

GENE JOHNSON

USCGC WINONA (WHEC-65) – Jan68 to Oct68 Navy Meritorious Unit Commendation – 15 Feb 68 to 14 Mar 68

May 14, 2021 – Gene Johnson E-mail to Bill Carr

I do not remember this particular instance. Winona did many fire support missions. In fact, we had to install a new barrel in Sasebo shipyard.

May 13, 2021 – Bill Carr E-mail to Gene Johnson

I picked up the below tidbit from page 70 of Paul Scotti's book, "Coast Guard Action in Vietnam". Do you remember this incident? If so, any further details you can add or personal thoughts about the action. It was a pretty unique engagement for the Coast Guard.

“The white cutters were accustomed to performing gunfire missions alone, but on 16 July 1968 off the Ca Mau Peninsula, and separated by 1000 yards, ANDROSCOGGIN and WINONA excavated Viet Cong positions with 414 rounds that sent black petroleum smoke billowing above the targets and left the ground shuddering from the secondary explosions coming from ammunition caches. “

Afterward, the pilot of the airplane spotting this mission - who had spotted on previous shoots for ANDROSCOGGIN, and who knew that this was the cutter's final Market Time patrol - made a low pass in salute. He dropped her a flare container, inside which was a Viet Cong battle flag.

May 14, 2017 – Gary Thornton (Class of '67) E-mail to Dick Walton

I just became aware, via the April Bulletin, of your research into the historic naval engagements on March 1, 1968. I assume that includes the role of the WINONA. I was an ensign aboard WINONA assigned to the duties of CIC officer. As such, I was intimately involved in the WINONA's operations from first detection of the enemy trawler to its explosive destruction by our firepower. I trust you have found other first-person witnesses in your research and I look forward to reading your report. If you would like additional information, or validation of existing research from my perspective, I would be happy to participate.

October/November 2016 Alumni Bulletin

Gene Johnson over casual conversation on the first night of the 17th Class of 1965 Golf Tournament mentioned he had served on board the USCGC Winona when they single handedly challenged and sank a North Vietnamese munitions trawler...the WINONA shadowed the 125

foot NVN trawler for six hours into the night before it finally turned for the beach on a course taking it directly toward a VC stronghold.

Closing to 700 yards, the WINONA illuminated and challenged the trawler to stop after which a seven-minute running gun battle ensued – engaging their .50cal machine guns and 5"/38 mount and taking hits themselves from return fire. The trawler was stopped when a 5" round found home at the base of the trawler deckhouse. The trawler exploded, rocked the WINONA and rained debris onto her decks.

The WINONA incident occurred the same evening of February 29/March 1 of 1968 when POINT WELCOME (captained by Gerry McGill), POINT GREY (captained by Dick Walton) and Lloyd George serving on the USCGC ANDROSOGGIN successfully stopped a second of four trawlers attempting to run the Market Time blockade with arms, ammunition and medical supplies.

A third trawler that night was stopped by a fleet of five Swift boats and three South Vietnamese Navy vessels – assisted by Navy aircraft. A fourth trawler turned to seaward after being tracked by the USCGC MINNETONKA and POINT ARDEN (captained by Bill Carr). The explosion of the McGill/Walton trawler was observed visually by Bill just over the horizon to the north west of where POINT ARDEN was lying in wait with MINNETONKA.

Golden Journeys Booklet – 2015

CGC WINONA spent 11 months in Vietnam which was professionally very rewarding. Keeping an obsolete steam turbine alternating current drive operating in that environment was a challenge.

29th February 1968 Ship's Log

0927H - Proceeding on trawler surveillance mission per CTG 115.4 msg 'O' 290112Z FEB 68.

1705H – Commenced covert surveillance TRAWLER 28F2 Hull # 468.

1st March 1968 Ship's Log

0105H – Set General Quarters.

0151H – Challenged the trawler three (03) times by the VNN Junk Challenge (single letter). Received no response.

0152H – Issued the VNN Challenge Code ((number & letter) "U.S. FREE WORLD MILITARY CRAFT TO VNN SHIPS" three times and received no response.

0153H – Illuminated the trawler and issued International Code "KILO" three times with no response.

0200H – Fired one (01) round 5'/38 across the trawler's bow.. The trawler continued on course.

0202H – Opened fire on the trawler with 50 caliber machine guns and 5"/38 main battery.
0203H – The trawler returned fire.
0207H – Trawler exploded and sank in position 08-42-15 N 105-21-46 E. Ceased fire with 24 rounds 5"/38 expended, bore clear, no casualties. 400 rounds of 50 cal ammo expended.
0214H – Commenced illumination of area with 81mm mortar shells in search for survivors and debris.
0228H – Secured illumination with 81mm having expended five (05) round and no survivors located.
0230H – Held Quarters with all hands present or accounted for. Examination revealed 2 penetrations in hull and 2 in superstructure by enemy fire.
0355H – CG-82323 (POINT GRACE) came alongside to starboard to pick up debris. SEPIA came aboard.
0429H – CG-82323 departed with SEPIA aboard.

Coast Guard Awards and Medals Board – List of CG Units Coming Under Hostile Fire

August 30, 2004

Encl. (16) to COMDTINST 650.25b MEDALS AND AWARDS MANUAL

WINONA – 29 Feb 68 and 1 Mar 68

WIKIPEDIA

WINONA was assigned to Coast Guard Squadron Three, South Vietnam, from 25 January to 17 October 1968. On 1 March the WINONA sank a North Vietnamese trawler designated T-A.

RELATED ARTICLES/WRITINGS

May 14, 2017 – Gary Thornton ('67) E-mail to Dick Walton

Gary Thornton Class of '67 here. I just became aware, via the April/May Bulletin, of your research into the historic naval engagements on March 1, 1968. I assume that includes the role of the Winona.

I was an ensign aboard Winona assigned to the duties of CIC Officer. As such I was intimately involved in the Winona's operations from first detection of the enemy trawler to its explosive destruction by our firepower. I trust that you have found other first person witnesses in your research and I look forward to reading your report. If you would like additional information, or validation of existing research from my perspective, I would be happy to participate.

NOTE: Gary has contributed three articles which follow:

COUNTDOWN TO COMBAT

Gary Thornton ('67)

When Coast Guard Cutter Winona arrived in theatre on 25 January 1968, the over-riding Market Time threat assessment was very general with little specific intelligence to act upon. The first impression of patrol procedures didn't feel that different from those of the long-standing Coast Guard ocean weather station routines. Those three-week long weather patrols increasingly bred crew apathy along with a fading sense of purpose. In Market Time we were basically assigned a rectangular maritime offshore area of responsibility to detect suspect enemy associated vessels. The typical vessel encountered, and sometimes boarded, was a small traditional junk with two or three Vietnamese fishermen and a payload of fresh fish. Recognizing that Winona's movements could be under hostile surveillance by possible weapons smugglers, we created a low tech random track generator. It simply involved dividing our assigned area into six sectors, each with six subsectors. A die was tossed twice and the resultant two numbers dictated our next transit waypoint.

At 9:27 AM on 29 February this low intensity routine was suddenly upgraded with the urgent report of a suspect trawler headed toward our zone of responsibility. The message suggested a decisive encounter and we needed to avoid jeopardizing it by early discovery. The seasoned radar-men and sonar-men of our Combat information Center (CIC) team monitored the vessel's reported progress undetected. As CIC Officer I was released from my regular deck watch officer duties to establish supervisory continuity in the CIC and continuous communications with our operational commander. At 5:05 PM the trawler's inbound track toward the Bo De River appeared conclusive and we commenced active covert surveillance within twenty-mile radar range. When the trawler entered Vietnam territorial waters we received authorization to approach and challenge the trawler. We established full operational combat readiness with the setting of General Quarters at 1:05 AM on March 1. Three separate international flashing light challenge procedures were executed to avoid the possibility of hostile fire on an innocent vessel. The trawler gave no response. With authorization from the operational commander, a 5"/38 warning shot was fired. The trawler continued moving and its crew was observed uncovering deck-mounted weapons. A rapid exchange of gunfire followed. In just five minutes twenty-four 5" rounds and four hundred rounds of 50 caliber ammunition were expended by Winona.

Pockets of individual drama on Winona included urgent debate between two gunnery officers over who would man the highly exposed fire control director position. When one, mostly spent, enemy round entered Winona's Combat Information Center spaces the crew therein hit the deck. My radio telephone handset cord was too short so I could only slightly crouch to maintain

external communications. Fortunately nobody in this space or elsewhere on Winona was struck or injured.

Ultimate success was the result of many moving parts all working properly together. The propulsion system, electronics, weapons systems, communications systems, damage control teams, plus command and control procedures all worked. Every member of our one hundred and fifty man crew flawlessly executed an important role. This was true testimony to the many hours of maintenance and training that preceded the direct hit and destruction of the trawler at 2:07 AM. This was the ultimate Semper Paratus moment.

As an Ensign in my first year of commissioned service I had played a role which far exceeded my rookie expectations. My seniors had trusted me and empowered me to act in unfamiliar territory and

under pressure. It taught me to likewise trust and empower my subordinates whenever possible. It also taught me to aggressively embrace change and the many opportunities that come with it. This became a career theme for me as I found myself on the leading edge of emerging Coast Guard programs in marine safety, environmental protection, fisheries and drug law enforcement and maritime defense. In each mission area, being an effective change agent required the rapid consumption of fresh knowledge and confident groundbreaking leadership moving forward. I can look back with satisfaction on a successful career trusting my trained instincts to innovate and lead.

VICTORY AT SEA AND THEN WHAT?

Gary Thornton ('67)

At 2:07 AM on Friday, March 1, 1968 a large trawler laden with arms and munitions destined for Viet Cong forces exploded and disintegrated in a massive fireball. This was the result of a direct gunfire hit from the 5"/38 mount on board the Coast Guard Cutter Winona. This decisive naval combat victory concluded sixteen hours of surface radar surveillance following the trawler's detection by a Navy patrol aircraft. This was one of four concurrent vessel interdictions along the East Coast of Viet Nam by Coast Guard and Navy Market Time forces. The immediate exhilaration of Winona crewmembers was quickly tempered by the awareness that we might have experienced casualties of our own from incoming gunfire. It was only after a quick internal and external inspection and an all-hands assembly at "quarters" was it safe to feel the euphoria of the victorious outcome.

This was a powerful adrenaline rush not unlike that experienced by a 10k runner after crossing the finish line. In this case the inevitable follow-on emotional crash came in the form of realizing that active combat might be our new normal. This was a true wake-up call. We were in a hot war with the real prospect of friendly casualties, even at sea. We were more vulnerable than any of us previously imagined. We were more dependent upon each other than ever before. We were

a team in the truest sense. For the remaining months of our deployment we had a new spirit. There was a strong sense of teamwork, readiness, and pride in our mission. Every crewmember from seaman to commanding officer played a vital role and was valued. We approached every new day with a laser like focus. We actively sought opportunities for naval gunfire support. We embraced missions to deliver humanitarian support to villages ashore. Our underway replenishments ran like clockwork. We supported our attached Swift Boats with additional manpower on patrols. Our boarding frequency and efficiency increased.

As individuals we carried our own mixed opinions on the wisdom of the Vietnam war. Regardless of our biases, we could all agree that our successful interdiction of this enemy supply ship likely would have the positive longer term effect of saving the lives of many Americans at risk throughout South Vietnam. Another simultaneously interdicted trawler, not destroyed, yielded 70 AK 47 rifles, seven 82 mm mortar tubes with 745 rounds of ammunition, 39 RPG-2 rocket launchers with 81 cases of rocket rounds, and 28 cases of 7.62 mm ammunition. The elimination of that much hostile firepower was very significant. Equally important, the four combined interdictions at sea played a pivotal role in shifting the primary supply lines for the Viet Cong guerillas to far less efficient land routes along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. This was clearly the most significant naval victory of the entire Viet Nam campaign.

Collectively, the four successful interdictions were truly in keeping with the finest traditions of the U.S. Coast Guard as a unique and valuable national multi-mission asset.

REFLECTIONS ON RETURNING HOME

Gary Thornton ('67)

When the Winona completed its final Market Time patrol off the coast of South Vietnam there was a sense of pride, relief, and a bit of apprehension about returning to stateside normalcy. We were somewhat aware of the social turmoil that was occurring back home. During a short port visit to Hawaii several crewmembers were allowed to detach and fly back to an early homecoming. While a bit envious, those of us still aboard felt good about remaining as a team until ultimately tying up in Port Angeles. We ultimately arrived in Port Angeles to a civic welcoming celebration highlighted by the local high school band and city officials. It was mercifully short as it delayed the many embraces of reuniting families and friends. Some of the crew, like myself, had nobody in the welcoming party so volunteered to take the first day in-port watches. In no time the dock emptied and Winona fell back into a very normal homeport routine. The following day, upon relief as OOD, I walked ashore and into a local pub, the only place that promised some civilian social contact. I felt an underlying need to share my just completed story but knew that interest among any of the strangers I observed was unlikely. I soon retreated to my safe and familiar Winona quarters.

Days later I visited Seattle to recover my stored car. I found myself walking through Seattle's downtown in a bit of a daze and met a young couple who somehow sensed that I was socially adrift. They expressed genuine interest in my story and were very supportive as we dined together. That was the beginning of my reentry into a normal routine life back in the states. Reuniting with my family back in Wisconsin soon thereafter was another vitally important rebuilding block.

Successive tours of duty included the Reliance in Corpus Christi, Texas; District 8 RCC in Long Beach, California; the Bibb in New Bedford, Massachusetts; Port Safety and Security in New Orleans, and Marine Safety Office in Chicago. As an O-5 Executive Officer at the Marine Safety Office, Vietnam was a distant memory. I rarely wore my uniform in public as it still carried negative symbolism to the public at large.

I was surprised to learn of a "Welcome Home Parade" in downtown Chicago on June 13, 1986. Since the parade route was past our offices, I went out to observe and pay my respects to the marching veterans. Somehow I did not see myself as a participant. Much to my surprise, a couple of marching veterans spotted me in uniform with my Vietnam service ribbons. They reached out and insisted that I join them. I was reluctant but accepted their invitation. The experience was life changing. There were 200,000 marchers and 500,000 spectators. It lasted for five hours. I was literally smothered by heartfelt hugs, handshakes, and welcome home greetings. I finally realized a healthy closure on my Vietnam experience which I had never realized I yearned for

To anyone experiencing a similar return from a warfighting environment, I strongly encourage assimilating with an openness about your experience. Regardless of rank or role, you need to celebrate with a sense of earned pride, your patriotism and contribution to our nation's security. You will discover that there is no shortage of family, friends and even strangers eager to share in that celebration. For the twenty years of my military retirement I have done just that with fellow veterans and supporters in my community. I am the bugler for all local Veterans Day and Memorial Day assemblies. I am an active board member for our local Freedom Memorial Park. I participate in the Veterans Day Week ceremonies and seminars at thirteen local schools. These types of uplifting opportunities are widespread. It is worth every effort to find them and reap the rewards of participation.



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Address reply to:
Commanding Officer
USCGC WINONA (WHEC-65)
FPO San Francisco 96601

USCGC WINONA (WHEC-65) NEWSLETTER #1

12 February 1968

Dear Friends,

This is the first of several newsletters intended to keep you folks back home abreast of WINONA activities during the next few months.

We are now at Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines making final preparations for our first Market Time patrol. From Port Angeles to Subic Bay we traveled over 7,200 miles. Excluding our stop in Honolulu, Hawaii the journey took twenty-two days. The principal event of the trip was the crossing of the international date-line (180th meridian) with its traditional initiation for those who cross for the first time into the realm of King Neptune. Normally, this takes a full day; however, due to bad weather the "polywogs" got off lightly, only getting an individually styled hair cut.

Over most of the trip the weather left much to be desired, although we did have several good days. With temperatures in the upper eighties we were able to go swimming twice. It is a new experience for many, swimming in the middle of the ocean with the closest land only a mile and a half away - straight down!

On our way to Subic Bay we spent several days in Honolulu, Hawaii enjoying the hospitality of the islands. The ship was met at the dock by the traditional hula dancers - a beautiful sight to behold.


After Honolulu there was a re-fueling stop at Guam. Mail was received and dropped off. Next to the mail the highlight of this stop was an opportunity to enjoy a home type shower in lieu of the water conserving "sea" shower.

On our passage through the Islands we found the Philippines to be a very colorful Republic. The people are very friendly and hospitable. Some of the crew had an opportunity to visit the capital at Manila; others enjoyed the recreational facilities around Subic. Communications were no problem since many of the Filipinos are very fluent in English.

As our preparations are about complete we will soon be sailing on our first Market Time patrol. Again this will be a new experience for most of us, but I feel the ship's company is ready to get on with the job we came out here to do.

From time to time we will be issuing news releases. It would be greatly appreciated if you would send us a copy of any WINONA news that appears in your local newspaper.

If there are any general questions about our operations, do not hesitate to drop a line, and I will attempt to answer them in future newsletters. Personal queries I will answer on an individual basis.


H. J. LYNCH
Captain, U. S. Coast Guard
Commanding Officer



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Address reply to:
Commanding Officer
USCGC WINONA (WIEC-65)
c/o FPO, San Francisco
96601

28 March 1968

WINONA NEWSLETTER NO. 2

Dear Friends,

This letter will cover our first Market Time patrol, the purpose of which is to prevent the infiltration to the Viet Cong of arms and supplies from the sea. Our area of responsibility was along the Western coast of South Vietnam in the Gulf of Siam. Working with us and drawing support from us were two Navy Swift boats. The WINONA, being larger, maintained an outer station while the Swifts were the inner line.

Vietnamese forces in the area consisted of a junk force which did about the same as the Swifts, and an Army detachment in the village of Song Ong Doc. The latter had a U. S. Army Advisory group attached which consisted of a Major, a sergeant and an Air Force medic.

Suspicious looking or acting vessels were stopped, boarded and searched. If all was in order they were allowed to proceed, otherwise they were turned over to the local Vietnamese authorities. Any that refused to stop or tried to escape were captured or destroyed. The Swifts interdicted much VC local traffic and were in action almost daily. Many of our crew members augmented the Swift crews thus giving them a little more excitement.

Four gunfire support missions were conducted. Song Ong Doc is surrounded on the three land sides by the VC who frequently move in and harass the villagers. When this happens the local detachment calls for support and the ship moves in and with our 5 inch gun drives the VC back. Ordinarily we can keep them back about six miles from the village!

The most impressionable incident was the destruction of an enemy munitions vessel. In the early morning of 1 March, after covertly tracking an unmarked ship from some distance at sea, whose course was taking it directly toward a VC stronghold just south of our normal patrol area, the WINONA for 10 minutes issued challenges, and by international code ordered the vessel to stop. When no reply or favorable action was received, and then only a short distance from shore, a shot was fired across her bow. A five-minute gunfight ensued, ending with the munitions ship disintegrating in a huge fireball, and the WINONA pockmarked with numerous hits from enemy gunfire. Fortunately, although there were a few close calls, we sustained no casualties. Inshore where the water got too shallow for us, and ready to take over if the need arose, was a line of four Coast Guard 82-footers (WPB's) and then four Navy Swift boats (PCF's).

On the constructive side, the ship's medical department made weekly visits to Song Ong Doc to hold sick call, treating over 300 during the patrol. Several patients were brought to the ship by Swift boat for X-rays. Three Vietnamese sailors were hospitalized on board for several days with severe

ailments. A suspected appendectomy turned out to be acute flu, a gunshot wound received in action was well on the way to healing when the boy "just had to get back to some Vietnamese chow", and a victim of a 40 foot fall from a tree, with possible internal injuries, was evacuated by helicopter to a hospital ashore. Several USN men were treated for various minor ailments.

A Navy radar station's generators and Song Ong Doc's water supply were worked on by our engineering force.

To show our many talents, on 21 February, while the Doctor treated patients on one side of the Song Ong Doc town square, the engineers worked on the water supply on the opposite, and the ships musicians, with guitars, banjos and vocal cords entertained in the center.

As in most war-torn countries, there is a great need for school supplies and clothing. Perhaps in that next box of goodies you could send along a discarded shirt, dress, pants, a couple of pencils, a pad of paper, erasers etc., to fill up the corners. We will see that they get distributed where they will be put to good use and be well appreciated.

My first letter brought a few questions, so in the order received here are the answers:

No definite date for the ship's return to Port Angeles can be predicted at this time; however, it should be sometime in the first two weeks of November '68.

We would hope that those whose enlistments expire while over here would reenlist; we have had one already; but for those who intend to leave the service, their enlistments will be extended to match our return date. In most cases this won't be more than a month.

Can't find anyone who is not getting more mail than we give them time to answer.

The HEC stands for High Endurance Cutter. That means we are self-sufficient for periods up to a month. The W is a prefix added to all Coast Guard designations. The 65 is just the hull number of this particular vessel.

Of interest might be the other types of vessels we work with in Market Time. WPB - Coast Guard patrol boats - 82'; PCF - Patrol craft, fast - 55'; LST - Landing ship tank; MSO - Oceangoing mine sweepers; MSC - Coastal mine sweepers; DER - Destroyer escorts outfitted for radar station duties.

I am quite proud of the way the crew responded to every demand on this first patrol. They all worked as long and as hard as the job demanded. We are now in port to do maintenance work on the ship and to rejuvenate ourselves with some of what out here is termed rest and recreation, but is still just liberty to most of us.

Sincerely yours,



H. J. LYNCH
Captain, U. S. Coast Guard



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Address reply to:
Commanding Officer
USCGC WINONA (WHEC-65)
FPO San Francisco 96601

1 June 1968

WINONA NEWSLETTER NO. 3

Dear Friends,

Again it's time to bring you up to date on Winona activities in the Western Pacific.

My last newsletter was written in KAOHSIUNG, TAIWAN where along with doing routine maintenance on the ship we got a needed rest. For recreation we had several softball games with other ships in the harbor and enjoyed the scenic beauties of Taiwan.

Our second Market Time patrol was off the South Viet Nam coast in the vicinity of QUANG NGAI. Again there were Navy Swift boats and Coast Guard WPB's inshore from us. Here the similarities of the patrols ended. The county here was hilly and rocky as opposed to flat and swampy. Even the fishing boats were of a different style and the methods of fishing differed. It was a much less active patrol although we did have several gunfire support missions. The highlight of the patrol was a night ammunition replenishment by helicopter. It took all hands to move the ammunition as it was delivered and the chopper had to slow down so as to not bury us.

From this patrol we proceeded to Hong Kong, B.C.C. where we were assigned as station ship with the title of SOPA ADMIN (Senior Officer Present Afloat, Administration). Our duties were to make all necessary arrangements with the British for U. S. vessels visiting the colony on R&R and to assist the SOPA in his duties. In our non-working hours there were sightseeing tours through the picturesque colony, softball and basketball games against local teams and a ship's party. The party was held on a remote beach with transportation to and from in a Chinese junk. Besides the main event of devouring the refreshments, there were volleyball games, enlisted men beat the Chiefs and then lost to the officers, swimming, and for a few of the more daring pole vaulting. On departing Hong Kong we were awarded the Servicemen's Guide Association's Meritorious Conduct Ashore Award.

Being relieved in Hong Kong by the Minnetonka, a sister ship, we proceeded to Sasebo, Japan for an upkeep period and nested with the Campbell and Duane, the two 327's of Coast Guard Squadron Three. Here our new Squadron Commander, Captain Sherman K. Frick visited us and conducted material and personnel inspections. Again our softball team was busy, our bowlers were

active and the sightseers journeyed to Nagasaki to visit the Atomic Bomb site. We will relieve the AFD 00000000, another sister ship, on our next patrol so we will have had an opportunity to visit all our friends in the squadron in a period of several weeks.

On departing Port Angeles, the Minona instituted a SALUTE OF THE MONTH award to give recognition to the enlisted men who showed the best military bearing, attitude, effort, accomplishment, esprit de corps, and cooperativeness. The winners to date have been:

January	Duane L. Allen, DC2
February	Euterio L. Morales, DC2
March	William F. Wardle, DC1
April	Dennis H. Wleckner, ST3
May	Richard A. Higgins, ST2

Before closing I would like to thank those of you who contributed clothing and school supplies to the needy of Viet Nam. Those collected to date will be distributed on our next patrol and additional contributions will be distributed as they arrive.

Sincerely yours,



H. J. LYNCH
Captain, U. S. Coast Guard
Commanding Officer



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Address reply to:

Commanding Officer
USCGC WINONA (WHEC-65)
c/o FPO, San Francisco
96601

1700

22 August 1968

WINONA NEWSLETTER No. 5

Dear Friends:

I think it's high time I got busy and continued this Newsletter business which my predecessor started. Captain LYNCH mentioned, in his last Newsletter of 29 June, that I had reported to WINONA in Subic Bay at the end of June. Unfortunately there was apparently a foul up in the mail room at our Seattle office and many of you received copies of the STATEN ISLAND'S newsletter instead of WINONA'S. So it may come as a surprise to some of you to hear that WINONA has a new Commanding Officer. Originally the Coast Guard didn't intend to change people on ships which were deployed to WESTPAC. They made an exception in Captain LYNCH's case because he was to head up the Professional Studies Department at the Coast Guard Academy in New London and he had to be there in time to begin a new school year.

I asked for WINONA and was delighted to get transferred here from a shore job in New York which I did not particularly like. I'm very happy to be here doing what I most enjoy professionally. I mention this because a happy ship starts with a happy C.O. I am a happy C.O.

I cannot commend the Officers and Men in WINONA enough for the fine ship they have handed me. You people at home can take real comfort from the knowledge that your sons and husbands are part of a team of champions. Champions, you know, are the ones who not only win, but who also survive. It's the out-of-shape players on the second-rate teams who get hurt.

We left Subic Bay, Republic of Philippines, on 1 July just two days after I assumed command. We made the crossing to Viet Nam in two rather sloppy days at sea and relieved CGC DUANE on Market Time near DaNang.

The weather on station was fine for two weeks while we carried out a rather dull patrol, checking vessels and fueling Swift Boats. Then we shifted South to the West Coast of Viet Nam in the Gulf of Siam. Here we became more active hitting enemy positions near the Coast, and I think we all got a feeling of some accomplishment. Unfortunately the weather was rather poor with the Southwest Monsoon and there were a few days when the sea got a bit bumpy.

With regard to personnel, we had some pleasant changes in grade:

LCDR Irvin W. LINDEMUTH, the Engineer Officer, was promoted to CDR.
LTJG Ted G. WALTERS was promoted to LT.
James A. ABERNATHY from FA to FN.
Charles J. BAUGHMAN from SNQM to QM3.

WINONA NEWSLETTER No. 5

James R. DOWD from FA to FN.
Richard A. HIGGINS from MM2 to MM1.
Leonard C. HOFFERBER from SA to SN.
Gary P. LeBLANC from SA to SN.
James R. McLANE from FA to FN.
Blair G. MINER from SA to SN.
Glen M. RONFELD from FA to FN.
David M. SOHLSTROM from FA to FN.
Douglas A. TURNER from SA to SN.

We had one particularly successful gunfire support mission worth special mention. The Bo De River at the South East tip of Viet Nam has been a Communist strong point for some time. (The Trawler which your men sank on 1 March was headed for the Bo De). In order to pinpoint the enemy positions for us to destroy, two Navy "Swift" Boats went in close to the beach and actually penetrated the river mouth so the Reds would open fire. We got in as close as the shallow water would permit and fired at the gun emplacements and bunkers which had revealed themselves to the "Swift" Boats. One of the Boats took a hit which opened up her hull and after the action was over we spent some time in the old Coast Guard business of helping seamen in distress. The day's work was most profitable as we apparently did considerable damage to an area which we had not previously attacked.

On 12 August 1968 I had the real pleasure and honor of pinning medals on three of our people. LCDR James A. ATKINSON, the Executive Officer, LTJG Marcel J. BUJARSKI, the First Lieutenant, and BM3 Larry W. SLAWSON were awarded the Navy Commandation Medal for their particularly significant part in sinking the Trawler on 1 March. The award was made in the name of the Secretary of Navy by the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet, and I pinned them on at a formal muster of all hands in white uniforms.

I want especially to thank you who so generously responded to CAPT LYNCH's appeal for clothes and other material for the people of Song Ong Doc. On 20 July 1968 I had the pleasure of presenting the gifts, in the name of WINONA'S wives and parents, to the District Chief at Song Ong Doc. It is with equal pleasure that I convey his sincere thanks to all of you.

I want to mention mail. I can think of no single factor which more deeply and continuously affects our morale and I suspect the same applies to you. Mail deliveries are sometimes few and far between for us. It's even more difficult for us to send mail off. If we put it on a tanker, we're looking at ten days to two weeks before it will get ashore. If we keep it aboard hoping for a "Swift" Boat to take it ashore, we may be sitting on it ourselves for ten days. So please be patient with us if the mail man seems to have forgotten you. Try to remember that when Johnny gets up at 3:00 AM (after two hours in the sack), spends the next three hours on a rolling

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
WINONA NEWSLETTER No. 6

UNCLASSIFIED

I expect to grant a liberal schedule of leave and liberty when we return, but the ship will remain in commission, and that means roughly a third of the crew will be "stuck" with the duty. If your husband or son is one of them, try to be patient; it's only for one more day.

I will, of course, open the ship to visitors as soon as we arrive, and I invite you to meet us and come aboard if you possibly can. I would like to meet you personally. If you share this desire, please mention it to the Officer of the Deck and I'll present myself. I'd invite you to the Cabin, but I suspect it will be a bit crowded with four lovely ladies with whom I'm acquainted.

Sincerely,



Robert A. Moss

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CONFIDENTIAL

WINONA NEWSLETTER No. 5

deck soaked from head to toe with salt water heaving tons of bullets and cabbage from a replenishment ship, gets half way through a late breakfast and is sent off to his battle station, feeds those same bullets he loaded that morning into a gun until noon, hurries through lunch to get on watch, gets off watch in time to go back to another replenishment, finishes that in time for late dinner and then gets piped to the engine room to fix the finnegan pin - - - Johnny is a tired lad! Chances are, ten seconds after his head hits the pillow, his last conscious thought will be "I really ought to write Mom. I'll do it for sure tomorrow - - - -ZZZZ".

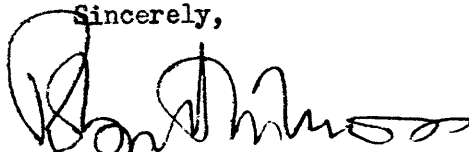
I tried to stir up some interest in some festivities on August 4th, Coast Guard Day. I suggested a smoker or a barbecue on the fantail or something like that. Can you guess what the Recreation Committee came up with? - - - - "Captain, just give us a day off with nothing to do." So be it!

Plans for our return are not yet definite beyond the expectation that it will be sometime in the first half of November. All sorts of things can come up between now and then to affect our operations. As soon as our plans are firm enough to depend on with some certainty, I'll let the ship's people know.

Please feel free to write me if you have any questions or for any reason at all.

Next Newsletter will cover our stay in Yokosuka, Japan.

Sincerely,



ROBERT A. MOSS
Commander, U. S. Coast Guard
Commanding Officer, USCGC WINONA (WHEC-65)



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Address reply to:

Commanding Officer
USCGC WINONA (WHEC-65)
Port Angeles, Wash. 98362

UNCLASSIFIED

1700
9 October 1968

WINONA NEWSLETTER No. 6

Dear Friends:

WINONA'S RETURN SCHEDULE:

Arrive, Pearl Harbor 23 October.
Depart, Pearl Harbor about 28 October.
Arrive, Port Angeles, 11:00 AM, 4 November.

There is, I suspect, only one piece of news in which you are really interested. And that will be news of our plans for returning to the States. By the time this newsletter reaches you we will be approaching Hawaii. I regret not having been able to tell you our plans sooner. Unfortunately those plans were classified for security purposes and I could not reveal our itinerary until WINONA had passed the 160th east meridian of longitude. Since it is a bit difficult to mail Newsletters from the middle of the Ocean, I made arrangements in advance for our District Office to send this one off to you on the day WINONA crosses the 160th meridian.

Our stay in Japan was a mixture of hard work and pleasant relaxation with the former predominating. But at least it was a change from the grind down on the line with which everybody had become pretty tired.

We had a final patrol in Vietnam up near Danang. It was a successful, productive and not too rugged patrol with a variety of weather conditions and enough shooting to keep us proficient.

The trip from Vietnam to Subic will go into my memory as one of the most pleasant two day periods I have ever spent at sea. The pressure was off and the weather was magnificent. It was flat, even glassy, calm and there was a full moon which lit up the heavens and kept me sitting on the bridge wing until the wee hours. I hope our return trip continues to be as pleasant as it started.

If you intend to meet us in Hawaii, you can find out where we will tie up by calling the Fourteenth Coast Guard District Office. Plans probably won't be definite until a day before our arrival, so don't call too early.

I am uncertain exactly where we will tie up in Port Angeles. Our regular berth suffered a rather serious trauma recently when a merchant ship backed into the pier and destroyed about half of it. I rather suspect that we will tie up at the Coast Guard Air Station Pier on Ediz Hook. If the details aren't common knowledge around town before we arrive, a call to the Air Station would be in order.

UNCLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

'The trawler exploded in a ball of flame'

A graphic description of the Coast Guard Cutter Winona's encounter with the enemy off Vietnam has been made available to the Evening News by Mrs. Irvin W. Lindemuth, a Port Angeles resident, whose husband, LCDR Lindemuth, is aboard the Winona.

The description came in the form of a letter from her husband, a part of which is reproduced here.

"Thursday, 29 February, 1968, the United States Coast Guard Cutter Winona received word to proceed to the vicinity of Con Son Island off the southern tip of South Vietnam to keep a suspicious looking trawler under covert surveillance. Four such trawlers spaced along the coast of South Vietnam were suspect at the same time. Other Coast Guard ships were detailed to two and Navy aircraft were watching the fourth. The message which dispatched us closed with the statement: 'This may be your big one.' It was.

"At 1730 (5:30 p.m.) on 29 February we set Condition Yoke. (Condition X-ray is with hatches, doors and valves open as necessary for normal shipboard living. Yoke is with half of the fittings secure and Zebra is with the ship fully secured for battle). At sunset we darkened ship, even turning off the navigational lights. Thus did we proceed to stalk the trawler on radar to quickly detect any move to infiltrate South Vietnam.

"Our night routine went on, including taps . . . for G.Q. (General Quarters, Battle Stations) could sound at any time. At 0100 (1 a.m.) 1 March it did. At that time of night, or at any time, the raucous clang . . . clang . . . clang of that thing has the aspirin and sledgehammer beat, hands down! About three minutes later we were at G.Q. with Condition Zebra set.

"In the engineroom, I received reports from all my spaces and reported to the bridge, 'All engineering spaces manned and ready, maximum speed available.' Elsewhere, men were donning flak jackets and helmets. Manning the five inch 38 gun mount, uncovering the mortars and .50 caliber mounts and breaking out ammunition. Why all this? The trawler was closing the beach. We stalked. At one point the heavily laden trawler hesitated, but then headed on in. It wasn't long until the order came down 'full speed ahead!' Full speed they got.

"At a range of one mile from the vessel our 36 inch searchlight speared them out of the

darkness. (Complete darkness, as the VC usually utilize nights of waning moon.) But this infiltration had been anticipated.

"We took them by surprise. About six men were observed scurrying around the deck, apparently trying to jettison some cargo. We challenged them once . . . twice . . . three times, all with no response. We were to capture if possible, if not . . . destroy. As a more emphatic challenge we then fired a five inch shell across their bow. Still no response.

"By this time the Winona was 650 yards distant, close enough for the job at hand and rapidly approaching water too shallow for us. As there was no alternative, we opened fire with the .50 caliber machine guns. This fire was immediately returned with small arms and weapons similar to our .50s. With our five inch 38 then in action as well as the .50 calibers, the ensuing battle lasted about 10 minutes, ending as the trawler

exploded in a huge ball of flame, proving beyond a doubt the presence of munitions on board.

"Debris rained down on the Winona; a length of handrail, shrapnel, helmet straps even. Gun stock splinters and other debris were found by other vessels standing by during the encounter, including four 82 foot Coast Guard patrol boats, four 50 foot Navy patrol boats (called Swifties) and the U.S.S. Conflict, a minesweeper.

"No survivors.

"Meanwhile, up the coast all was not idle. The USCGC Androscoggin, assisted by a similar group of Navy and Coast Guard craft, had forced their quarry to destroy itself — the USCGC Minnetonka turned hers back to seaward . . . and Navy aircraft, five Swifties and three South Vietnamese Navy vessels combined to destroy the last enemy trawler.

"It has been estimated that these four boats would have provided supplies for a good-sized

army for many months. As one message to all units involved said, in part, ' . . . your action will mean the saving of countless American and South Vietnamese lives.'

"No one was injured on the Winona. One man got his sleeve torn. Another was hit on the helmet with a four pound chunk of steel plate. We could hear the bullets hitting the hull of the engineroom which was thick enough to withstand it. The Winona acquired about six holes and several more dents, but that's all.

"I have mixed emotions about all this. A. I am glad for the victory; B. I am thankful for zero casualties; C. I am saddened by snuffing out of human life, even VC.; D. I am resolved that because of the Communist threat in the world today, this sort of thing must go on, at least for the present; E. I am certain that our country, though not always right, is more right than wrong. May it ever be so."



Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

Re: WINONA cruise book

1 message

eugenekjohnson@aol.com <eugenekjohnson@aol.com>
Reply-To: eugenekjohnson@aol.com
To: "bill@getrain.com" <bill@getrain.com>

Thu, Oct 7, 2021 at 12:09 PM

Tha egg nks just wanted to make sure it arrived.
Gene

-----Original Message-----

From: Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>
To: eugenekjohnson@aol.com
Sent: Thu, Oct 7, 2021 10:36 am
Subject: Re: WINONA cruise book

I did Gene...my apologies for not letting you know right away.

I have to double check but with your Winona tour book, i have them for all the white cutters on which our classmates served. All will be available for research and display in the Special Collections department of the Academy Library.

Thank you for your donation.....Bill

On Wed, Oct 6, 2021 at 10:25 AM <eugenekjohnson@aol.com> wrote:

Bill

Did you get the WINONA cruise book I sent you?

Gene

From: thornton@vail.net
Sent: Wednesday, May 17, 2017 11:34 AM
To: dwalton65@bellsouth.net; Bill Carr
Subject: Vietnam personal narratives
Attachments: Countdown.docx; Victory at Sea.docx; Welcome Home.docx

Good morning Bill and Dick,

Here are my first cuts at Vietnam service related personal narratives. I wasn't sure what formats you were looking for. I can go back to the drawing board on this if you wish but I know that your deadline is close. I have no problem if you choose to edit or use selected portions of these narratives.

I found the statistics I used on weapons recovered from a trawler in an August 17, 2010 article by Dwight Zimmerman entitled Operation Market Time. It can be found at defensemedianetwork.com.

I am available by phone today if you have questions or would like to discuss this project further.

Re: Vietnam Tidbits

1 message

Lloyd George <Lloyd.George@lfgcpa.com>
To: Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>
Cc: "Eugene (Gene) & Lynne Johnson" <eugenekjohnson@aol.com>

Fri, May 14, 2021 at 1:56 PM

We are barrelled at Subic, I believe.

On Fri, May 14, 2021 at 1:23 PM Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com> wrote:

Thanks Gene. Lloyd is out of town and replied that he will dig into his personal journal to see if anything of note was recorded for that date...Bill

----- Forwarded message -----

From: <eugenekjohnson@aol.com>
Date: Fri, May 14, 2021 at 6:40 AM
Subject: Re: Vietnam Tidbits
To: bill@getrain.com <bill@getrain.com>

I do not remember this particular instance. Winona did many fire support missions. In fact we had to install a new barrel in Sasebo shipyard.
Gene

-----Original Message-----

From: Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>
To: Lloyd George <Lloyd.George@lfgcpa.com>; eugenekjohnson@aol.com
Sent: Thu, May 13, 2021 6:16 pm
Subject: Vietnam Tidbits

Lloyd and Gene - I picked up the below tidbit from Paul Scotti's book, "Coast Guard Action in Vietnam". Do either of you remember this incident. If so, any further details you can add or personal thoughts about the action. It was a pretty unique engagement for the Coast Guard.

Scotti p. 70

The white cutters were accustomed to performing gunfire missions alone, but on 16 July 1968 off the Ca Mau Peninsula, and separated by 1000 yards, ANDROSCOGGIN and WINONA excavated Viet Cong positions with 414 rounds that sent black petroleum smoke billowing above the targets and left the ground shuddering from the secondary explosions coming from ammunition caches. Afterward, the pilot of the airplane spotting this mission - who had spotted on previous shoots for ANDROSCOGGIN, and who knew that this was the cutter's final Market Time patrol - made a low pass in salute. he dropped her a flare container, inside which was a Viet Cong battle flag.

Let me know, OK?...thanks....Bill



Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

Fwd: Vietnam Tidbits

1 message

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Fri, May 14, 2021 at 1:23 PM

To: eugenekjohnson@aol.com, Lloyd George <Lloyd.George@lfgcpa.com>

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Let me know, OK?...thanks....Bill



Fwd: 1965 Class Vietnam Scrape Book Project.

1 message

Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>
To: eugenekjohnson@aol.com
Bcc: Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

Sat, Mar 20, 2021 at 2:58 PM

Gene - Just touching base to follow up on our quick conversation of several weeks ago.

I'm getting some very nice write-ups about the routines of those of our classmates who served in Vietnam theatre.

Of the 43 that were Vietnam Vets in one capacity or another (or their widows), I've contacted all but 9 so far and have finished work from 14. Another 20 have said they will write something or will at least think about it and have asked me to get back with them later.

A couple examples:

1. Ron Fritz - Besides sending me a number of well captioned photographs, I have some good quotes from a book he recommended about the sinking of PCF-19 off the Cua Viet June 16 of 1968 by NVA helicopters. Tony Finizio was on board the Campbell along with Jim Townley '67 who were also involved. Quite the story.
2. Jim Morgan - Jim had several incidences with helicopters killing innocent fisherman and his reporting of same. I'm touching base with him again in mid April when he is free to spend some time putting these stories together..
3. Bob Storch sent me a write-up on how he got the nickname of Captain Crunch for a bit of a misadventure - not of his fault.
4. Lloyd kept a diary and is putting something together besides the Andrascoggin and PT WELCOME/PT GRAY trawler story.
5. Dick Chapman has sent me three interesting write-ups to include.

Just thought I'd give you a head's up on how the project is shapping up. Would love to have your experience/memories on your regular work on WinONA during that time - in addition to the trawler write-up you already gave me.

Take care and stay well....Bill

In Service to Country and Humanity
In the June 2017 issue of *The Bulletin*, this Class column highlighted Gary Thornton's (Class of 1967) personal recollection as CIC Officer while on the WINONA in the evening and early morning hours of February 29 and March 1 of 1968. Gary wrote about what happened before, during and after the sinking of one of four enemy trawlers that were missioned to infiltrate ammunition and medical supplies into South Vietnam that evening.
Gary's excellent account is an example of one of my objectives as Class Correspondent to encourage all in our class who served in Vietnam (**Attachment One**) to tell their story before it is lost forever. Our children and their children and their

children should have the gift of knowing our families served their country – and how they did so. My objective is well exemplified with the collection of Vietnam War stories of the Class of 1963 put together and edited by Bob Leggett '63 dated February, 2017.
Attachment Two is the cover page along with the Dave Brostrom '63 Dedication, Introduction and Table of Contents pages of that 52 page collection.

Bill Carr

From: Bill Carr [bill@getrain.com]
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 11:52 AM
To: 'Gary Thornton'
Subject: FW: Reunion Follow-up
Attachments: Countdown.docx; Victory at Sea.docx; Welcome Home.docx

OK Gary – Looking forward to talking with you further....Bill (563-529-3982)

From: Gary Thornton [mailto:thornton@vail.net]
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 11:24 AM
To: bill@getrain.com
Subject: Reunion Follow-up

Good Morning Bill,

At Providence Airport awaiting trip home. I was able to discuss and promote your project with quite a few of our '67 Vietnam veterans plus a couple from '68 who I met at all-class reception. I have no idea if any will come through. I may follow up with a one or two who had especially poignant leadership stories from that era. I will let you know if and when I hear anything.

Best regards,
Gary

Gary Thornton
thornton@vail.net
h: 970-926-6195
c: 970-331-3648

An Xuyen Province Trawler

An unidentified trawler, with non-secured plates bearing the ~~number 498~~ ^{WINONA} on her bow and with visible cargo on deck, was sighted at 1830 on 28 February approximately 150 miles east-southeast of Vung Tau. Air surveillance of the trawler was maintained as the ship proceeded on a southeasterly course at approximately 10 knots. At 2100 on the 29th, the trawler changed course to 310° and speed to 13 knots as the USCGC WINONA (WHEC 65) commenced covert, surveillance. At 0120 on 1 March, the trawler crossed into the 12-mile contiguous zone on a course of 340° at seven knots, At 0200 the trawler commenced a run for the beach, ignoring all challenges and warning fire. A firefight ensued and a large fireball erupted on the trawler after direct hits by 5"/38 and .50 caliber fire from WINONA. After the explosion, the trawler sank approximately seven miles off the beach, 43 miles northeast of Ca Mau Point. A small amount of debris in the area was recovered.

Bill Carr

From: Bill Carr [bill@getrain.com]
Sent: Saturday, October 21, 2017 8:50 AM
To: 'Gary Thornton'
Subject: RE: '67 Reunion

Gary - Would be glad to talk tomorrow between 11:00 and 3:00 as I will be otherwise unavailable. Then anytime in the afternoons throughout the following week will work as well.

Do enjoy your day...Bill

From: Gary Thornton [<mailto:thornton@vail.net>]
Sent: Friday, October 20, 2017 5:41 PM
To: Bill Carr
Subject: RE: '67 Reunion

Thanks Bill. Exactly what I was **looking for**. We have completed the medallion ceremony and are moving into the more social part of our weekend. I **will be testing** the waters with a few classmates on this project. May call you tomorrow to further refine my thinking and **approach**.

Gary

Gary Thornton
thornton@vail.net
h: 970-926-6195
c: 970-331-3648

From: Bill Carr
Sent: Friday, October 20, 2017 12:24 PM
To: 'Gary Thornton'
Subject: RE: '67 Reunion

Gary – Just am catching up on my e-mails from when I last reviewed them this morning – evidently just before receiving yours. Sorry I didn't catch this right off causing us to lose the last 5 hours.

I left a voice mail.

What I would be able to commit to at this moment is to include any essays from Vietnam veterans from your class or that before that were written within the following framework (the same framework as the 85 essays of our Gift of Leadership book published in 2010):

- The writer should imagine they are in a long car ride with a young person important to them....somewhere around a sophomore to senior in high school and a serious and upcoming young person.
- That young person (grandchild, niece or nephew, etc) asks in a moment of seriousness, "Uncle, what does it take to be a good leader?"
- Since that person is important to you, ask yourself what you would tell them if you had some time to think about it.
- Write out your response to that young person from your experience both in your military and civilian careers.

The writings need to be the thinking of each classmate who wants to participate. No page limit but we are not looking for polished papers or the use of references....just that classmates' original thinking.

I'd be happy to take a call from you to discuss further.

Have a great time at your 50th. I did two years ago....Bill Carr (563-529-3982 cell)

From: Gary Thornton [<mailto:thornton@vail.net>]
Sent: Friday, October 20, 2017 8:44 AM
To: bill@getrain.com
Subject: '67 Reunion

Good morning Bill,

Reunion now in full swing. I have determined that we have thirty-five Vietnam veterans in our class with thirty still living. Of that number, twenty-five are in attendance here this weekend. I enjoyed learning about your leadership principles projects but am a little unclear what you would like me to promote with my classmates. Blame it on Happy Hour just before we spoke. Would you like input similar to mine on Vietnam experiences with emphasis on leadership?

I will shortly resend my three recollection documents to you as requested.

Regards,
Gary

Bill Carr

From: Bill Carr [bill@getrain.com]
Sent: Wednesday, October 18, 2017 12:21 PM
To: 'Gary Thornton'
Subject: RE: Vietnam Essays

Gary – I would most appreciate a copy of those essays even though I already have the content.

We should take a few minutes to talk before your reunion this weekend. Would that be possible?

Could you call me at your convenience on my cell at 563-529-3982 ? Thanks.....Bill Carr

From: Gary Thornton [mailto:thornton@vail.net]
Sent: Tuesday, October 17, 2017 2:57 PM
To: bill@getrain.com
Subject: Vietnam Essays

Hello Bill,

Thanks for your generous acknowledgement of my essays in the Bulletin. I hope my input has stimulated additional responses in support of your objectives. I am headed to New London for our Class 50th this weekend. It will be interesting to see how many of my classmates have picked up on my support for your project. I have a hard copy of the essays with me, including my name under the titles. I'll provide e-mail copies to anyone interested. I will also encourage any classmate with similar first person narratives of their Vietnam experience to weigh in with you.

Best regards,
Gary

Gary Thornton
thornton@vail.net
h: 970-926-6195
c: 970-331-3648

In Service to Country and Humanity

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Gary's excellent account is an example of one of my objectives as Class Correspondent to encourage all in our class who served in Vietnam (*Attachment One*) to tell their story before it is lost forever. Our children and their children and their children should have the gift of knowing our families served their country – and how they did so. My objective is well exemplified with the collection of Vietnam War stories of the Class of 1963 put together and edited by Bob Leggett '63 dated February, 2017. *Attachment Two* is the cover page along with the Dave Brostrom '63 Dedication, Introduction and Table of Contents pages of that 52 page collection.

Bill Carr

From: Bill Carr [bill@getrain.com]
Sent: Monday, May 15, 2017 4:02 PM
To: 'thornton@vail.net'
Subject: RE: CGC Winona in Viet Nam

OK Gary - I'll try tomorrow at 8:00 am your time....Bill

From: thornton@vail.net [mailto:thornton@vail.net]
Sent: Monday, May 15, 2017 3:42 PM
To: Bill Carr
Subject: RE: CGC Winona in Viet Nam

I am on Mountain Time in Colorado. 8:00 AM my time would work best for me to be in full recall mode. I look forward to it.

Gary

Gary Thornton
thornton@vail.net
h: 970-926-6195
c: 970-331-3648

From: Bill Carr
Sent: Monday, May 15, 2017 2:18 PM
To: thornton@vail.net
Subject: RE: CGC Winona in Viet Nam

Gary - Looking forward to calling you. Are you an early bird? If yes, how early. My day can start as early as 5:30 am CST....Bill

From: thornton@vail.net [mailto:thornton@vail.net]
Sent: Monday, May 15, 2017 2:34 PM
To: Bill Carr
Cc: dwalton65@bellsouth.net
Subject: RE: CGC Winona in Viet Nam

Hello Bill,

I am available to talk anytime tomorrow and the rest of the week as well. I have been busy collecting my thoughts this morning after reviewing the research materials provided by Dick. The time lines provided are essentially correct but don't reflect the real time voice communications with the operational commander including specific gunfire authorizations. I was in the middle of that relaying information between our command team on the bridge and higher authority and can maybe shed some light although my memory on specifics after all these years is not perfect. The incident had a profound impact on the morale of the entire Winona crew and I can possibly share some thoughts on that as well.

Please try my cell number first when calling.

Gary

Gary Thornton Class of '67 here. I just became aware, via the April Bulletin, of your research into the historic naval engagements on March 1, 1968. I assume that includes the role of the Winona. I was an ensign aboard Winona assigned to the duties of CIC Officer. As such I was intimately involved in the Winona's operations from first detection of the enemy trawler to its explosive destruction by our firepower. I trust that you have found other first person witnesses in your research and I look forward to reading your report. If you would like additional information, or validation of existing research from my perspective, I would be happy to participate. Please feel free to contact me at any time, by E-mail or via my cel.

Best regards,

Gary

Gary Thornton
thornton@vail.net

h: 970-926-6195

c: 970-331-3648

Bill Carr

From: Bill Carr [bill@gettrain.com]
Sent: Monday, May 15, 2017 10:25 AM
To: 'dwalton65'; 'thornton@vail.net'
Subject: RE: CGC Winona in Viet Nam

Got it Dick.

Gary – sometime we should talk. What would be the soonest you could be available after today? I'd like to talk with you and get this story in the Bulletin for June. My deadline is this coming Sunday so the earlier we talk the better....thanks....Bill Carr (563-529-3982 cell)

From: dwalton65 [mailto:dwalton65@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Sunday, May 14, 2017 5:23 PM
To: thornton@vail.net
Cc: 'Bill Carr'
Subject: RE: CGC Winona in Viet Nam

Hi Gary,

Glad to hear from you. You are correct, my research did include the Winona trawler incident. Unfortunately, I did not find any person to get "first hand reports" from. My classmate, Gene Johnson, was on Winona, but he was the DCA and didn't see too much. The "first hand reports" that I got were through the Port Angeles, WA Evening News newspaper where they had interviewed a couple of folks after the ship returned (or just before).

I'm attaching my write-up, plus the deck log from Winona the night of the trawler. (Note: I had to go to the Port Angeles, WA Evening News newspaper to better read the article that I attached. <https://newspaperarchive.com/port-angeles-evening-news-oct-27-1968-p-12/?tag=uscg+winona+vietnam&rtserp=tags/uscg-winona?ndt=ex&pd=27&pm=10&py=1968&plo=vietnam/>) (Don't remember how I got the news clear enough to read; I do know that I did not pay to look.) If I missed anything, please let me know and we can get it in as a follow-up. My classmate, Bill Carr, is the class scribe who will be putting the paper in the June Bulletin, and he said that he would be doing last minute reviews in the next week.

Appreciate the shout out and any input you may have.

Thanks,

Dick

PS: I was also CO on the CAPE HENLOPEN in Port Angeles, WA Jan 67 to Nov 67. (Was in Port Townsend Oct – Dec 66)

Dick Walton
Cell: (843)830-0088

From: thornton@vail.net [mailto:thornton@vail.net]
Sent: Sunday, May 14, 2017 2:20 PM
To: dwalton65@bellsouth.net
Subject: CGC Winona in Viet Nam

Hello Dick,

In Service to Country and Humanity

Gene Johnson over casual conversation on the first night of the 17th Class of 1965 Golf Tournament mentioned he had served on board the USCGC **WINONA** when they single handedly challenged and sank a North Vietnamese munitions trawler. From news clippings and a newsletter sent to the families of the crew that Gene provided, the WINONA shadowed the 125 foot NVN trawler for six hours into the night before it finally turned for the beach on a course taking it directly toward a VC stronghold. Closing to 700 yards, the WINONA illuminated and challenged the trawler to stop after which a seven minute running gun battle ensued - engaging their .50 cal machine guns and 5" mount and taking hits themselves from return fire. The trawler was stopped when a 5" round found home at the base of the trawler deckhouse. The trawler exploded, rocked the WINONA and rained debris onto her decks.

This WINONA incident occurred on the same evening of February 29/March 1 of 1968 when POINT WELCOME (captained by **Gerry McGill**), POINT GREY (**Dick Walton**) and **Lloyd George** serving on the USCGC ANDROSOGGIN successfully stopped a second of four trawlers attempting to run the Market Time blockade with arms, ammunition and medical supplies. Dick has obtained copies of the ANDROSOGGIN and POINT GREY deck logs which you may find interesting to read (ATTACHMENT ONE).

A third trawler that night was stopped by a fleet of five Swift boats and three South Vietnamese Navy vessels - assisted by Navy aircraft. The fourth trawler turned to seaward after being tracked by the USCGC MINNETONKA and POINT ARDEN (**Bill Carr**). The explosion of the

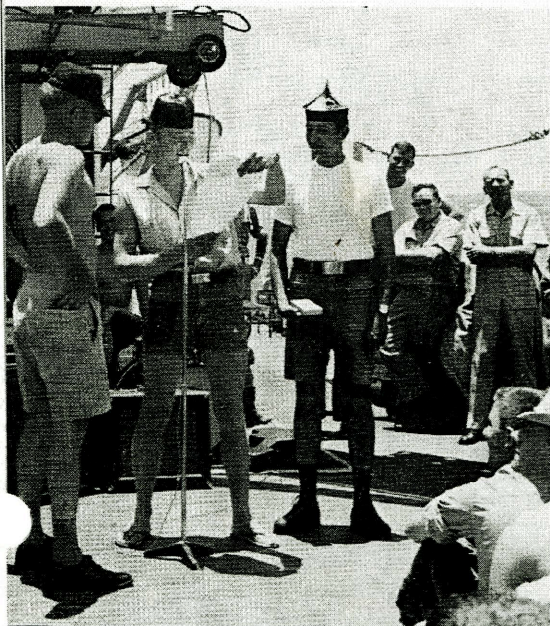
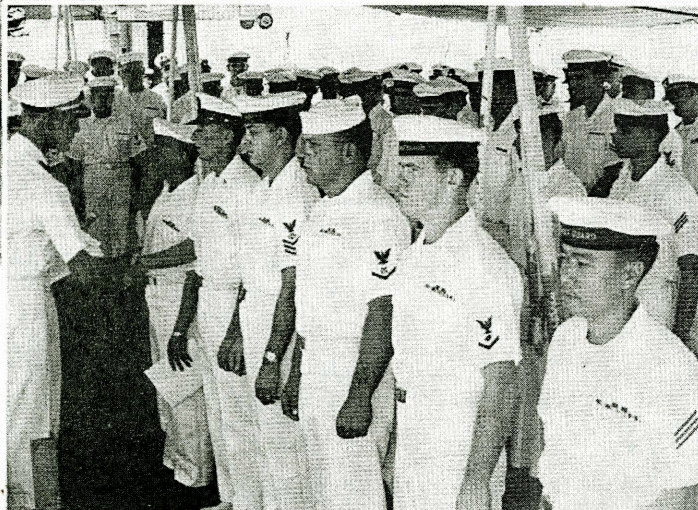
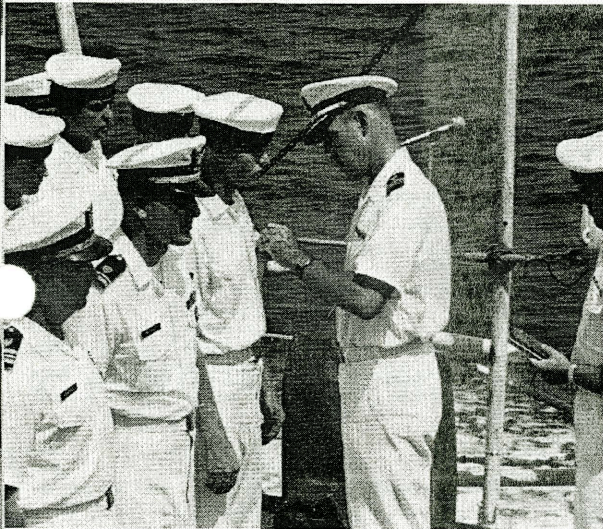
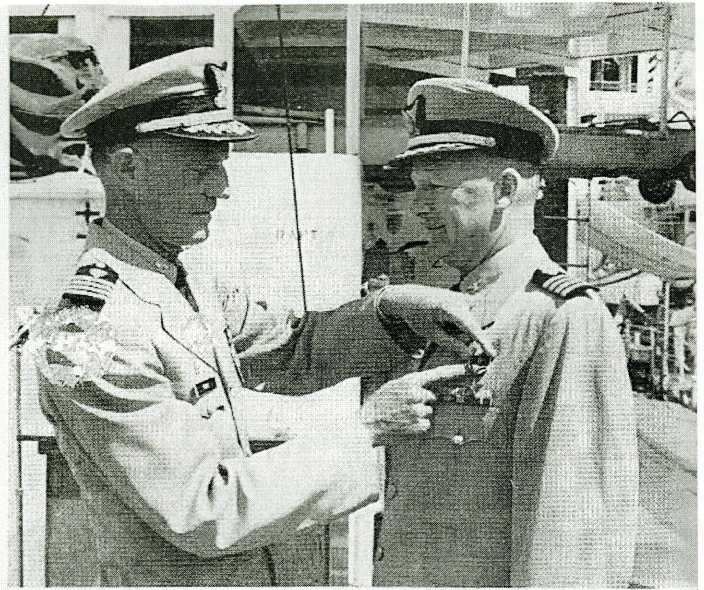
McGill/Walton trawler was observed visually by Bill just over the horizon to the north west of where POINT ARDEN was laying in wait with MINNETONKA.

Action off Bo De River

The trawler designated in U.S. Navy records as *An Xuyen Province Trawler* (map reference #1) was first sighted on 28 February approximately 150 miles east southeast of Vũng Tàu holding a southeasterly course.^[5] On the evening of the 29th she changed to a westerly course and USCGC *Winona* started a covert surveillance. The trawler crossed the 12 mile limit at 0120 1 March and began a run for the beach near the mouth of the Bo De River at 0200.^[11] A blocking force placed near the mouth of the river consisted of several Navy PCF's and the Coast Guard cutters *Point Hudson*, *Point Grace*, and *Point Marone*.^[6] *Winona* fired warning shots eight miles off the coast which were ignored so she opened up with her 5 inch/38 caliber gun after receiving return fire from the trawler.^{[7][8]} The trawler exploded in a huge fireball after taking several direct hits and sank approximately seven miles off the beach.^{[1][9]} *Winona* was struck by several pieces of debris from the explosion, however only minor injuries were sustained by the crew during the action.^[10]

On March 1, 1968 the WINONA became the first High Endurance Coast Guard Cutter to singly engage and destroy an enemy vessel since World War II.

Offshore from the CuBoDe River, a major waterway on the delta southwest of Saigon, a 125 foot NVN trawler was detected infiltrating arms and ammunition to Viet Cong forces ashore. We shadowed the trawler for six long hours into the night before it finally turned for the beach, our cue to intercept. Closing to 700 yards we illuminated and challenged them to stop when a running gun battle ensued. The effect in the night outfourthed the 4th of July. .50 cal. tracers, fiery red in the black, streaked both ways, punctuated by 5" gun flashes, white with the intensity of burning magnesium. The ricochets whined off into the distance, or metal piercing rounds thwacked through steel. For seven minutes we fought until a 5" round found home at the base of the trawlers deckhouse, and the night was day, and our ship rocked from the explosion that rained debris on our decks.



For meritorious achievement that night, Captain Lynch was awarded the Bronze Star. Lt. Commander Atkinson, conning officer, Lt. Bujarski, gunnery officer, and BM3 "Audie" Slawson, director operator were awarded Navy Accommodation Medals. All four were authorized a Combat "V".

Pictured above, five crewmen receive Good Conduct Medals.

In April, 1967, Winona received word that she was scheduled to serve a tour of duty with Coast Guard Squadron Three in Vietnamese waters in support of Operation Market Time. Prior to her departure, Winona's facilities were upgraded, including overhauling her deck hardware for better capability to refuel and resupply while underway, a new air conditioning system was installed, her sickbay was enlarged and she received armament for nighttime illumination of the sea. She departed Pearl Harbor for Vietnam on 16 January 1968 and she arrived in theatre on 25 January.

On 29 February 1968, Winona was directed to proceed on a trawler surveillance via message traffic. The story as told by the Winona's deck log is as follows: 29 February 1968, 0800-1200, 0927, Proceeding on trawler surveillance mission per CTG one one five PT four msg 290112Z Feb 68. 1600-2000, 1705, Commenced covert surveillance trawler 28F2, Hull #468. March 1, 1968, 0000-0400, Underway in the South China Sea in accordance with COMSEVENTHFLT QUARTERLY OPSKED and CTF 115 msg 'O' 290049Z Feb 68 maintaining surveillance on an unidentified suspicious trawler. 0105, Set General Quarters. 0151, Challenged the trawler three (03) times by the VNN JUNK CHALLENGE (single letter) Received no response. 0152, Issued the VNN CHALLENGE CODE (number & letter) U.S. Free World Military Craft to VNN Ships and received no response. Issued this challenge three (03) times. 0153, Illuminated the trawler and issued International Code "Kilo" with no response. 0200, Fired one (01) round 5 inch/38 across the trawler's bow. The trawler continued on course. 0202, Opened fire on the trawler with .50 caliber machine guns and 5inch/38 main battery. 0203, The trawler returned fire. 0207, The trawler exploded and sank in position 08°-42'-15" N 105°-21'-46" E. Ceased fire with 24 rounds 5inch/38 expended, bore clear, no casualties, and 400 rounds of .50 caliber ammo expended. 0214, Commenced illumination of area with 81MM mortar shells in search for survivors and debris. 0228, Secured illuminating with 81MM having expended five (05) rounds and no survivors located. 0230, Held Quarters with all hands present or accounted for. Examination revealed 2 penetrations in hull and 2 in superstructure by enemy fire. Carried out at sea routine. 0400-0800, Underway as before. 0355, CG 82323 (Point GRACE) (LTJG Bob Offut, Jr. '65 CO) came along side to starboard to pick up debris. SEPIA (CTG 115.3) came aboard. 0429, CG 82323 departed with SEPIA onboard. Carried out at sea watch routine.

The Point GRACE (82323) log book recorded the trawler incident and events leading up to it. 29 February 1968, 0800-1200, Moored as before. 1030 Unmoored standing down Song Dinh enroute Area 8C/D on emergency mission m/v/c/s. 1059 alongside Army Tug LT1957 vicinity DeLong Pier. 1100, standing off Army Tug LT 1957 awaiting CTG 115.3. 1130, CDR Robert F. Connally, 557-653, USN and 3 members RAN EOD team aboard. 1 March 1968, 0000-0400, Underway in the South China Sea position 38-37. In Market Time areas 8 C/D on Special Operations with Commander Connally (CTG 115.3) aboard. 0200, CGC Winona (WHEC 65) illuminated contact and challenged. 0203, Opened fire with one round from 5". 0204, contact returned fire. 0207, Observed large fireball and secondary explosion from contact. 0210, Contact disappeared from radar scope. 0400-0800, 0430 away from CGC Winona. Set course 050 enroute Base Cat Lo. 1600-1830, 1800, Moored stb side Rachgia pier complex, CTG 115.3 and RAN EOD Team departed. 1830, Moored starboard side USN Pier Cat Lo, RVN.

The Point MARONE (82331) (LTJG Bill Blanchard '65 CO) log book recorded the following concerning the trawler incident. 1 March 1968, 0000-0400, Underway in the South China Sea on Market-time patrol of Area 8C. Both main engines ahead slow on various courses at random patrol. Under OPCON of CTG 115.3. Position WQ4070. 0215 General Quarters: Battle Stations. Contact with unknown radar contact 3500 yards. Contact under fire and returning fire with friendly unit (CGC Winona). 0220 Enemy hit with 5inch/38 fire and exploded. 0240 maneuvering to receive debris or survivors. 0310, Secured from Battle Stations.

The Point HUDSON (82322) (LTJG Dick Chapman '65 CO) logbook recorded the following concerning the trawler incident. 1 March 1968, 0000-0400, Underway in the South China Sea off the coast of the Republic of South Vietnam, patrolling M/T area 8 C/D, darkened ship, under the OPCON of CTU 115.3.9. 0020 All hands

to General Quarters. 0220, secured from General Quarters. 0240, Commenced search for debris from trawler at position WQ 4000580. 0800-0900, 0830, Steering various courses and speeds picking up debris of trawler destroyed night of 29 February/1 March 68. 1015, Small boat away to pick up debris. (Last entry concerning picking up debris, continued on regular patrol.)

The Port Angeles Evening News had an article on the WINONA, October 27, 1968, as she was headed home that discussed the trawler incident.

This high endurance Coast Guard cutter is returning to her home in Port Angeles, after eight months in Vietnam where she distinguished herself by single-handedly sinking an armed enemy vessel.

The sinking of the large trawler-type supply ship was a part of the action the moonless night of Feb 29 – March 1, which has been termed the most significant naval victory of the Vietnam campaign.

WINONA was first alerted by her Operation Market Time superiors that the arms-laden vessel appeared to be planning to infiltrate along the east coast of the Ca Mau Peninsula, southwest of Saigon. The cutter steamed toward the area and relieved a Coastal Surveillance Force aircraft which had been tracking it.

“After double checking to make sure we had the right contact on our radar, we took a position several miles off the infiltrator’s port beam and held that distance as she neared the coast,” recalls LCDR James A. Atkinson of Elizabethtown, N. C., the cutter’s executive officer. “When she actually entered the Republic of Vietnam’s territorial waters we began closing in.”

By the time the enemy craft was about eight miles from the mouth of the Bo De River, its apparent destination, the cutter was only about 1,000 yards away, and dead astern.

“We first challenged her with flashing light, asking her to identify herself,” explains LT Ted G. Walters of Port Angeles, who is WINONA’s operations officer. “When she failed to respond, we ordered her to stop.”

The infiltrator continued on toward the beach. Acting on orders from the Coastal Surveillance Force headquarters, Cam Ranh Bay, the cutter fired one round from her 5-inch gun across the vessel’s bow, and then took it under fire with .50 caliber machine guns when it still ignored the challenges.

The enemy craft immediately returned the cutter’s fire with her own machine guns.

“The tracers from her machine guns looked like a bunch of fireflies as they passed over our bridge,” Atkinson says. “Occasionally one would hit something on the ship, making a big racket. Of course our machine guns were pretty noisy too.”

Boatswain’s Mate First Class Robert R. Schmidt of Vashon Island, who was gun captain of the cutter’s main battery that night, describes the next few minutes of action as “plenty exciting.”

“I could see the bullets from our forward machine gun walk right across the water and onto the trawler. When we got the order to take her under fire with our big gun I thought I could see some of the shells hitting about her, but it was pitch black out. Then we were without light in the gun mount for about six rounds, and that added to the excitement,” he says.

The trawler was finished after a fierce firefight which lasted only about five minutes. A 5-inch round made a direct hit amidships just above the water-line and the trawler erupted in a 200-foot-high ball of flame, showering WINONA, which was then about 500 yards away, with debris.

A few hours later, at dawn, there was hardly any wreckage floating on the water where the trawler had exploded. Navy units conducted some dragging operations within the next few days, but were unable to locate anything on the shallow South China Sea floor.

Although several crewmen had experienced close calls during the firefight and a few were showered with falling debris when the trawler exploded, there were no casualties in the cutter. The ship itself had been hit several times by machine gun bullets.

LTJG Gene Johnson '65 was DCA on WINONA the night of the trawler incident.



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Congratulations on your promotion to Capt. This
time of year finds Lynne and I very well and
happy to be together again after our long separation
due to Viet Nam. We both wish the very best
during the Christmas season and the coming
year.

Lynne & Gene

Christmas Greetings and best wishes
for the New Year

Gene & Lynne Johnson

Gene Johnson & Lynne