

BOB OFFUTT

USCGC POINT MAST (WPB-82316) – XO – Apr67 to Jul67

**USCGC POINT GRACE (WPB-82323) – Aug 67 to Apr 68 – Relieved by Sanders
Navy Unit Commendation – 1 Apr 68 to 31 Oct 68**

November 22, 2018 – Rog Rufe E-mail to Bob Offutt

BMCM Horsely sailed with me in PT GARNET on several patrols as relief BMC. I considered it a great compliment when he said the only skipper he would rather sail with was Bob Offutt.

November 21, 2018 – Bob Offutt E-mail to Rog Rufe

Often forgotten is the PT GRACE and its motley crew. Due to a scheduling SNAFU, I was sent to Vietnam early. Arriving when '64 was still in the CO's chair. Arriving in spring of '67, there were no available boats so I was the XO for Jerry Bacon for a few months on the PT MAST. When I finally got the PT GRACE, it did not take us long to find some action. In early September we came under fire near the Long Tan Secret Zone, sustained 2 direct hits and an unknown amount of machine gun fire. One hit was at the waterline. One of the photographs shows my ENC Olinger doing damage control of the waterline hit – all that Newport Damage Control stuff really worked. We also were hit at the base of the mast. The inside damage was much worse than the external damage. After repairs, we continued to aggressively monitor our patrol areas. I was relieved by Bud Sanders in the spring of 68 after surviving the TET Offensive.

May 20, 2016

A new, 154-foot Sentinel-class cutter was commissioned, bearing the name of Bob's MCPO – Donald Horsley.

Alumni Bulletin – December - January – 2016

First from our class into the Vietnam combat theatre was Bob Offutt as Commanding Officer of the PT GRACE. From Bob's Commanding Officer's Dairy submitted April 27, 1968, his first of several significant combat incidences was logged just six weeks after taking command:

“17 September 67 – While patrolling 1200 yards off Long Toan Secret Zone, sustained two recoilless hits, opened beach, returning fire, expend seven 81mm HE and 2000

50cal rds Stopped at 3500 yards offshore to control flooding. When the flooding was under control, preceded to Cat Lo for repairs. PT GAMMON closed the beach to provide covering fire and to coordinate sector artillery.”

Bob has donated to the Academy Museum Vietnam Display the American Flag he flew during the incident with 80 bullet holes. Bob included in his donation several photographs of the damage sustained by taking those two incoming 57mm recoilless rifle hits. As an additional and special note, included in Bob's crew was MCPO Donald Horsley after whom a new 154-foot Sentinel class cutter was named and commissioned on May 20th of this year.

November 27, 2016 – Bob Offutt Letter to Lloyd George

Hi Lloyd, this is the flag that always flew from the stern of the CGC PT GRACE. It made us distinctive, a fact not lost on the VC.

It was flying during the incident marked on the attached memo. It is a miracle that no one was hurt.

I trust you will find a good place for it.

Golden Journeys Booklet – 2015

Received orders in 67 with assignment to Squadron One, Vietnam, the first 65er to be sent over. With 75% of our time underway, we had a lot of sea time and even some significant combat damage.

May 23, 2011 – Bill Carr E-mail to Bob Offutt

Point well taken. It is remarkable what was expected performance in Vietnam when you contrast that with what most people, not of combat experience would accept in discussion. I must say my life was very significantly impacted as a result of my experiences in Vietnam – both in the positive and the negative.

I have had a nagging desire for a long time to write a book about why combat vets don't talk about it. While such a book would have significant value for the young officer, I'm pretty much convinced there is no support system that exists within which to be able to write and have one character survive a truthful book.

May 22, 2011 – Bob Offutt E-mail to Bill Carr

Being the CO of a SAR oriented WPB vs CO of a WPB in Vietnam are decidedly two different leadership experiences. Many of the details of the latter, while true leadership experiences, may be best left undocumented in the class project. Hopefully, today's cadets will never have to face another Vietnam.

Need to be careful how you scope the project.

A Gift of Leadership – 2010 (pp.199 and 200)

In Viet Nam, I served as executive officer for two months before getting my own boat, USCGC Point Grace. In the Vietnam environment, the biggest enemy was boredom. Reflecting on what didn't work on the Cape Porpoise, I knew that it was critical to build a strong team and I did. We fought hard, the crew partied hard, but everyone was part of the team and those who weren't soon had orders elsewhere.

Together, as a team, we survived pot smokers, E-8s trying to find them, cooks who urinated on the mess deck, a Vietnamese liaison officer who took a knife to the cook's throat and a devastating 57 mm recoilless rifle and machine gun attack.

I still have our American Flag with over 80 bullet holes. The boat attracted a senior master chief boatswain's mate who almost left when I was away on emergency leave. When I returned, he agreed to stay. In a sea of sameness, we established an identity for the CGC Point Grace. In short, I learned the real leadership lesson; how to build a team. I am still in touch with some of the crew.

This experience has stayed with me my entire life. Not only did I practice it at my subsequent duty stations, I used it in my next career.

Upon my return to Vietnam, I went to the Point Grace only to find MCPO Horsley packing to leave. When I asked why, he said that the relief CO was chicken shit and never approached the shore. We had discretion between 7 miles out and 1500 yards. I asked him to give me a chance. He said that he would "try one patrol." We got underway that night - usually only the watch section and I were sober.

At 6 am the next day we were approaching the Lon Toan Secret Zone, about 1550 yards off shore when we saw a pattern of bullets falling about 10 yards from the boat. Delighted, MCPO Horsley quickly returned fire from the forward 50 cal. And 81mm mortar over/under using a special sling he had had made personally for himself. He was a bit on the short side. He was very happy and stayed with the boat until I rotated back to the states.

P. S. When we were on patrol in the South China Sea, I received word that my daughter had encephalitis and was not expected to live. MCPO Horsley came to the bridge and peeled off \$400 saying, "Take it skipper; you will need it to get to the hospital." My daughter survived. This experience has stayed with me my entire life.

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

POINT GRACE – 7 Jul 67, 17 Sep 67, Jan 68 and 29 Feb68

September 17, 1967 – In Lon Toan SZ (Secret Zone) just six weeks after taking command, patrolling 1200 yards off beach, came under small arms and 57mm recoilless rifle fire. While returning fire, sustained two recoilless rifle hits and had to open from beach to control flooding. American Flag had 88 bullet holes. One of the two recoilless rifle rounds just missed the White Phosphorus mortar round locker. Expended seven 81mm HE and 2000 50cal . Stopped at 3500 yd offshore to control flooding. When the flooding was under control, proceeded to Cat Lo for repairs. No injuries withing the crew but damage to the deckhouse and crew berthing substantial. Flag and pictures of damage donated to the USCGA museum and library. PT GAMMON closed the beach to provide covering fire and coordinate sector artillery.

WIKIPEDIA (1)

..... was hit twice with recoilless rifle fire while on patrol near the Long Toan Secret Zone on 17 September 1967 with no injuries to the crew but damage to the deckhouse and crew berthing.

WIKIPEDIA (2)

On 1 March 1968 USCGC WINONA, encountered a trawler 8 miles (13 km) off the coast near the mouth of the Bo De River which ignored warnings to stop and be searched. After a warning shot was fired by WINONA and fire returned by the trawler, POINT GRACE assisted in the destruction of the trawler which exploded before sinking fifty yards off the river's mouth in 25-foot (7.6 m) of water.



One of the highlights was having BMCM Horsely as as chief of the boat. A cutter was recently named for him.

Hope this brings you up to date on the "forgotten WPB"

Bob Offutt

Thanks so much for your and Dick's outstanding work in putting this gathering together. The video was excellent and Walt and Bill did an admirable job expressing what many of us would have said. Particularly loved the Point Hudson closeup with the toughest crew but who could not fool NBC. Let me just say, 50 years later, I am so sorry I had to be the one who ruined your 15 minutes of fame.

Turning to more mundane matters, I did not see Dick Chapman on your list. I know he was there because I relieved him, and you know because of those cool stories you told about him.

I served in div 11 in An Thoi from 8 June 1968 to 17 Oct 1968 as CO on the Point Hudson and (after a 6 day trip up to Danang) 23 Oct to about 7 April 1968 on the Pt Hudson and, relieving Jim Morgan, served as CO from 8 April 1968 to 11 May 1968 on Pt Welcome. I served my entire time in Vietnam as a CO and did not serve on a staff. I did receive the Bronze Star for my service on the cutters, and the Navy Commendation medal for service in Div 12 for period 1 July 68 to 30 July 1969, so any one serving in Div 12 during that time would have as well. As I am sure all others received, I also received letters of appreciation from the CO's in An Thoi and Danang.

Andy

Sent from my iPhone



Figure 4: One 57 MM recoilless round hit amidships at the base of the mast

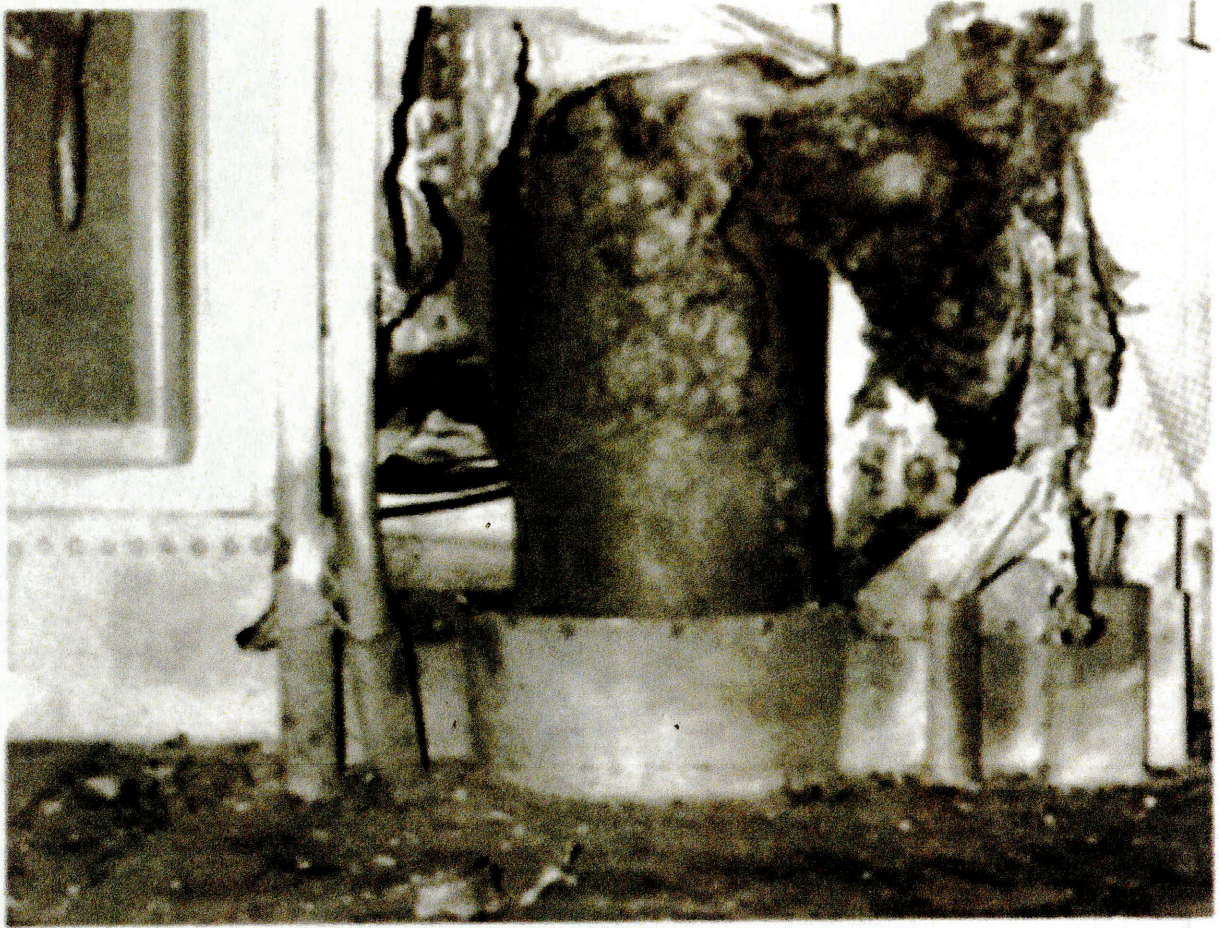


Figure 5: The inside damage was greater



Figure 7: More damage control

HEAVY ACTION

POINT GRACE was on patrol 17 September 1967 off Long Toan secret zone, an area of heavy VC activity. She was 1,000 yards from shore when she came under heavy fire from automation weapons and recoilless rifles from bunkers on the beach. She returned fire and opened to seaward.

The cutter was hit by two of the more than 25 rounds of 57mm recoilless rifles fired at her. One round blasted an 8-inch hole in the steel deck at the base of the mast and sent shrapnel ripping through the aluminum deckhouse. Another round hit the starboard side at frame 13, just above the waterline; it detonated in the crews' quarters, only six feet from where an earlier round hit.

The action brought the total to six recoilless rifle hits suffered by Point Grace in nine months - without any personnel casualties.

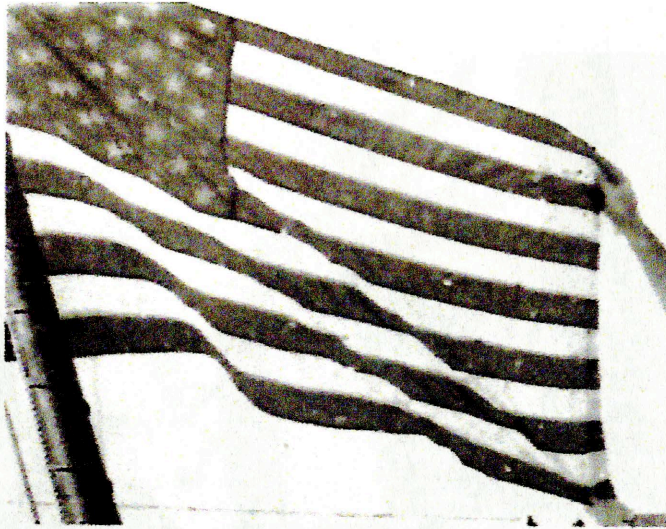


Figure 2: On September 17th, 1967 We took fire from shore (Long Toan Secret Zone). This was both small arms and 57MM recoilless rifle. The American flag experienced over 80 hits. Here is the flag. (The Pt Grace also experienced 2 57 MM Recoilless rifle hits)



02/23/201

CAPT. Robert (“Bob”) Offutt, Jr. (USCG Retired)

A Coast Guard Officer and veteran of the Viet Nam War

In 2010, Bob wrote the following essay which was included in *A Gift of Leadership*, an anthology of leadership experiences of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy Class of 1965.

The U. S. Coast Guard, a Leadership Laboratory of “The Finest Kind”

After graduation, I reported to my first ship, the USCGC Winona, which was in dry dock in Seattle. In my year on board we spent copious amounts of time under repair. We did, however, accomplish one November patrol, one Alaska Patrol and one refresher training (REFTRA).

We did so well at REFTRA we were certified for limited operation as long as other ships were not around. The commanding officer required a check ride from the district inspector before he was given his promotion from commander to captain, the executive officer had been charged with shoplifting at a local store, and the operations officer (my boss) got drunk and chased boatswain’s mates around the deck with a butcher knife. After I left, the operations officer was put in back for three days for drinking on board. The commanding officer had a directive - it didn’t matter what happened on board as long as every call or message that left the ship painted a positive picture. That was my first leadership laboratory.

With good fitness reports, I was given command of a 95 footer, the USCGC Cape Porpoise in Morro Bay, California. Morro Bay was somewhat isolated with my administrative command 100 miles north in Monterey and the operations center at the rescue coordination center in San Francisco. It was a lonely feeling, but I was intent on making it a success. Everything that left the unit was carefully phrased and screened. We were considered an excellent SAR unit.

Unfortunately, I was too busy managing upward to focus on the issues of morale and team building. Morro Bay was a rough town

of abalone divers, not the best family place. In addition, for the whole time I was there, except for two weeks, which was cut to one, we were officially on Bravo-2 standby; but the RCC expected us underway in 30 minutes. Not good for family life or recreation. The executive officer was a chief boatswain's mate who had just been restored to E-7 after being busted for theft of government property. He and his wife wanted to show the ensign and his wife that chiefs really ran 95 footers. Needless to say, morale deteriorated. Just as I was attempting to improve things, I got orders to Squadron One in Viet Nam.

In Viet Nam, I served as executive officer for two months before getting my own boat, USCGC Point Grace. In the Viet Nam environment, the biggest enemy was boredom. Reflecting on what didn't work on the Cape Porpoise, I knew that it was critical to build a strong team and I did. We fought hard, the crew partied hard, but everyone was part of the team and those who weren't soon had orders elsewhere.

Together, as a team, we survived pot smokers, E-8s trying to find them, cooks who urinated on the mess deck, a Vietnamese liaison officer who took a knife to the cook's throat and a devastating 57 mm recoilless rifle and machine gun attack. I still have our American Flag with over 80 bullet holes. The boat attracted a senior master chief boatswain's mate who almost left when I was away on emergency leave. When I returned, he agreed to stay. In a sea of sameness, we established an identity for the CGC Point Grace. In short, I learned the real leadership lesson; how to build a team. I am still in touch with some of the crew.

This experience has stayed with me my entire life. Not only did I practice it at my subsequent duty stations, I used it in my next career. After retiring from the Coast Guard in September of 1991, I went to work in the Sabre Division of American Airlines.

There I was given the opportunity to build an applied technology

R & D group, Sabre Labs. At that time Sabre was one of the world's largest automated transaction processing systems. It supported travel agents and airlines using over 700,000 terminals and devices worldwide. It was later spun off from American Airlines with a market capitalization that placed it in the Fortune 500.

Using my lessons learned I was able to build a world-class team, which became an industry leader. The charter was to demonstrate "the art of the possible." While I was there, we were granted more than a dozen U.S. and foreign patents. Many of the innovations you are seeing when you travel today were seeded by Sabre Labs. I still get together with many of the people once or twice a year, even though I retired four years ago.

As a postscript, I moved on to be the Chief Technology Architect at Sabre. My Sabre Labs successors had good management and technical skills but lacked experience in the leadership department. The good people moved away. Sabre Labs atrophied and has assumed a new identity and charter. Only two of the original team remains.

Yes, the Coast Guard was a great Leadership Laboratory "of the finest kind."

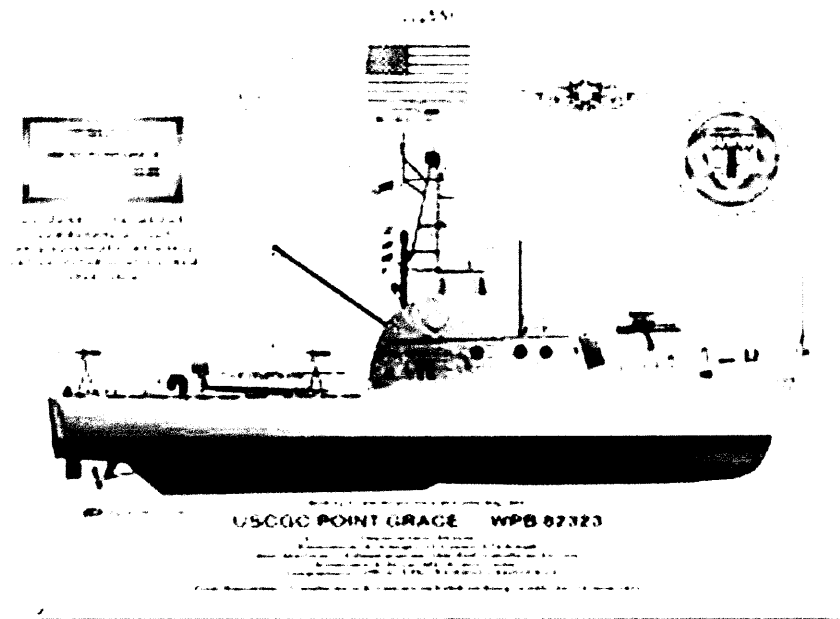
In 2016, Bob's Academy classmates asked him to reflect further on his experiences in Viet Nam.

To my surprise, I received orders to USCGC Cape Porpoise (WPB-95327) in Morro Bay, CA in spring of '66 followed in '67 with assignment to Squadron One, Vietnam, the first 65er to be sent over. With 75% of our time underway, we had a lot of sea time and even some significant combat damage.

As Commanding Officer of USCGC Point Grace (WPB 82323) in Viet Nam...

When we were on patrol in the South China Sea, I received word that my daughter had encephalitis and was not expected to live. MCPO Horsley came to the bridge and peeled off \$400 saying "take it skipper, you will need it to get to the hospital". (My daughter survived)

Upon my return to Vietnam, I went to the Point Grace [WPB 82323], only to find MCPO Horsley packing to leave. When I asked why, he said that the relief CO was chicken sh_t and never approached the shore (We had discretion between 7 miles out and 1500 yards). I asked him to give me a chance. He said that he would "try one patrol". We got underway that night (Usually only the watch section and I were sober). At 6 am the next day we were approaching the Lon Toan secret zone, about 1550 yards off shore when we saw a pattern of bullets falling about 10 yards from the boat. Delighted, MCPO Horsley quickly returned fire from the forward 50 cal. & 81mm mortar over/under using a special sling he had had made personally for himself (He was a bit on the short side.). He was very happy and stayed with the boat until I rotated back to the states.



On 20 May 2016, a new, 154-foot Sentinel-class cutter, was commissioned, bearing the name of Bob's MCPO, the USCG Donald Horsley. The ship's first C.O., LT Colleen Denny, Chief

Horsley, a 44-year veteran, reports “many folks have called him a ‘hell raiser’, and in his retirement speech he said he ‘I had more fun and raised more hell in 20 years in the Coast Guard than most people do in a lifetime’. Therefore, we decided to make the ships motto ‘Facere Inferna’ [‘Raise Hell’ in Latin!] A video of the launch may be viewed at:

A photo collage follows.





Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

Class of 1965 Scrapbook

1 message

Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>
To: Bob Offutt <boboffutttx@aol.com>
Bcc: Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

Wed, Aug 11, 2021 at 2:29 PM

Bob - I'm coming down the home stretch with this project and find I have tripped up myself a bit with your material.

First, I hope you received everything back in good order.

Second, and embarrassing to admit, i somehow made a good copy of your tour debrief and now find I have only page one of the four pages. Somehow, I lost them in the shuffle.

Would it be possible for you to e-mail those to me again?

Thirdly, there is an official data base that shows PT GRACE with four instances of being under hostile fire. as follows:

1. July 7, 1967 - Were you still XO on the PT MAST at this time or had you already assumed command of PT GRACE?
2. September 17, 1967 - This was the recoilless rifle incident. I've got good detail on this one.
3. January 1968 - Was this TET or another hostile fire incident?
4. February 29, 1968 - This was your assistance with WINONA stopping the trawler. I've got little detail on this one. Could you give me a paragraph of so describing your involvement?

Thanks for your involvement Bob. I greatly and humbly appreciate your help here....Bill

Offutt Jr 68

9 Jan 68

Dear CDR High,

I apologize for not writing sooner but we have had some very busy patrols lately. Perhaps it is now CAPT High. I haven't followed the Commandant's bulletin very well. In any case, Congratulations are in order.

We are on the last day of a 4 day patrol. One in port will be 2 days in Com Ranch Bay and another 4 day patrol before return to homeport in CATLO.

I very much appreciated your letter and will forward it to Gayle as soon as I finish this. Gayle and Tina are in Bremerton, Wash (1503 Westfield Apt 5). Gayle and I went to high school there and ~~at~~ her parents also live there. Tina is really growing now, being almost 3 1/2. I wish I could keep her from growing up while I am gone.

I have a little more than four months left over here and am beginning to get restless. Our biggest enemy is boredom. I am looking forward to 60 days of leave with my family and then I have been selected to go to the USARP-5 in Monterey, Calif to major in Communications Engineering.

With my academic record, I don't know how.

I arrived here in May and was assigned to Division 11 in the Gulf of Thailand where I served as XO for 2 months since there were no green CO billets (poor planning). Finally the message got through from DEU 13 to DEU 11 that they needed a CO so I changed to Division 13 and am now C.O of the POINT GRACE. In this division we patrol from CAMAU, the southern tip of Vietnam north to about 40 miles south of Lam Rank Bay.

Not all of the areas have WPB's in them however. The weather is

in the middle of its bad stages,
the Northeast monsoons, making it impossible
for the NAVY Swift boats (PCFs) to
remain on station. We have been involved
with several SAR operations saving
PCF's, one including taking it out of
15 FT Surf when it lost both engines
And it's anchor was dragging. Patrols
are normally 4 days out 3 days in
with about 16 hours out of the 3 days
in for transit. I was most fortunate
in that I took over an excellent boat
with a real good crew. We have
been in approximately 20 firing missions,
taking hits from recoilless 57mm rifles
ashore on one occasion (2 hits) (Something
I don't bother to tell my family).

Most patrols are marked with our
primary mission of preventing infiltration
of arms and supplies by sea. We
patrol back and forth inspecting and
boarding junkies as weather permits,
always with an eye out for shore

activity where we can get a Gun Fire Support mission. Our large Cutters are also getting a piece of the action with their 5" guns. The Duane just finished ~~the~~ last night shooting at VC caves and wells and the Campbell has just arrived in Viet Nam and is relieving her this morning.

I have been following the reports of the HH-3F in the 3rd District Cdr's bulletin and it looks like quite an asset to the Ground. Where do you expect your next duty station?

It is good to look back and see some of the things started at the Academy, (like the *Aviation* Gale Magazine) by the class of '65) are being continued and ~~improved~~ improved. I can't say that I ~~love~~ want to ever go back there.

I have been lucky in service life outside the Academy, and have kept my score pretty clean, being one of the 1st in the class to get a 95, the 1st to be

sent to Viet Nam and the lowest
academically to get Post Grad school.

It sure was good to see the members
of the class of 65 come ~~back~~ over here
in Sept. The members of '64 were
friendly but they had a different class
spirit which carried through to Viet
Nam.

In this division we have.

Bill Huntz - PT League

Bob Stock - PT Cypress

Dave Forrest - PT Partridge

Paul Blyney - PT Slovans

Bill Blanchard - PT Marone

Dick Chapman - PT Hudson

Bart Hennessy - PT Kennedy.

It looks like Bill Huntz will have
less time here than anybody. He expects
to go to PT school in June, having
arrived here only the last of September.

Please excuse my writing, it being
worse than usual because of a 4-5 ft
sea.

In other divisions, as far as I know,
~~There~~ Division 11 with CDR Vershe
has only 3 boats now, the others
being deployed because of the Northeast Monsoon.
all CO's are '64.

In Division 12, Dravy.

PT GAMMON, Horie Wenthoff.

PT Welcome, Gerry Mc Hill.

There are a few more but not going through
survival training with the ^{1st group of the} class, I lost
track of many.

Your list was remarkably up to date,
especially when compared with the Alumni
Bulletin.

If you and your family are ever
on the west coast, please don't
hesitate to look us up.

Thank you for the Christmas card
and the letter.

Sincerely,
Bob [Signature]

P.S. This unit in particular is engaged in several Psychological Warfare Operations "Winning the Hearts and the minds of the people."

The CG Reserve in San Luis Obispo has made it a project to send used clothes, particularly baby clothes, which we make special trips to distribute. If you are involved with a CG Reserve or Army, perhaps they would consider this a worthwhile project.

While we have all we can do with the parcels we receive from SGO, another VPS in some way would be glad to participate.