

ALUMNI NEWS



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Captain John "Cosmo" De Pree, CO, PNS

Commanding Officer's Comments

Greetings Alumni and Welcome to the Fall Edition of your Newsletter!

I am proud to report the arrival of 12 Freshman Scholarship Midshipmen and College Programmers in the Class of 2027. The Beaver Battalion has also seen the biggest group of STA-21 Officer Candidates this year, with an impressive nine new OC's joining our ranks over the summer!

C.O. Comments . . . continued

Closing out last year's departure of the Class of 2023, I'd be remiss if I didn't share our Spring Battalion Photo taken on the steps of the MU in May. All but one of our newly commissioned officers has hit the fleet, with the final Ensign leaving in November for Charleston and Nuclear Power School.



Relocation of the NROTC Obstacle Course to Western Ave / Whyte Field.

The summer here in Corvallis saw the relocation and upgrade of our USMC obstacle course from behind Goss Field to Western Ave, adjacent to OSU Soccer. Our relocation was forced by baseball's construction of a new enclosed batting facility on Washington Ave, which bought us not only a new and improved location (with shade and overhead lighting), but a soon-to-be constructed fence enclosure and hydration station, all within walking distance of Cascade Hall and Whyte Track. Finally, we have preserved the old "USMC" climbing wall and have petitioned the school to allow us to place it on the west end of Cascade Hall as unique signage for our program. Stay tuned!

C.O. Comments . . . continued

New Climbing Wall



O-Course from Western Ave. Looking South



C.O. Comments . . . continued

Hitting the O-Course



C.O. Comments . . . continued

The Ropes Course



Paintball



C.O. Comments . . . continued

Silver Falls Hike



New Student Orientation

A big BZ to OC Lim, current senior and future submarine officer, for his fantastic work organizing and leading this year's New Student Orientation (NSO) from Sept 20-23. With all incoming freshman having already completed New Student Indoctrination over the summer at RTC Great Lakes, this year's NSO focus was on building a foundation for Midshipmen success prior to the start of the academic year. New students were introduced to the Battalion N-Staff, their squad leaders, mentors, and Officer Cadre, in a four day evolution that saw new students complete their first PRT, hit the pool on 3rd Class swim quals, run the newly relocated obstacle course, experience the OSU ropes course, capture the flag in head-to-head paintball, practice damage control techniques, hike Silver Falls State Park, culminating with a family BBQ in Willamette Park!

Summer Cruise

The start of the academic year also means the end of a rewarding summer full of leadership opportunities and fleet exposure. Our Battalion members supported a wide array of summer cruises this year, from east coast to west coast, with many seeing time on ships, submarines, and in squadrons, with several getting full exposure rides in the back seat of F/A-18F Rhinos in NAS Lemoore, CA. Several from the Beaver Battalion supported NSO as MIDN instructors this year, while others completed sophomore CORTAMID and Marine Month. Our two USMC option seniors crushed OCS in Quantico this summer, while others experience a taste of overseas life on ships and submarines with port calls in Japan and Singapore!

C.O. Comments . . . continued

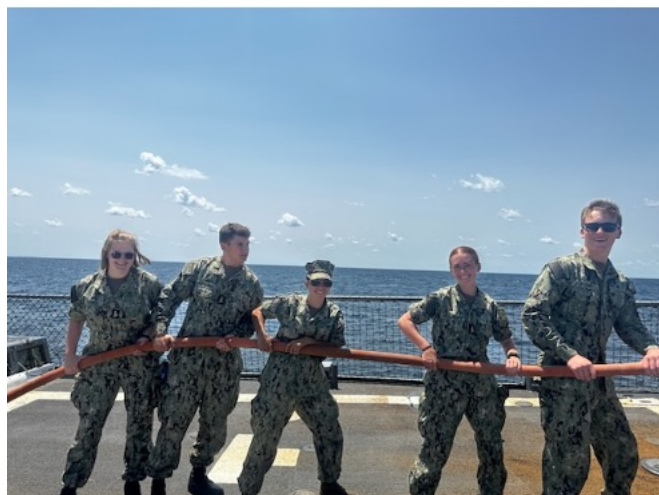
USMC “Marine Month”



Aviation Week at CORTRAMID



Surface Week at CORTRAMID



C.O. Comments . . . continued



1/C Aviation Cruise



2/C Surface Cruise



NSI Instructor Cadre Color Guard

C.O. Comments . . . continued

NEW – Service Assignment Results

Our Seniors received their service assignments on Monday, October 3rd at an informal ceremony at 4 Spirits in Corvallis. Of our 10 Seniors, 80% got their first or second choice in assignment, with the following breakdown:

Student Naval Aviator – 1
Student Naval Flight Officer – 1
Surface Warfare Officer – 1
Cryptologic Warfare (new this year) – 1
Submarines – 6!

Congrats to all!!

Finally, our OSU NROTC Command Ball Cap order is IN! OC Allison will have ball caps for those that ordered available at the Alumni Tailgater on October 14th. Game time has just been announced for 1700! There is much construction still on Washington Way and game-day parking has been rather interesting, so please contact Doug Neve for more information. If you missed a hat on this round, please see OC Allison to get your name on the next order. And make sure to ask her about orders for our new unit polo shirt!!

In closing, I'd like to thank you all for your gracious support of our program through your time and donations. We've posted quite a few photos in the edition – and if you notice our coyote and olive drab unit t-shirts, these are great example of your donations via the unit taffrail fund at work. Our new student orientation, with early move in, meals, and events also couldn't happen without the flexibility that our taffrail account provides for "the student experience". Thank you!!

I am really excited for the new year ahead. We have a lot on the agenda this fall, starting with last Friday's home game vs. Utah, where you probably got to both hear and see the culmination of an idea we planted over a year ago -- the fly over by two EA-18G Growlers from the "Garudas" of VAQ-134 promptly timed with the end our national anthem -- as OSU went on to defeat Utah 21-7 in the first home game with a full student body. What a great way to start the year!

Go Beavs and Fly Navy! Skipper sends!



Or Marine! Editor's Note!

The Russians and Me

Bill Jorgens '72 USMC

A typical progression from Commissioning at OSU-in-'72, to Basic School then flight school before joining the fleet at Yuma flying the A-4 Skyhawks (VMAT 102 and VMA 223) also known as the Heinemann's Hotrod. Then off to the Pacific to join 1/9 and Major Sweeney before returning to CONUS rejoining VMA-223 now in Cherry Pt, NC.

A West Coast Marine at heart and not excited about staff jobs, I joined the 142 FW in Portland Oregon to fly the venerable F-4. It was a beast but glided like a brick.

As we began transitioning from the F-4 to the F-15 in the fall of '89, we were invited to perform at the Abbotsford International Airshow, BC, expecting to fly a 4-ship but only mustering 3 aircraft. The Thunderbirds were also to attend as were the Russian's flying the newly minted Mig 29. Exciting.

We launched north to burn fuel and crossed the Canadian border when the air controller asked if we'd make a fly-by at Victoria Intl. Airport. Of course. Victoria cleared the flight path and we flew a V formation at 200' but slow (250 kts) so all could enjoy.

Our waypoint was Comox Airbase on Vancouver Island but on the trip north in Vancouver Straights the controller, once again asked for a favor. This time an Augusta Helicopter wanted us to fly close aboard and we naturally said yes. We spilt and passed him on both sides to a round of cheer. Then off to beat up the pattern at Comox before heading south to Vancouver, BC. Beautiful calm day at 200' and 300kts over the water we found ourselves passing a point of land and staring ahead at Vancouver International. Oops. Immediate burner climb to 13k and off to Abbotsford.

The Mig was painted camo-blue and a nice-looking jet. But everyone at the airshow seemed to be ignoring the Russians. Odd. Nowhere to be seen off the flight line. Not even the after-show beer tent known as "Hanger 13".

Meanwhile, we flew our routine, and the crowd loved the Phantoms. Large and Loud. Awesome. Some of the crowd were asking the Thunderbird pilots if they flew the F-4's but they indignantly said no. Double ouch. And General Jumper, the Nellis Commander (owner of the Thunder Chickens) was angry another American flying unit was performing at his airshow. And a National Guard unit at that. Triple and quadruple ouch.

By Saturday's end, no one had paid any attention to the Russians. Unacceptable to this former Marine. So I called our ANG Lt General and discussed the situation suggesting we ask the Russians to fly in our backseat. What could possibly go wrong? The General (also a county circuit judge and all-around great guy) agreed. The Russians likely had F-4's and ours were heading to the BoneYard within the month.

The Russians and Me (con't)

Sunday morning arrives and I approached the Russian General after the morning briefing offering to take one of their pilots up for our daily performance. He agreed and assigned Roman T to the flight. My backseater, Sully, was about the same size so we used his gear for the ride. Roman, accompanied by one of the engineers, sat in the F-4 and we explained the ejection handles, safety items and intercom.

Before we suited up, I asked an AF Reserve photographer I'd befriended from another boondoggle, to photograph the event but to keep quiet as not to spoil the surprise. Hero pictures a must.

Time to suit up, start, taxi and take off. I gave Roman the stick while we waited for our showtime then flew our routine and landed. More photos. When asked how it flew, he said "like a truck". Accurate assessment. Not wanting to waste an opportunity, we asked to see his MIG and he agreed. One of our pilots, Plug, was a former AF Aggressor pilot whose specialty was 4th generation Migs. So, I told him to take the first cockpit tour and spend as much time as he needed. 15 minutes later the rest of us got our "seat tour" of the jet. I took photos of their cockpit which came in handy after the Feathers-hit-the-Proverbial-Fan. Fun stuff.

The Russians were going to give me a ride in the Mig but our take off times were too close, so they gave the unexpected ride to a Canadian test pilot. Apparently, our "Oregon good will" was paying dividends.

We invited the Russians to Hanger 13 and the crowd went wild. Roman had exchanged flight suits with Sully and everyone thought Roman was American and Sully a Russian. The ensuing conversations were amusing. After Sunday's final show, the Canadian Snowbirds (their version of the Blue Angels) were hosting an invitation only party but the Russians hadn't been invited. Bad Form. So, I gave Roman our invitation and explained their driver would find it. Again, everyone reveled at their appearance. Good fun. A boost for international relations.

We flew home Sunday night with Roman's patches, a flight suit and forthcoming photos. Perfect weekend. Then Monday morning arrived.

My secretary (civilian job) called to say the General needed to talk to me ASAP. Oops. The General was being crucified by the AF Pentagon staff. Unknown to us, the Thunderbird General wrote a personal letter to the Pentagon complaining about another American Unit flying next to his precious Thunderbirds. Then we discovered the Thunderbirds had asked the State Department permission for a reciprocity ride with the Russians and State declined. Oops x 2. By Tuesday the AF Chief of Staff was briefed and irate and by Wednesday President Bush (Herbert Walker) was briefed. None being very happy about this sorted affair. Rut-Rho.

The AF Intel folks from LA appreciated our debrief and photos but the AF was still pissed. Our General was due to retire so he escaped further ire while I was grounded for 9 months and

The Russians and Me (con't)

reassigned to a later F-15 training slot. My name subsequently appeared in Aviation Week about the weekend's events. Famous.

But the Russians thought we were rock stars. They allowed me to place one of our squadron Redhawk stickers under their canopy rail and told everyone how wonderful the Oregon Guard was. When the editor of Aviation Week visited Russia a year later to showcase the Mig, our sticker was still on the aircraft.

The following year, a local Portland TV person personality I'd befriended called to cancel lunch explaining he'd been assisting the Russians in making a second trip to North American and they wanted him to meet at Elmendorf AFB and accompany them on the two-week trip across Canada and into the US. I rushed home to write a note and collect photos of our adventure telling him about Roman and asking to give the package to Roman if he was on the trip.

Three weeks later, my friend gave me a note from Roman and explained Roman had worn his American flight suit throughout the trip. And our Redhawk sticker was still under the canopy rail. And the Russians never forgot us.

Everyone survived the event. We took our trusty Phantoms to the Boneyard for a final farewell then welcomed the F-15 to our flight line. Six months later, the Berlin Wall came down. Apparently, we were ahead of our time. The final bit of irony was the aircraft we flew. A single red star adorned the intake indicating the aircraft had a confirmed Mig-Kill. When Roman asked about it and we told him, he just smiled.

What a Weekend!!

The Russians and Me (con't)



Alumni Coordinator Notes

Doug Neve

It's been a quiet summer for alumni group activities.

The 2023 Beaver Battalion – Alumni Tailgater will be October 14th, homecoming against UCLA. We have over 150 RSVPs to attend, up from 88 attendees in 2022. The game is sold out, including 30 seats in the Alumni block we reserved and several season tickets held by alumni. Suffice it to say that the Navy and Marine Corps will be well represented at the game. This is the second year we are hosting the event for the unit attendees. Many thanks to the Alumni donors who generously gave to support the tailgater. We are getting great support with logistics from Midn. Payton Harty and his team.

Our scholarship goal is endowed funding for at least \$9,000 in scholarships. The Endowed Scholarship Account balance is approximately \$90,000 and we need a total of \$250,000 to reach our goal. Thanks very much to those that previously made contributions to help fund scholarships! Contributions may be made on the OSU Foundation website by searching for "NROTC Alumni." You can also contact Denise Harrison (Denise.Harrison@osufoundation.org or 541-609-9661) at the OSU Foundation to discuss making contributions.

Please remember to send me updated contact information if you move or change email addresses. Quite a few email addresses on file are work or military related addresses which become invalid as careers change.

If you know of a young person who would be well suited for military service, please help recruit them into Naval ROTC. You can send them to the Oregon State NROTC web page to get started.

Hope everyone had an enjoyable Summer and is having an equally enjoyable fall. I hope to see you at a Tailgater or other Beaver Battalion event, such as the Spring Awards Ceremony or Commissioning.

Doug Neve

USN 1981

OSU NROTC Alumni Coordinator

Major Mike Sweeney Clifford Ratte', '80 USN

This story has been long in the making. The idea really began to form after reading an article probably two years ago about Major Sweeney. That article brought back many memories. Another more recent article mentioning Major Sweeney reminded me yet again to put this to paper. I have told this story to a few friends, one of whom was CDR (ret) Terry Robertson. Terry encouraged me to write my story.

The tale begins about six years before I began my Naval career at the OSU NROTC. My family had just moved to Corvallis at the completion of my sixth grade year at Crown Elementary school in Coronado California.

My father had just been transferred to be the new Executive Officer at the OSU NROTC Unit. That summer I was introduced to the staff, most of whom I regret to say I can't recall, but Major Sweeney made an impression on me. He seemed to take an immediate interest in me and my interests. Over the next few years I went on quite a few fishing and hunting trips with the Major.

On one of those fishing trips, we were drifting down the Alsea River in his drift boat. I caught my first steelhead. We had banked fished numerous times, but I had never caught a steelhead. We had caught salmon, but not a steely. That drift trip convinced me that I really just wanted to drift fish. The next year we went back down the river and the Major remembered the hole where I caught that fish in and the color and type of lure I had been using. I didn't even remember all those details. But I'm off track here. This is not the real part of the story I wanted to tell.

Before I turned fourteen, I had been hunting with several of the Unit staff. I could not carry a weapon as I was still too young, but I still enjoyed going on the hunts and participating. We would camp out and have dinner around the fire. On one trip, Major Sweeney shot a nice buck on the first morning. He brought it back to camp and took care of his prize. As the rest of us went out for the afternoon hunt, he stayed in camp and had prepared a delicious dinner of fresh liver. I know, most of us would say yuck. Me too. Yet I tried some and it was great. That is the first time I enjoyed eating liver. I'm not sure if it was the freshness, or all the butter it was cooked in, or if I was just starving from being out most of the day. To this day, the only liver I like is fresh from the hunt.

Returning home from one of our hunts in the afternoon, the Major was driving what I remember was an old van. My dad was in the front seat and I was in the back. We were just casually driving down one of the old roads doing a little scouting on the way home. Of course we were all looking for deer along the road when very abruptly Major Sweeney jammed on the brakes, put the van into reverse and backed up about thirty yards or so. He excitedly asked if we saw that deer over there, pointing to right. Dad and I were looking hard, but could not see that elusive blacktail deer. The Major said to look at the third tree back and we would see the rump of the deer. Yes, there it was.

Major Mike Sweeney (con't)

To this day, I still don't understand how he saw that deer while driving. I guess that is the experience and attention to the finest details in the woods after a tour (or more maybe) in Viet Nam.

The first time I was old enough to carry a gun we were out on opening day of pheasant season. I was carrying a 16 gauge single shot shotgun. It was a beautiful day. Sunny and somewhat chilly, but not really cold. I think there were five of us in the group hunting that day. Most of day we were walking in a line abreast through the fields of the Finley Wildlife Preserve. We did not limit out in our morning push so we were still out just before noon. Again, in our line abreast we came up on a thick blackberry row that had only a few paths through the thick brush. I fell in behind the Major as he made his way through the thicket. Probably about ten yards behind him, I had just cleared the brush when he stopped. I of course stopped also. He stood there just listening and looking, when a bright wild pheasant flushed from almost at his feet. I could not believe the racket that a bird like that makes as it flushes. I admit it startled me, and obviously did the Major also because he dropped his shotgun. I was shouldering my gun as the Major bent down and was feeling for his shotgun in the grass brush, all the while keeping his eyes on the game. He was also declaring rather loudly (shouting), "my bird, my bird, my bird." I had a good bead on that bird and judged it was still in my range, but I held my fire. I thought I would wait for Major Sweeney to get his chance at the bird until it was going to go out of range for my 16 gauge. The story ends with his retrieving his shotgun and getting the bird in what was a pretty easy shot. We quickly retrieved that bird and continued on our hunt.

On our way back to our vehicles to end the day, one last bird flushed beside us. I got my shotgun up quickly and took the shot and saw the bird fold up. We started our search. I found a feather rather quickly but could not find the bird. We looked for a few minutes more and had actually called off the search, figuring the bird was only wounded and probably ran after hitting the ground. Passing back by where I found that feather I found the bird. Sadly it was a flicker (I think the statute of limitations is up on this). I picked it up and brought it back to show the Major and others. Not being a game bird we just threw it back into the grass figuring a coyote or fox would have a nice easy meal. I felt rather bad about shooting a wrong type bird, but I really felt I saw all the color of a pheasant, and a flicker is rather brightly colored. As we continued back to the cars, I think the Major knew what I was feeling, because he said that if I had not hit that bird that he was ready to shoot also. To this day I am not sure if he was just trying to make me feel better or if he would have really taken the shot.

Once back at the cars, we were sort of debriefing our glorious day. I was pretty proud that I had taken three shots that day and got all three birds, although maybe I shouldn't take one into account. I also wanted to tease the Major about dropping his shotgun, but deferred. Not sure if I was mute on that because I was brought up to respect my elders or the fact he had said he would have shot that one bird if I didn't.

Major Mike Sweeney (con't)

What I can say though, is I have a lot of respect for Major Sweeney and learned a lot from him over our all too few years of being out in the woods.

There are other stories to tell of our instructors at the Unit. LCDR Robertson could and would be the center of many of them. He was our Junior class instructor at the time before returning later as the Executive Officer, but I should leave these to others to tell, like Ray Bellant and Vivian Madison. Come on shipmates, put your two cents worth in.

As for me, I went on to flight school. I flew the trusty A-6 Intruder primarily on the East Coast at Oceana. I retired after 23 ½ years after my final tour as an instructor at VT-4 at NAS Pensacola where my wife and I still reside.

Editor's Note

When Mike Morrissey submitted the article that follows he mentioned that it might be a bit long and that as "the editor" I could certainly edit/shorten as I saw fit. Instead I opted to include it in its entirety due to fact that there are several leadership lessons that our young Midshipmen can discern. For us "veterans" I think we all probably witnessed some of them.

'Old School' Leadership Lessons

Mike Morrisey, '68 USN

She was my first ship after being NPQ'd in flight school for an eye problem that cropped up. After ASW school, an 18 hour air transit, three hours on an un-air conditioned school type bus and wearing Service Dress Khakis in 90+ degree and 95% humidity, I grabbed my seabag and boarded the ship exhausted. But—just as I stepped aboard, the XO, who happened to be at the quarterdeck, said “Glad you got here, you have until we get to Keelung to relieve (your predecessor).” That night I found out from my predecessor that he was being relieved for cause. Interestingly, he was very happy. I was going to come to an understanding of his happiness. We got underway the next morning for a three day transit.



USS KRETCHMER DER 329

The normal turnover was 10 days; we had 3 days. In those days, a division officer had to sign custody cards for just about everything pilferable. As both the ASW and Gunnery Officer, that meant a whole bunch of landing party web belts, canteens, ammo pouches, GI battle helmets, compasses, helmet liners, bayonets, bayonet scabbards, and of course all the firearms and bullets plus classified material. What further complicated the turnover was the inventory of all the 3" ammunition. Each round was in its marked canister. Right off the bat, many of the rounds did not match their canister, and of course the load out was inaccurate. They had just come off the gun line. We had some HE in Frag canisters and BL&P (inert) in VT-Frag canisters etc. I don't think we ever had an accurate inventory. It was a real mess. We anchored in Keelung, and my predecessor readily embarked a water taxi and was on his way. He had been a Seal who quit, a 6+ foot handsome guy married to a gorgeous airline stewardess and now assigned to the tender in Guam as the welfare and rec. officer. For him it was a perfect “rabbit thrown in the briar patch” ending.

I bunked in after-officers quarters in an un-air conditioned space originally configured for 9 bunks—three tiers of three racks. Fortunately we only had two triple tiered laced canvas and thin mattress bunks in a small area next to a space with 3 shared desks and clothes closets.

'Old School' Leadership Lessons (con't)

with drawers. The head had two commodes and two sinks with one shower. The uninsulated overhead was the starboard quarterdeck area and exposed to the sun. Low temperature was 85 degrees at night. At times, the fire hose would run water over the deck for cooling. Should also mention that we junior officers weren't the only occupants. Not unusual to be sweltering at night and have one of Herman's progeny crawl across sweaty chest and/or legs.

As a side story. The ship had repeatedly requested fumigation for cockroaches only to be deferred whenever we had a restricted availability. Several months after I arrived, we made a homeport shift from Guam to Pearl. Within a few weeks of arrival, we had the Flotilla Five Commodore as a guest for lunch. (I actually witnessed what follows.) Of all things, chili dogs were on the menu for this visit. The Commodore sat at the head of the table and was served his chili dog. He took his fork and cleaved a part of the sandwich away from the main body. And, there was Herman with antennas looking right at him. We got thoroughly deloused shortly thereafter. There was no way the event could have been staged even in "Mister Roberts".

Back to the sequential account. Within a few weeks of my taking over, I would begin to understand why my predecessor readily accepted his transfer. After a few days in Keelung, we got underway for a period in the Formosa Straits a.k.a. Taiwan Patrol. For weeks, we cruised back and forth between Red China and Taiwan coupled with two to three days breaks in Keelung (our adopted homeport). During this time, my sonar techs would conduct the required several

bathythermograph drops each day. In those days, a brass BT fish with a gold plated slide was lowered and retrieved at regular intervals to measure the water temperatures. A scribe etched temps on the slide as it passed through to max depth.

The data for all the drops

were to be sent daily by message to FWC Monterey and a host of other addressees. I drafted the first day's message and gave it to my department head who initialed it and told me to get the XO's sign off.

Well, the XO was convinced that the message requirement had been superseded, and only the monthly mail in with the slides was required. Even though I showed him the latest instruction, he would have none of that. He had me go through 6 months of messages—Secret and below. Literally thousands of messages. Nope, not a word. When we pulled



"Brass BT Fish"

'Old School' Leadership Lessons (con't)

alongside a destroyer in Kaohsiung, he sent me over to find the message which of course was news to them. Didn't make any difference, so the months worth of slides and log sheets were mailed off without any daily BT messages. Weeks went by as we accumulated the data and prepped the next mailing.

Then one night just as I hit the rack after the 20-24 watch, the growler phone rang out right next to the head of my rack. My department head told me to grab everything I had about BT drops and hustle up to the CO's cabin. So, got dressed, pulled the files with instructions and notes and got to the cabin only to be faced with an angry CO, no XO, and a department head who would say nothing during the ensuing dressing down.

A FLASH (yes FLASH) message had come from Commander 7 th Fleet which, in no uncertain terms, cited current requirements and laid out the admiral's personal dissatisfaction with the failure to report the BT readings as required. In the midst of being dressed down, I took my folder with the instructions and placed it on his desk and said something that I would regret. "Damn it sir, I told the XO all of this." There were a couple lessons here. The biggest one was what I observed about my department head, he never spoke up or interceded for me. Of course, the XO was never heard from. However, the BT messages were back to being transmitted and now only required the department head's chop. So, life went on, though a bit frosty for a bit.

While I felt fairly secure in the realm of ASW, I had nil background in 3"/50 single barrel semi-automatic gun mounts, the ship's two main batteries. The ship had been forward deployed for several years with barely any real upkeep. The forward mount, while enclosed in a fiberglass shell was still exposed to the saltwater as we had relatively low freeboard and regularly took green water over the bow. We seldom got off more than three rounds with either mount before a sensor failed or a camshaft broke. In addition, the steel frame of the mount had brass bolts holding aluminum plates in place which does wonders for tri-metallic corrosion. In those days, we weren't permitted to CASREPT a system, only recommend CASREPT.



Hedgehog and Forward 3" Gun

‘Old School’ Leadership Lessons (con’t)

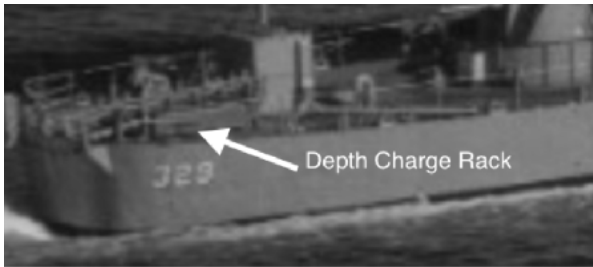
After months of patrol and gun line duty, we had a homeport shift from Guam to Pearl which was a God Send in so many ways. In addition to the previously mentioned fumigation, we got the MOTU and NOSSOPAC folks to come out for the guns. I cannot sing their praises high enough. After they finished several weeks of work, we were scheduled for independent steaming time before joining a squadron gun shoot. We made sure the ready service magazines had confirmed and tagged VT-NonFrag rounds!!

We headed out to a restricted area, launched a jerry-rigged target and swung out to a distance, and got ready to fire. Except that a civilian Chris-Craft type boat came over the horizon and was crossing our target line in our restricted area. We repeatedly sounded the ship’s whistle, but nobody was at the helm. Then things got a bit tense. I was the check sight observer in the gun mount, and we received orders to load one round BLP (a sand filled projectile) and train out to a bearing ahead of the boat. So BLP was brought up as we were initially set to use VT-NonFrag. When the order to fire was given, I called back on the sound powered phones to confirm the order. The CO picked up a handset and in no uncertain terms confirmed the order. We were in local control so the gun mount captain, the gunner, and I closed our firing keys and one round went sailing out and across the boat’s bow. Waited some more, sounded the whistle again. Then sure enough, we get another call for BLP, train out, then the call to fire. No need for me to confirm. Out went the round and suddenly a head pops up, and the craft rapidly turns and departs the scene. We sink our target, go out to the squadron gun shoot, and fire to our hearts content. Have to say, I felt ecstatic that the guns worked. And, we repeatedly hit the sleeve. After the squadron exercises, we pull in to the Bravo Pier at Pearl.

As we approach, the teams who had worked on the guns were present and waving at us. As we moored, they shouted that they had heard we had a very successful shoot. Interesting! When the brow went over, one of the techs came over to me with a news article from the Honolulu newspaper (which I have since lost). The header essentially said “Navy ship fires on State Senator.” We held he had transgressed restricted waters. What wasn’t disclosed was that the reconstructed plot showed that neither we nor he were actually in the area set aside, close to but not in. The newspaper article came about because the Senator had come home drunk and mentioned the episode as a funny story then headed to bed and was just letting it go by the wayside. She, on the other hand, was furious and called the newspaper.

Life went on. No repercussions. A few months later, a trade for two destroyers with 5” guns from the Atlantic Fleet was approved. We, in company with another DER, were to proceed to Key West for duty as ASW School Ships. Hawaiian State Senators could rest easy. With liberty stops in San Francisco and Acapulco and transit through the Panama Canal, we arrived in Key West. During my time out of Key West, we had the opportunity to individually fire 24 hedgehogs (see image above for hedgehogs mount) for a reliability test over a hard seabed. The first one failed or else we didn’t hear it?? With the second one (and the other 22), I can assure everyone that even at over 200ft there is no doubt about detonation.

‘Old School’ Leadership Lessons (con’t)



Caption

On another occasion, we were to drop conventional depth charges between two submarines, one a conventional and the other a nuclear attack boat. This evolution was for the prospective CO and XO school. I frankly had ignored these weapons as they just sat in the long rack as rust magnets. I will admit that I really messed up. Up to this point, I never had them taken out of the rack for maintenance of the rack. The issue would become readily apparent.

After digging out instructions for arming a weapon I had never been trained on, we got out the black powder cartridges and mercury arming/detonating depth triggers. Fortunately, we had an old Boatswain Mate who had actually armed and dropped against German U-Boats. So we got set, the ship made the run equidistant between periscopes, and we dropped the first one set for a depth of 250 ft. When it detonated we only saw a white bulge and foam, not the typical WWII big splashes from the drum style depth charges. Ours were the teardrop style which dropped faster. Now we came about for the second drop. That meant we needed to roll number two to the release gate. Except it wouldn't roll. Here is where my inattention to detail came to the fore. The rack had been painted over so many times over the years without taking the units out that layers of paint restricted any movement. The ship was at flank speed (that meant maybe 19 kts downhill with a following wind) and rudder over full for a return run. We had minutes to figure out how to get this drop set. Out came scrapers, chipping hammers and crowbars. Still wouldn't roll enough. Next my lead Gunners Mate and I decided that we were not going to fail this run. Nope, not on our watch!!

After brushing all the chips away, maybe, just maybe with a little help we could maybe coax it out. At this point, the arming mechanism was not yet in place. He got on one side of the rack and I on the other. We grabbed the third unit by its rims and repeated rolling ramming it against number two. After three or four good tries, number two moved to the release rig. My Gunners Mate and I look up and ...SURPRISE!! Everybody who had been on the stern (including the after-steering watch down below) had vacated the premises.

We hurriedly got everything set with the trigger etc. The ship ran right to drop point; the depth was set for 125 ft; the drop went without any further issues; detonation was, of course, a lot quicker than the previous one and really stung our feet. Then suddenly, we noticed our speed rapidly dropping and no wake from the port screw. We were supposed to make four drops, and the crew had worked the next ones free to roll.

'Old School' Leadership Lessons (con't)

The word came to secure from the detail. It turns out that the last drop's detonation had forced the shaft into the reduction gear and would require extensive work. Have to say, my feelings certainly weren't hurt. If there are guardian angels, I can think of at least two who breathed a sigh of relief. Needless to say, the next in-port stay had all depth charges out of the rack, and all new paint work applied. In retrospect, target fixation is a dangerous thing. It also convinced me that we were not made for any more drops. (Note: After I transferred off, the depth charges etc were removed, then the hedgehog mount was replaced with a heavy crew serve gun.)

A few months later we would find ourselves off Cuba's Cienfuegos coast shadowing a large Soviet task force of cruisers, destroyers, submarines and support ships. As we steamed from Key West to intercept the Soviets east of Cuba we officers were shown an "eyes only" hand written note on a four star flag memo which explicitly stated that should we be boarded we would not be allowed to be taken. It included a chilling sentence, "There will never be another USS PUEBLO in the United States Navy." OK, well... that's nice.

After taking station off Cienfuegos, we settled in for a back and forth patrol. A few days later, I was asleep after the 20-24 watch and suddenly "General Quarters, General Quarters, All Hands Man Your Battle Stations. This is not a drill. Surface Action Port". A Cuban gunboat was barreling out of the harbor. Their forward gun was obviously manned and ready. I was in the after mount in shower shoes and skivvies but had my helmet on. Wasn't the only one so outfitted that night. But we reported manned and ready in record time. We were given the order to load VT Frag but not to train out. Our search light illuminated the boat and then illuminated the forward and after sections of our ship. Kind of like "We see yours, now look at ours...wanna fight??" The boat kept coming then we had two F-8 Crusaders in afterburners skimming at bridge height between us and the gunboat. It turned on its lights and showed its personnel leaving their gun. It turns out we had HF radioed to NMCC that gunboats were coming, and we had gone to general quarters and suddenly went radio quiet. Radio was getting ready to destruct equipment. NMCC immediately scrambled the jets out of Gitmo. After it all was said and done, we gathered in the wardroom full of after-adrenaline effects, and somebody wondered out loud whether the F-8s were for the gunboat or us. The "eyes only" letter came to our collective minds.

A few weeks later during a small arms familiarization on the fantail, the new XO, who had just come from Vietnam Riverine duty, approached me with an ammo can and an M-16. He handed me the M-16 and said "get used to this after you read this." I finally had my orders to Naval Advisory Group Vietnam and off the ship.

Farewell Shipmate

Terrance Michael (Mike) Porter, of Beaverton, Oregon passed away peacefully at home on August 14th, 2023 from pancreatic cancer. He was born on November 16th, 1945 in Austin, Texas. In 1963, he graduated from Highlands High School in Sacramento, California. He drove his Triumph TR3 to Oregon State University, joined the Phi Delta Theta fraternity and earned his degree in Mechanical Engineering in 1968. He was an active member of Navy ROTC and upon graduation was commissioned an Ensign in the United States Navy.

Mike married Barbara Allan on June 15th, 1967 in Portland, Oregon. He is survived by his wife of over 56 years and three children, Brian (Kari) Porter, Shari (Jason) Smith, and Jeff (Sally) Porter.

After college, he fulfilled his lifelong dream of being a Navy jet pilot, earning his wings in August of 1969. During active duty he flew F-9s and A-4s. In 1974, he completed his active duty in the military having achieved the rank of Navy Captain. Including his time in the Navy Reserves, he served over 26 years in the military. After his active duty, Mike started his career as a Professional Engineer working for various firms.

Mike had a long list of hobbies and volunteering with youth, including Boy Scout Leader, Little League Coach, Toastmasters, and recumbent cycling. In retirement he blossomed into a true renaissance man, developing talent in woodturning, sketching, and (as he liked to call himself) a “perspiring artist in watercolor”.

In January 2019, Mike took on a new challenge as he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. He often referred to himself as a ‘cancer thriver’ and relied on Stoicism philosophy to gain perspective. He donated all the proceeds from his fine wood and art work to support pancreatic cancer research. He truly embodied the Seneca quote *“Life, if you know how to use it, is long.”* Mike was a role model as a husband, father and friend. He was an admirable human with a beautiful way of looking at life. His warmth and kindness will remain with us all.



Caption

OSU NROTC ALUMNI WEBSITE

<https://osu-nrotc-alumni.org/>

Editors Note

Thanks to those who have contributed the articles included within. And “YES” inputs from current midshipmen and especially recent grads are welcome!!!

Email me at kencollier73@gmail.com

See y’all in October at Homecoming.

Semper Fi

Ken

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