo was taken looking south.

The beginning of July 1967 marked the start of our fourth month in-country. We had already been patrolling out of Chu Lai for two months and five days. A number of events occurred that indicated the **Viet Cong** were not only operating in the jungles but were carrying out operations along the coastal regions. While we were on patrol, one evening our **Swift Boat base went to Red Alert**. From across the bay, the **Viet Cong hit the base with mortar and recoilless-rifle fire**.

During a patrol south of Chu Lai, we heard of enemy contact on the **Batangan peninsula**. LT j.g. **Lou Masterson** and his **PCF-75** crew, working with a **Bird Dog** (spotter plane) lobbed mortar rounds at the mouth of the **Sa Ky River**, sinking an evading sampan. The following morning, we spotted a **floral wreath floating off shore**. It was speculated that the **Viet Cong had placed it out there**, using innocent fishermen, perhaps to honor their soldiers who died while evading **PCF-75's** crew.

We had yet to experience enemy contact. However, the floral wreath was indeed a foretoken of things, big things to come....

**Meanwhile, In-Country...**



# COASTAL DIVISION 16, CHU LAI, REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

10/2/22, 6:02 PM

Gmail - Fw: Vol. 2 No. 13

## I CORPS

**Market Time units in the First Coastal Zone detected over 62,000 junks and sampans during July, and increase of 11,000 detected over June. In addition, Swift Boats and Coast Guard Cutters provided exfiltration patrols and gunfire support of three amphibious operations as well as participating in two search and rescue missions.**

**A quarter past midnight on July 15, 1967 Swift Boat PCF-79, skippered by LT j.g. Edward J. Bergin, lead the attack on a 120-foot North Vietnamese gun-running steel-hulled trawler. The enemy vessel, code-named Skunk Alpha, was captured at the mouth of the Sa Ky River at the tip of the Batangan Peninsula in Quang Ngai Province, Republic of Vietnam.**



**U.S. Navy Lieutenant Commander Max G. Branscomb was the Patrol Plane Commander of YB-10, a P2V7 Neptune surveillance aircraft. VP-1 Patrol Squadron One maintained Operation Market Time's outermost coastal surveillance barrier.**

**Late in the afternoon of July 11th and during the flight's last run north bound, the crew spotted a skunk (unidentified seaborne contact) 55-miles east southeast of Chu Lai. LCDR Branscomb ordered his crew to their rigging stations and dropped to 100-feet above the rolling waves.**

**Commander Charles R. Stephan (Left), Market Time Task Group Commander in I Corps, placed the Coastal Surveillance Center in Da Nang at General Quarters. He ordered the USS Wilhoite to vector to the contact, circle the skunk at first light the following day to investigate, note details and take pictures.**

**Upon reaching radar contact after midnight on the 12th, it was assigned the code-name Skunk Alpha.**



**The trawler had been heading toward the mainland. The nearest**

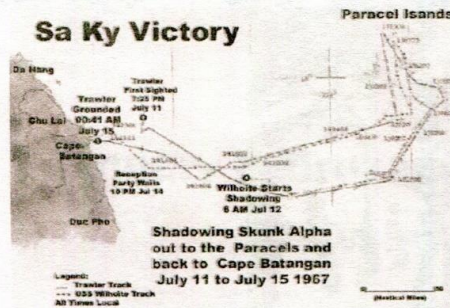


# COASTAL DIVISION 16, CHU LAI, REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

## April 1967-1968

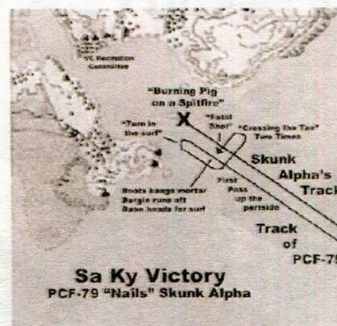
10/2/22, 6:02 PM

Gmail - Fw: Vol. 2 No. 13



harbor was 28 miles northwest. Skunk Alpha turned about and headed back out to sea, once it was detected by aircraft YB-10.

The USS Wilhoite began its marathon clandestine chase from beyond the horizon. At 1 pm on Thursday, July 13th and 230-nautical miles east northeast of Chu Lai, Skunk Alpha dropped anchor east of the Paracel Islands.



While the USS Wilhoite was hot on the chase, CDR Stephan formulated an intercept plan. It included the USS Wilhoite, gunboat USS Gallup, US Coast Guard Cutter Point Orient, and our Swift Boat, PCF-79. In addition to seaborne units, Task Force Oregon flare and gunship units from the 71st Assault Helicopter Company - the Firebirds and Rattlers - were added to the plan.

Standing next to Mr. Bergin at the helm, my eyes glued to the radar scope, I picked out the contact through all the surface clutter. Mr. Bergin radioed IMPAIR (CDR Stephan's afloat call sign), "I have one fast moving contact heading for river mouth. Request permission to go get him. Over." IMPAIR replied, "PER GRA" (PERmission GRAnted).

TM3 Robert Middleton, our gunner behind the twin 50s in the guntub, silenced machine gun fire coming from the enemy ship. We were within 75-yards of the contact. From our fantail, BM1 Bobby Don Carver trigger fired a white phosphorous 81mm mortar round into Skunk Alpha's portside pilot house door. The trawler ran aground at the mouth of the Sa Ky River on the Batangan Peninsula.



# COASTAL DIVISION 16, CHU LAI, REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

April 1967-1968

10/2/22, 6:02 PM

Gmail - Fw: Vol. 2 No. 13



Four days after the trawler's capture Premier Nguyen Cao Ky and Chief of State, Nguyen Van Thieu personally congratulated and presented our crew and others involved in the operation with the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry Medal. More than 90-tons of ammunition and supplies were kept from enemy hands, saving countless friendly forces lives.

PCF-79 and her crew fulfilled the Operation Market Time Mission - prevent the infiltration of arms, 90 tons plus in this case. BRAVO ZULU.

The capture of Skunk Alpha and the Swift Boat story will be detailed in my forthcoming book, [SKUNK ALPHA](#). [Texas Tech University Press](#) will be publishing my memoir early 2023. Please visit my [YouTube Channel](#) for Swift Boat related videos. In particular is a [CBS News Report of the Awards Ceremony](#).

## II CORPS

Just after midnight on 12 July 1967, PCF-44 provided illumination fire for two Coastal Group 25 craft involved in an exchange with two Viet Cong sampans, 20-miles north of Nha Trang. Six Viet Cong were killed during the engagement. Two Coastal Group sailors were killed by the enemy's fire and a third, seriously wounded, was evacuated to Nha Trang by the Swift Boat.

Raul Herrera, Editor  
PCF-79 Radio / Radarman

You don't have to send back all of these. On this sheet just mark what you are interested in seeing/doing. If you think of something else that might be good, please let me know.

San Diego Zoo Safari Park 1 day - \$65.00      Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Wine Tour      Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

I don't know enough about wine tours, so if there is a lot interest in going on a Wine tour, I'll research it.

Whale and Dolphin Cruise - \$85.00      Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Railroad Museum (Largest Indoor In North America) \$89.00      Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Midway Ship Museum \$26.00 2-5 hours      Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Swift Boat Tours (Only on Sat. and Sun)      Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

The Tall Ship \$99.00      Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Seal Tours – 1-2 HOURS      Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ \$46.00

Balboa Hidden Gems Park (walking tour of Balboa Park) \$45.00      Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

They have Ghost and Tombstones tours; City tours and Dinner Cruises if you are interested in any of those. They offer a day trip to Tijuana for \$75.00 – 6 hours

If you are interested in coming to San Diego in 2023, please let me know your interest so we can get to planning.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_





**HATS - How many \_\_\_\_\_ Price is \$ \$15.00**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_



**SHIRTS - \$15.00 - COLOR - WHITE**

SHIRTS- SIZE S \_\_\_ M \_\_\_ L \_\_\_ XL \_\_\_ XXL \_\_\_ XXXL \_\_\_

**COLOR NAVY**

SHIRTS - SIZE S \_\_\_ M \_\_\_ L \_\_\_ XL \_\_\_ XXL \_\_\_ XXXL \_\_\_

**COLOR - GREY**

SHIRTS - SIZE S \_\_\_ M \_\_\_ L \_\_\_ XL \_\_\_ XXL \_\_\_ XXXL \_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State Zip \_\_\_\_\_



**MAYON VACUUM WATER BOTTEL - 18 OZ. STAINLESS STEEL**

**\$15.00 - How Many \_\_\_\_\_**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State Zip \_\_\_\_\_

FULL NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

COUNTY \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE # \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

Male/Female \_\_\_\_\_

HONABLE DISCHARGE? \_\_\_\_\_

RANK GETTING OUT: (E1, E2, etc, \_\_\_\_\_

BRANCH OF SERVICE \_\_\_\_\_

PERIOD OF SERVICE (In and out) \_\_\_\_\_

~~UNIT~~ DUTY STATION \_\_\_\_\_