

## **GERRY MCGILL**

**USCGC POINT WELCOME (WPB-82329) – Sep67 to May68 – Relieved by Williams**

### **Golden Journeys Booklet - 2015**

Each boat did a one week a month patrol of the Florida Keys from Fowey Rocks Light, south of Miami to Dry Tortuga in the Florida Keys - tough duty but perfect training for Vietnam. In July, 1967, I was relieved of command of the CAPE FOX and began Vietnam training.

I arrived in Cat Lo/Vung Tau in September and was given command of the USCGC POINT WELCOME (WPB-82329). One patrol later we were transferred to Da Nang for the northern monsoon season. On 29 February 1968, POINT WELCOME participated in driving a North Vietnam trawler ashore and the trawler's subsequent self-destruction. This was the last vessel stopped in Operation Market Time. Dick Walton commanded the other 82 involved. Dick and I have been inducted into the Academy Wall of Gallantry as a result of that night.

### **February/March 2012 Alumni Bulletin**

...for heroic achievement in connection with combat operations while serving with U. S. Naval Forces, Vietnam and as Commanding Officer, USCGC POINT WELCOME during the Vietnam War. LTJG McGill and his team caused the suppression of return fire and interdiction of enemy attempts to offload cargo which consisted of at least 650 small arms and large quantities of heavy caliber automatic weapons.

### **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 WELCOME – 29 Feb 68 and 1 Mar 68**

## **RELATED ARTICLES ATTACHED**

**Tour Debrief – Historical Summary**

**S.E.R.E Training with the Marines**

**Welcome to Vietnam**

**Bad Shot Charlie**

**An Unexpected Christmas Present**

**A Practical Joke on the Captain**  
**A Coast Guard Christmas**  
**Run Skipper Run**  
**Fishing in Da Nang Harbor**  
**No More Swim Calls**  
**The Trawler Incident**  
**Remains of Enemy Trawler and Cargo Recovered**  
**Life Aboard the Cutters**  
**Double Duty**  
**Captain Dracula**  
**Paint the Cutters**  
**Seaworthiness**  
**Letter Home**  
**Too Done Eggs**  
**Going Home**

## **RECOGNITION OF COMBAT ACTION MILITARY SERVICE**

**Lieutenant Junior Grade (O-2) Gerald A. McGill**  
**WPB Gun Boat Commanding Officer – Coast Guard**

Combat Service October 17, 1967 through October 7, 1968  
12 months

**Command at Sea Insignia**  
**Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon**  
**Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V"**  
**Combat Infantryman Badge (CIB)**  
**Navy Meritorious Unit Commendation**  
**National Defense Service Medal**  
**Vietnam Service Medal with bronze stars (two)**  
**Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross Unit Citation with palm and frame**  
**Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal with device**

## **SUMMARY OF MILITARY SERVICE**

Total Service – June 1961 through May 1974  
13 years

- June 1961 through June 1965 – United States Coast Guard Academy – cadet.
- July through August 1965 - ?????
- September 1965 through August 1966 – First Lieutenant and Deck Watch Officer, USCGC Sebago Ocean Station Cutter, Pensacola, Florida.

coastguardcombatvets.com - Coming Soon! <https://www.coastguardcombatvets.com/> 1/1

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# quarterdeck

I was recently talking with a young lady whom I had never met. During our conversation the natural question came out, "What do you do?" she asked. Of course my first response was to tell her I was a cadet at the Coast Guard Academy to which she responded with a rather blank expression. Expecting this I proceeded with the normal dissertation of where the Academy is, the fact that it really is a college, etc, etc.

Once my companion finally understood what I was doing and what the Academy is, she then asked, "Do you like it?", meaning of course the Coast Guard, the Academy and all that relates to them. Having been subjected to just this question many times, I was well prepared to answer with what must have seemed to her an overly "gung-ho" answer of yes. Hearing this she

In this day and age the emphasis of youth is on individual freedom and the "do your own thing" approach to life. How do you convince an outsider that your "thing" is the Coast Guard without sounding like the slogans on Post Office billboards?

In talking to my ladyfriend I simply tried to bring to her mind the difference between the Coast Guard and the other branches of the service. I explained to her how the Coast Guard was always active in their main duties while the other armed forces spent most of their time practicing for a day we all hope will never come. I think she was surprised to hear how the Guard pays for itself and relieved to find that we actually save more people than not.

Of course ending on such a positive note would still tend to make her believe I was reading from a P.I.O. form letter and still had been brainwashed, so then I mentioned ocean stations. I think my comments on this



responded with a very concerned look and asked, "Are you brainwashed or something?" This one caught me off guard. This was a new question to me and I did not know exactly how to answer her. If I had jumped up on the table waving a flag and accused her of being a commie for even thinking such absurdities, my verbal reply of no would have little relevance. This called for tact.

The encounter got me to thinking. I decided that this question must be in the minds of many of our peers out in the civilian world. It is just that few are bold enough (or rude enough?) to ask it. I suspect the problem to be nonexistent when talking to members of the "older generation", to them our train of thought is only natural for any sensible young man. But how do you explain to the hippie draft dodger you happen to meet, that your decision to join a uniformed service is because of humanitarian reasons and that you want to do something to help the society and the environment, *and* that you are not brainwashed?

phase of the Coast Guard convinced her I knew it was not without faults. I also explained to her the difference between the Academy Coast Guard and the "Real Guard". I told her of the many benefits one can get from a career in the Coast Guard, but looking at them from an objective point of view realizing the drawbacks in such a career. If one only sees the good points of such a career and not the bad, he certainly can become brainwashed.

All in all I think the conversation was beneficial to both her and me. She learned that not all military career men are narrow minded and short sighted, but more significant, I was forced to formulate an approach to sensibly explain my decision to choose the Coast Guard. I think that I have convinced her that although my choice is not yet completely definite, it is the result of objective thinking and a true analysis of the pros and cons of not only the Coast Guard career itself, but all matters related.

Have a very Merry Christmas.

*Bob & Buck*

- September 1966 through August 1967 – Commanding Officer, USCGC Point Fox, West Palm Beach, Florida.
  - Article?????
  - Article?????
- October 22, 1967 – Commanding Officer, USCGC Point Welcome, DaNang, Republic of South Vietnam.
  - October 17<sup>th</sup> - One of first of Class of 1965 to arrive in Vietnam theatre
  - “Welcome to Vietnam” – 4/9/20 - Saigon arrival unexpected; Marine mail route ride to Cat Lo Navy Swift Boat complex in Vung Tau.
  - Assumed command with no orientation patrol.
- November 6, 1967 - Attempted salvage of I Corp Cua Viet river mouth Swift Boat capsize.
  - “Seaworthiness” - 10/9/19 annotation
  - “PCF Capsize” – 11/6/97 annotation
- December 5, 1967 – II Corps Qui Nhon Naval Base attack and near overrun.
  - “Run Skipper Run” - 8/29/19 annotation
  - Interview?
- Christmas 1967
  - “A Coast Guard Christmas” - 12/8/19 annotation
  - “An Unexpected Christmas Present” - 11/15/19 annotation
- January 7<sup>th</sup> – LCM-8 near sinking while moored across the river in Qui Nhon – Article?????
- January 23, 1968 – The Pueblo is seized by North Korea. Interview?
- January 30<sup>th</sup> – TET Offensive begins while moored in Qui Nhon.
  - No communications possible

- Unilateral decision to return to DaNang
- Article?????
- February 29 and March 1<sup>st</sup> – Trawler Night
  - “The Trawler Incident – 1 March 1968” – 4/5/20 – Gerry reviews in detail how his unit was selected and involved in one trawler interdiction of four in this single night in what has become known as the largest sea battle in the Vietnam War.
  - “Remains of Enemy Trawler and Cargo Recovered” - 9/22/19 - annotation
  - Androscoggin Reunion comments? Bill Steward, CO of Androscoggin was XO of Gerry’s first seagoing billet aboard the Sebago. Article?????
  - Dick Walton of Point Gray and two Swift Boats also involved.
- Seal Team, Special Forces and allied forces insertions and retrievals.
  - 4-man teams inserted and retrieved 48 hours later. Article?????
  - Thai team on last insertion lost 2 men.
- Other operational items of note
  - Thailand R&R – Article?????
  - “Too Done Eggs” – 8/16/19 – annotation
  - “Bad Shot Charlie” – 7/29/19 – annotation
  - “Captain Dracula” – 10/14/19 – annotation
  - “A Practical Joke on the Captain” – 6/23/20 – annotation
  - “Double Duty” – 1/16/20 – annotation
  - “Fishing in DaNang Harbor – 9/16/19 - annotation
- May 11, 1968 – “Letter Home” – 11/27/19 – annotation
- May 23, 1968 – Transferred to Squadron APL barge as PsyOps Officer Article?????
- September 1<sup>st</sup> through 15<sup>th</sup> – Executive Officer of Point Dume

- October 7<sup>th</sup> – Return Flight Home Clean Up and Change of Uniforms article
  - “Going Home” – 1/30/20 - annotation
  - Article
  
- November 1969 through December 1970 – Company Tactics Officer, Coast Guard Academy.
  - Long Cruise 1970?????
  - Hal Gammon – 3 star Navy admiral from Swift Boat to destroyer to cruiser CO?????
  
- June 1969 through May 1974 – Military Justice; new UCMJ?????
  
- Navy League Heroes Among Us Wall - Article?????
  
- November 2012 – Induction into Hall of Fame/Wall of Gallantry at United States Coast Guard Academy
  - Bronze Star Citation and Forwarding Letter - dated ?????
  - Article?????
  
- Other articles written by Gerry to capture his experiences in-country as well as to give some historical perspective follow:
  - “Attacked By Friendly Fire” - 10/7/19 – annotation
  - “Paint the Cutters” – 8/25/19 - annotation
  - “Life Aboard the Cutters” – 9/20/19 – annotation
  - “On Board a Market Time Cutter (1965 – 1966)” – 9/12/19 – annotation and credit
  - “How the Cutters Got to Vietnam – 9/23/19 – annotation and credit
  - “Operation Market Time” – 8/26/19 – annotation
  - “48<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Start of Operation Market Time” – 8/28/19 – annotation and credit

## Bill Carr

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**Subject:** FW: FW: Tom Pennington

**From:** [lgeorge00@gmail.com](mailto:lgeorge00@gmail.com) [mailto:[lgeorge00@gmail.com](mailto:lgeorge00@gmail.com)] **On Behalf Of** Lloyd George  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 30, 2015 11:16 AM  
**To:** William C. & Judy Carr  
**Subject:** RE: FW: Tom Pennington

Will do.

Sent fm my Verizon Droid. Please reply to [Lloyd.George@lfgcpa.com](mailto:Lloyd.George@lfgcpa.com). +1 (609) 799-5863.  
Thank you.

On Jun 30, 2015 11:23 AM, "Bill Carr" <[bill@getrain.com](mailto:bill@getrain.com)> wrote:

Thanks Lloyd.

Call me on the correspondent project when you are to a comfortable point...Bill

**From:** [lgeorge00@gmail.com](mailto:lgeorge00@gmail.com) [mailto:[lgeorge00@gmail.com](mailto:lgeorge00@gmail.com)] **On Behalf Of** Lloyd George  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 30, 2015 10:10 AM  
**To:** Bill Carr  
**Subject:** Re: FW: Tom Pennington

I believe he's now retired from his municipal job. The phone numbers you have equal mine, and I have both that email address and also [tompenn@visi.net](mailto:tompenn@visi.net), which has not bounced back yet.

Making progress on a 2nd successor. Need a couple more weeks.

Lloyd

On Tue, Jun 30, 2015 at 11:06 AM, Bill Carr <[bill@getrain.com](mailto:bill@getrain.com)> wrote:

I also just discovered I have an e-mail address of [thomaspenn@gmail.com](mailto:thomaspenn@gmail.com).

Do you know of his circumstances?....Bill

**From:** Bill Carr [mailto:[bill@getrain.com](mailto:bill@getrain.com)]  
**Sent:** Monday, June 29, 2015 5:38 PM  
**To:** 'Lloyd George'; 'Lloyd George'  
**Cc:** 'Lauren Larsen'; 'Judy Carr'  
**Subject:** Tom Pennington

Lloyd – Would you have any more current information for contacting Tom than the following:

757-898-4178 – home

757-291-3603 – cell

tompenn@visi.net

I've been trying to reach him on and off for a month now with no luck. Roger said Tom had volunteered to be in charge of the tailgate party this year but I think he was having trouble reaching Tom as well.

Thanks for any help you can be....Bill Carr (563-529-3982 cell)

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

LTJG Gerald A. McGILL 7604, USCG

October 1967 to October 1968

- 17 October 1967 Reported to Commander, Coast Guard Division 13 as PCO, USCGC PT. WELCOME.
- 22 October 1967 Assumed command of USCGC PT. WELCOME.
- 26 October 1967 PT. WELCOME transferred to Division 12. CHOPPED to CTF 115 enroute Division 12.
- 28 October 1967 Arrived Division 12, CHOPPED to CTU 115.1.6.
- 6 November 1967 Notified that a PCF had turned over in the mouth of the Cua Viet River. PT. WELCOME proceeded to assist and arrived on scene in approximately 20 minutes. By that time all persons aboard had been rescued by helos. The PCF was grounded on a shoal on the southern bank of the river, making salvage attempt by our unit impossible. Searched for debris and publications for one hour. One life raft, one chart, and several life jackets were recovered. Resumed normal patrol upon release by Coastal Division 12 Rep. Cua Viet.
- 29 - 30 November 1967 Ran security patrol for salvage party from beached LST CLARK COUNTY at the request of OSC aboard USS MARS (FS-1). No incidents.
- 12 December 1967 Ran anti-exfiltration patrol for Americal sweep in area 3C.
- 22 December 1967 Ran anti-exfiltration patrol for ARVN sweep in area 1C.
- 7 January 1968 Provided assistance to an LCM-8 which was taking on water and nearly sank at docks in Qin Nhon. The watch noticed that an LCM moored across the slip appeared to be settling in the water. Upon investigation the engine compartment was found to be full of water and two packing glands were sprung, allowing the flooding to continue. Immediately began dewatering using the submersible, salvage, and fire pumps to bring the flooding under control. CO, Base Qui Nhon credited our unit with preventing the sinking and possible loss of the LCM-8.
- 9 January 1968 Ran anti-exfiltration patrol for 1st AIRCAV sweep in area 3D.
- 9 January 1968 Fired 60 rounds of 81mm HE urgent NGFS at suspected VC infiltration route as directed by CTF 115.2.1.
- 21 January 1968 Conducted expanding square search for aircraft reported down area 1A1. Established comms with LCU 1615 who had originally reported downed aircraft, but 6 hours of search yielded no debris.

LTJG MCGILL HISTORICAL SUMMARY October 1967 to October 1968 continued

- 27 January 1968 Assisted USS VALLEY FORGE (LPH-8) in search for man overboard from her unit. Fired 15 rounds 81mm Illumination for search. Two hours of search yielded no results, so VALLEY FORGE discontinued search.
- 29 January 1968 PT.WELCOME and PT. ELLIS conducted roundup of all junks in area LF who had come off the beach during or shortly after Danang came under attack. All detainees taken to CTG 115.1; all junks returned to persons on beach.
- 29 January - 8 February 1968 Sortied each inport night for defense of Danang harbor and surrounding areas.
- 16 February 1968 Sortied from Qui Nhon due to possible attack on CG 22. Expended nine rounds 81mm Illumination for CG 22, no incidents.
- 21 February 1968 Fired H&I at VC staging area in area 3D. Expended 21 rounds 81mm HE and 500 rounds .50 caliber. Results unknown.
- 29 February - 1 March 1968 Underway to provide additional patrol for possible trawler infiltration. CTU 115.1.6 embarked. At 0100h8 a trawler designated 29F2 crossed the 15 mile boundry inbound. The trawler was first challenged, then illuminated by the USCC ANDROSCOGGIN. The trawler answered with heavy AW and RR fire. OSC aboard the ANDROSCOGGIN directed the 2 WPB's and 2 PCF's to open fire when the trawler was approximately 1/2 miles off the beach. The 2 WPB's alternately illuminated the trawler and fired 81mm HE and WP rounds, scoring several direct hits. The trawler was forced aground and heavy U. S. fire suppressed the trawler's return fire, killing at least 2 of its crew members and severly wounding another who was subsequently captured. Approximately 1 hour after beaching the trawler destroyed itself with a tremendous explosion, showering all units with shrapnel. Shortly after this, all units were returned to their normal patrol area except the PT. WELCOME which remained in the vicinity for the following two days retrieving floating debris and providing security for VNN Junk Force and U. S. Navy divers during recovery operations. Material was found scattered for 2000 yards in all directions from the blast. Remains of the following items were found: Approximately 600 K-44 carbines, one 12.7 heavy machine gun, eleven 7.62 light machine guns, 41 sub-machine guns, a 57mm recoilless rifle, plus multiple rounds of ammunition of all types, and medical and personal gear. The PT. WELCOME had the forward pilot house window completely shattered by the blast and had the port side window shattered from the inside out by a piece of shrapnel. There were no friendly casualties.

LTJG McGill HISTORICAL SUMMARY October 1967 to October 1968 continued

- 11 - 12 March 1968 Fired H&I area 1C for ARVN.
- 14 - 15 March 1968 Fired H&I for CG 14 area 1F.
- 5 April 1968 Fired H&I for ARVN unit area 2E.
- 28 April 1968 As CO, PT. ORIENT conducted a daytime PSYOPS broadcast from Cua Viet to Utah Beach, with PSYOPS team from USS IWO JIMA (LPH-2). Purpose of this mission was to test the team's portable P. A. system to evaluate equipment effectiveness and establish guidelines for PSYOPS program.
- 11 - 12 May 1968 Conducted PSYOPS sweeps for 4 hours each night from Cua Viet north to DMZ.
- 13 May 1968 Conducted PSYOPS sweep from Cua Viet south to Utah Beach and then back again.
- 13 May 1968 While conducting PSYOPS sweep, detected unlighted contact closing the beach in area 1A1. Upon closing to range of 1 mile the contact was identified as a large sail junk, not common to the area. After several warning shots the junk heaved to. The junk was boarded and searched. The junk was apparently Chinese in origin, with 3 persons on board, and was flying a white flag from the mast. It carried no suspicious cargo, however the 3 persons on board spoke only a Chinese dialect. The junk was turned over to the PT. LOMAS for towing to Danang. Initial interrogation of the 3 POB by a USMC linguist indicated that they were Chinese refugee fishermen from Pakhoi, China, who had become lost enroute to Taiwan. Further information was unavailable.
- 23 May 1968 Relieved as CO, USCGC PT. WELCOME. Assumed duties as Division 12 Readiness, PSYOPS, and Intelligence Officer.
- 4 July 1968 Attached to PT. GARNET for 2 day patrol to assist that unit with I Corps indoctrination and policies.
- 23 July 1968 As Acting CO, PT. WELCOME, conducted H&I for 1st Marine AMTRACK Battalion area 1A1.
- 25 - 27 July 1968 Conducted H&I on suspected VC staging locations, area 1A1.
- 1 - 15 September 1968 Served as XO, PT. DUME due to medivac of DUME's regular XO.
- 7 October 1968 Departed for CONUS.

GERALD A. MCGILL

These articles are all third party provided by Gerald A. McGill...

- A. Attacked by Friendly Fire and Point Welcome Incident – August 11, 1966 - Dave Brostrom
- B. Operation Market Time - (Third Party from Internet)
- C. How the Cutters Got to Vietnam – (Third Party from Internet)
- D. On Board a Market Time Cutter (1965 – 1966 - Third Party from Internet)
- E. Timeline of Vietnam Conflict – (Third Party from Internet)
- F. Japanese Occupation of Vietnam - Third Party from Internet)
- G. 48<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Start of Operation Market Time (Reblog)
- H. Walter Cronkite Address
- I. Life Aboard the Cutters - FILM



Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

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**Fwd: VN 3**

1 message

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**Maureen McGill** <maureen.mcgill67@gmail.com>  
To: Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

Thu, Oct 7, 2021 at 5:25 PM

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

From: <gmcgill@thejonesact.com>  
Date: Sat, Mar 19, 2016 at 5:03 PM  
Subject: VN 3  
To: Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>  
Cc: Maureen McGill <maureen.mcgill67@gmail.com>

The trawler was forced aground and heavy US fire suppressed the trawler's return fire, killing at least 2 of its crew members and severely wounding another who was subsequently captured. Approximately 1 hour after beaching the trawler destroyed itself with a tremendous explosion showering all units with shrapnel. The Point Welcome had the forward pilot house windows completely shattered by the blast and had the port side window shattered from the inside out by a piece of shrapnel. Thankfully there were no friendly casualties.

Shortly after this all units were returned to their normal patrol areas except the Pt. Welcome which remained in the vicinity for the following two days providing security for VNN Junk Force and US Navy divers during recovery operations. Material was found scattered for 2000 yards in all directions from the blast. Remains of the following items were found: approximately 600 K-44 carbines, one 12.7 heavy machine gun, eleven 7.62 light machine guns, 41 sub-machine guns, a 57mm recoilless rifle, plus multiple rounds of ammunition of all types, and medical and personal gear.

On February 29 and March 1, 1968 four trawlers attempted to infiltrate and re-supply VC and NVA units. Three were destroyed and another turned back. No other attempts by trawlers after this are known to have been made. So successful was the joint effort by the Coast Guard and Navy that Market time ended in 1970.

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**Maureen McGill** <maureen.mcgill67@gmail.com>  
To: Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

Thu, Oct 7, 2021 at 5:26 PM

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

From: <gmcgill@thejonesact.com>  
Date: Sun, Mar 20, 2016 at 4:23 PM  
Subject: VN article  
To: Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>  
Cc: Maureen McGill <maureen.mcgill67@gmail.com>

I have no problem with leaving out the last sentence. In the future my comment will be that we will never see another Market Time as the Navy is determined not to be caught with their pants down again. They are working hard to develop a littoral combat force to deal with shallow water operations. Also the PCF's were totally unsuited to offshore operations due to their instability caused by raising their center of gravity due to positioning a twin 50 caliber machine and 1000 rounds of ammunition above their wheelhouse. The prototype was designed as an offshore crew boat to supply oil production crews in the Gulf of Mexico and they functioned fine without the additional weight. The weather in our Gulf and the South China sea was greatly similar in the ability to go from flat calm to 6-8 foot seas in a 4 hour watch. Thanks for taking on this project. Gerry



Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

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## Fwd: VN part 2

1 message

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Maureen McGill <maureen.mcgill67@gmail.com>  
To: Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

Wed, Oct 6, 2021 at 4:36 PM

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

From: <gmcgill@thejonesact.com>  
Date: Sat, Mar 19, 2016 at 4:35 PM  
Subject: VN part 2  
To: Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>  
Cc: Maureen McGill <maureen.mcgill67@gmail.com>

My recollection of the orders we received from the USN Market time were: "Capture desired if possible but if not interdiction and destruction high priority." From earlier captured trawlers the US learned much about who was supplying the weapons, medical supplies and what else was in demand. However in this case there was a river mouth just south of the peninsula where the trawler seemed to be heading. To the south of the trawler's track was the Pt. Grey commanded by Dick Walton, '

65 and a USN Swift boat. To the north was the Pt. Welcome and another Swift boat. I felt that the best possibility of capturing the trawler was to disable the bridge area and the best way to do that was with the 81mm mortar on our bow. (format error that I don't know how to correct)

When the trawler was outside the 15 mile boundary it was shadowed by the high endurance cutter the USCGC ANDROSCOGGIN. The trawler was designated 29F2. At 010048 the trawler crossed the 15 mile boundary inbound. The ANDROSCOGGIN first challenged then illuminated the trawler. The trawler answered with heavy automatic weapon and RR fire. The OSC aboard the ANDROSCOGGIN directed the WPBs and PCFs to open fire when the trawler was approximately 4 miles off the beach. The Point Grey illuminated the trawler and the Point Welcome fired 81mm HE and WP rounds scoring several direct hits.



Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

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## Re: Viet Nam

1 message

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Maureen McGill <maureen.mcgill67@gmail.com>  
To: Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

Thu, Oct 7, 2021 at 5:28 PM

Sounds good. I just sent you couple more of these.

On Thu, Oct 7, 2021 at 9:11 AM Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com> wrote:

Maureen/Gerry - Got all five of your story e-mails. Will get back to you in the next week or so on several next steps I'd like to take to update the "Class of 1965 - Experiences in Vietnam" scrapbook that is now held in the Special Collections department of the Academy Library...Bill

On Wed, Oct 6, 2021 at 4:39 PM Maureen McGill <maureen.mcgill67@gmail.com> wrote:

Gerry just asked me to forward these stories to you. There is more but I didn't want to overload you. I will send a few more tomorrow.



Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

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**Fwd: [FWD: RE: Miscellaneous VN info]**

1 message

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**Maureen McGill** <maureen.mcgill67@gmail.com>  
To: Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

Wed, Oct 6, 2021 at 4:35 PM

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

From: <gmcgill@thejonesact.com>  
Date: Mon, Nov 30, 2015 at 10:54 AM  
Subject: [FWD: RE: Miscellaneous VN info]  
To: Maureen McGill <maureen.mcgill67@gmail.com>

please print

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

Subject: RE: Miscellaneous VN info  
From: "Bill Carr" <bill@getrain.com>  
Date: Sun, November 29, 2015 12:52 pm  
To: <gmcgill@thejonesact.com>  
Cc: "Bullwinkle65" <bullwinkle65@bellsouth.net>, <whtoakarabns@aol.com>, <thomaspenn@gmail.com>

Most helpful Gerry.

Regarding #5 and #6 below, what you are saying ties into one of the major objectives of mine regarding being Class Correspondent. All the Vietnam "extraordinary circumstances" stories (combat related or not) need to be well told before we lose them forever. I'm going to have a Vietnam Corner in every Newsletter and Bulletin, pulling in stories over time from all the 30+ Vietnam vets from our class – and possibly those Vietnam vets from the other Vietnam War classes. They will not be sterilized but will be first hand, honest and with a slant towards lessons learned that can be handed down to cadets and young officers. I'm envisioning pulling in content from other sources such as those of paragraphs #1, #2 and #3 below of your e-mail. The Coast Guard at War is also a good source. (By the way, I'm getting through the Golden Journeys booklet slowly and just read your work. Nice writing...).

I'll need stringers to get those stories collected and written and have taken a few steps already to get help from classmates.

How about we target your and Dick's stories (beyond the verbiage of the citations) in time for the April Newsletter. I would need to have all that done by the middle of February in draft form at least. I'm beginning to get into pretty good shape with the first February 2016 Newsletter.

When I talked to Dick just a couple days ago, he said he would have his story written by the middle of February. Can you get those four video/audio tapes to me as I see those as probably providing a good deal of the content for your story for that April article.

Regarding #4, I'll ask Lloyd and Walt to pick up on whether or not the museum has that Point Welcome patch.

I've copied Donna and Tom as I'm thinking we five could be a sort of plank group for this project – even if the work of the group is only ceremonial and/or a continuation of what Jim White did for us. We five have received a formal recognition. I was surprised by how much I needed that recognition and how emotional it was to get to the point of telling my story. I'm betting there are dozens of other Vietnam vets one of us knows personally who also need their day of recognition and thanks.

Have a nice Sunday remaining....Bill (563-529-3982 cell)

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**From:** gmcgill@thejonesact.com [mailto:gmcgill@thejonesact.com]

**Sent:** Sunday, November 29, 2015 12:54 PM

**To:** Bill Carr

**Subject:** Miscellaneous VN info

Bill,

1. If you will go online to U.S. Coast Guard in Vietnam you can find info on Paul Scotti's book Coast Guard Action in Vietnam. Also Wikipedia has a good write up.

2. At page 112 of his book Scotti has a picture of Wiley Coyote with a band aid on his butt. Ironically, he was actually shot there by the Air Force. His image was transferred from the outer bridge wing to the flag box when the Pt. Welcome was repaired and repainted.

3. In my Golden Journey there is a picture of Wiley and me.

4. We also had an embroidered Pt. Welcome patch. I gave one of mine to the CGA museum when Doug was Superintendent. I recently found another one if that one cannot be found.

5. I think it's important that ALL the 82's stories be preserved, particularly the ones dealing with the plaques on the Hall.

6. As you know this is the 50th anniversary of the start of Ronone and Market Time. I don't think it will ever happen again. The Navy got caught with their pants down but they are now heavily invested in building littoral combat ships with shallow drafts. They are being built in Mobile AL.

Got to go, Maureen wants to put me to work unloading boxes from our move from St. Pete back to full time in Pensacola. Gerry



Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

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## Fwd: VN story part 1

1 message

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Maureen McGill <maureen.mcgill67@gmail.com>

Wed, Oct 6, 2021 at 4:36 PM

To: Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

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

From: <gmcgill@thejonesact.com>

Date: Sat, Mar 19, 2016 at 4:06 PM

Subject: VN story part 1

To: Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

Cc: Maureen McGill <maureen.mcgill67@gmail.com>

17 October, 67 Flew into Saigon. Hitched a ride with a USMC mail run to Vung Tau, Cat Lo village area about 30 miles south of Saigon at the mouth of the Mekong River Delta and reported to Coast Guard Division 13.

22 October, 67 assumed command of the Pt. Welcome, WPB 82316. By coincidence relieved Ltjg. Harry Reid, 64 who I had relieved as CO of the Cape Fox in West Palm Beach, FL in July 66.

26 October 67 Pt Welcome transferred to Div. 12, Danang, RVN for the northern monsoon season. Arrived in Danang 28 October and moored at the Junk Force base at the foot of Monkey Mountain along with a couple of other 82's that were not on patrol.

November-February mostly routine patrols in areas from the DMZ in the North and in the south to just north of Qui Nhon. Daytimes were mostly spent boarding junks and nighttimes making sure no vessels closed to the beach from the sea.

29 February 68 at 1600 returned to Danang from southernmost patrol area approximately 100 south of Danang. Moored outboard of three other 82s and commenced taking on fuel, water and food supplies as usual when returning from patrol.

29 February 68 at approximately 1630 Cdr. Richard Bauman, CG Division 12 came aboard and asked me how soon I could get underway. This was not unusual to come in and go back out immediately. I told him we would be finished taking on all supplies in another 30 minutes. He told me that intelligence reports were of an attempted trawler infiltration in the same area that we had just come from and the Navy and Coast Guard wanted an additional 82' down there. He also said that "with my permission" he wanted to ride the Point Welcome down there. I had great respect for Cdr. Bauman and had no reservations to having him aboard. The only problem I had was that I had let two of my petty officers go to the PX and had no way to get them back. He asked if I was willing to take two of the same rate from one of the other boats and I said yes. We needed an ET and a Gunner's Mate and fortunately there was one of each on the other boats inport. At 1730 we were underway.

On the four hour run we ran through drills to integrate the two new crew members into our crew. It was my practice to have the gunner's mate man a 50 caliber machine gun on the fantail. With four machine guns back there I felt that if anything was going to jam it would be back there. Also I was very happy with my 81 mm mortar team forward. My gunner there was my BMC and as would later be shown he was very good.



Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

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## Fwd: USCGC Point Welcome Qui Nhon 1969

1 message

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Maureen McGill <maureen.mcgill67@gmail.com>

Wed, Oct 6, 2021 at 4:35 PM

To: Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

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

From: <gmcgill@thejonesact.com>

Date: Fri, Aug 21, 2015 at 11:07 AM

Subject: RE: USCGC Point Welcome Qui Nhon 1969

To: Dean Kratchmer <deankratchmer@hotmail.com>, mikebates@1330weby.com <mikebates@1330weby.com>

Cc: <viglie@aol.com>

This is the Swift boat base in Qui Nhon where we were moored on January 30, 1968 when the Tet Offensive started. The other side of the mountain was VC controlled and they came over the hill into the base. The Army had a couple of tanks across the harbor and even before Tet would fire random H & I over the base into our side of the mountain. It was a little unnerving to have them firing over our heads. We always worried about a "short round" but we were glad they were there that night. I was in the quonset hut that served as an OClub playing poker with the Swift officers. I recall that I was winning for a change but when the firing started we left everything on the cable spool table. I ran back to the Point Welcome where they had cast off the mooring lines and had both engines running. We got out of the harbor and turned north for Danang not knowing what else to do and unable to communicate with anyone. For some reason all the coms channels were busy. Turns out it was the right decision. Once back in Danang the inport 82's sortied each night for several nights dropping concussion grenades around the anchor chains of the supply ships anchored in the harbor. I don't recall if anyone got any sappers but we did get enough edible fish to have several fish dinners. Gerry

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

Subject: USCGC Point Welcome Qui Nhon 1969

From: Dean Kratchmer <deankratchmer@hotmail.com>

Date: Thu, August 20, 2015 10:48 am

To: "mikebates@1330weby.com" <mikebates@1330weby.com>

Cc: "gmcgill@thejonesact.com" <gmcgill@thejonesact.com>

I was really surprised to see her here after what I had heard about Aug 1966. I guess Gerry wasn't at all surprised. I don't know for sure what month this was taken, so Gerry, you may have still been in command when this was taken.



Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

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## Fwd: [FWD: RE: Vietnam Trawler Experience]

1 message

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Maureen McGill <maureen.mcgill67@gmail.com>

Wed, Oct 6, 2021 at 4:36 PM

To: Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

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

From: <gmcgill@thejonesact.com>  
Date: Tue, Jan 5, 2016 at 5:06 PM  
Subject: [FWD: RE: Vietnam Trawler Experience]  
To: Maureen McGill <maureen.mcgill67@gmail.com>

please print

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

Subject: RE: Vietnam Trawler Experience  
From: "Bill Carr" <bill@getrain.com>  
Date: Sun, December 27, 2015 9:43 pm  
To: "'Bullwinkle65'" <bullwinkle65@bellsouth.net>,  
<gmcgill@thejonesact.com>, <viglie@aol.com>, <thomasrpenn@gmail.com>

Dick – Did a quick read through and you are right on target. Thank you for the fast lap; I wasn't expecting this until mid-February and am delighted to have it now to work up. I'll have to pay attention to company business most of this week but will be able to get my head into it the end of this week and the weekend. I'll have something back to you or call you for sure the week of January 4<sup>th</sup>.

Nice work Dick. This is going to set the example for a lot of the guys who had Nam tours. I appreciate the timeliness – a lot.....Bill

**From:** Bullwinkle65 [mailto:bullwinkle65@bellsouth.net]  
**Sent:** Sunday, December 27, 2015 2:23 PM  
**To:** 'Bill Carr'; gmcgill@thejonesact.com; viglie@aol.com; thomasrpenn@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Vietnam Trawler Experience

Bill, Gerry, Walter, Tom,

Hope that everyone had a Merry Christmas and will have a Happy and Prosperous 2016!

Asking for your help in writing up my Vietnamese Trawler incident that I told Bill earlier this year that I would write. I asked for and Bill gave me some writing points for the paper:

- Imagine some young person you particularly care about in the 16 to 20 year age range - someone just starting to get serious about their future.
- And imagine that person asking if you would mind talking to them about your experiences in Vietnam. The reason they are asking is because they have an assignment to interview a relative who was in the military about how that service impacted the rest of their life. They want to know what happened with the

trawler incident, and not just a gloss over story but the detail of what happened – what went right and what went wrong.

- Keep it simple and write from personal experience using concrete rather than abstract examples of that experience.
- Take your time re-thinking that trawler scenario and let your thoughts percolate for a while before you write.
- Keep it short and compelling to read. If you or Jerry (if he agrees) are submitting something you have already written, please freshen the work by putting it into the context of this specific trawler incident. For example, what can you add to the story in “Coast Guard at War” that would get beneath the skin of what happened on the surface – what did you feel like, what could have been done better, etc..
- Stay positive. Don't vent or “put others on report”

As I understand, Bill wants to work with the CG museum and wants to publish in the “65 notes” what is written.

Attached is my draft. Request that you review it and comment using comments and track changes in Word. (Gerry – remember that I'm looking at it from the PT Grey perspective.) I put in a section called BACKGROUND that contain thoughts that I remember most vividly. I'm not sure that this section falls under what Bill's guidance is. (Bill – don't hesitate with the editorial pen). Please let me know if you think that it adds to the story or not.

Thanks ahead of time for your help!

Dick

AKA Bullwinkle

## **S.E.R.E. – TRAINING WITH THE MARINES**

**Gerald A. McGill**

**October 1, 2020**

The crew and officers who had been assigned to the 82-foot Point-class cutters did some of our pre-deployment training for Vietnam with the Marine Corps. Generally, us Coasties got along well with the Marines. The standing joke was that we had a common enemy—the U.S. Navy. The training program, which was known as survival, evasion, resistance, escape (S.E.R.E.) took place at Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, California. The camp encompasses more than 125,000 acres which contain Pacific beaches, bluffs, canyons, and mountains. It is located approximately 38 miles south of San Diego, California.

On the first day of training, we mustered at 08:00 Monday morning at Camp Pendleton and were taken by bus to the firing range. There were approximately 50 men but only about 10 were Coast Guard. The rest were Marines, mostly 18 or 19-year-old kids just out of boot camp. Although at age 24 I was just a LT (jg) (O2), I was the senior Coast Guard Officer present. The remaining men were enlisted petty officers of various specialties ranging from Enginemen to Electronic Technicians even some Cooks. All persons who would be on the Coast Guard 82's in Vietnam got this training.

When we got to the range we got an orientation briefing from one of the Marine instructors. He told us we would learn to throw hand grenades. He explained these were not the real grenades we would have in the field as the powerful explosive had been removed and a greatly reduced charge had been substituted. The grenades had to be thrown over a 5' wall. To make things more interesting several 55-gallon drums had been scattered down range as targets at which to throw. There was also the rifle range where one could fire different types of rifles, M-1s, M14s, M16s and various handguns mostly .45 caliber pistols.

At 15:30 one of the Marine instructors blew a whistle and yelled, "Form up". He said that he would be wearing a 30-pound backpack and that we should try to keep up with him. The march went on for an hour, uphill and down. By the end we were all dripping wet from sweat. On the bus trip back to our quarters, one of the more senior Coast Guard petty officers approached me to ask if we could get out of the afternoon marches. He claimed that his reasoning was that the longest march for us in Vietnam would be 82 feet, the length of our patrol boats. That argument made sense to me.

The next day, I approached the Marine who had led Monday's march. I made the "82-foot" argument to him. I told him that I understood that it was necessary to have rugged conditioning and training for the Marines but not necessary for us. He told me that he would discuss it with his Captain (O-3) but he doubted the Captain would agree. He said the Captain would want to know what the Coast Guardsmen thought they would be doing while everyone

else was marching.

I don't know where the inspiration came from but I replied, "Remedial weapons training." I said, "Assign one of your Marine Instructors to each Coast Guard trainee for a solid one on one hour of individual training to improve our weapons capability."

To my surprise, the Captain apparently agreed that this was a good idea and we were relieved from the daily marches. My men were happy and, in truth, I sincerely believe this greatly improved our training.

# WELCOME TO VIETNAM

(October 19, 1967)

Gerald A. McGill

April 9, 2020

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I arrived in Saigon, RVN via Pan Am Airlines commercial flight from Hawaii - it was 0900H.

Even at mid-morning, it was sweltering hot and I was in full uniform. No one met me at the airport or even seemed to expect my arrival.

My orders were to report to the USCG base in Cat Lo, which was about 30 miles south. I took a military taxi from the airport to the Visiting Officers Quarters (VOQ) in downtown Saigon. At the front desk, I asked for the telephone number for the USCG base in Cat Lo. After some searching, I was told that they didn't have the number. Frankly, it didn't seem like they even knew there was a Coast Guard base in Cat Lo.

The man behind the desk told me that the Marines would be making a mail run that morning. He suggested I try to find them and ask to ride along. I went outside and searched around until I found the USMC armored truck. I introduced myself to the marine in charge and asked if I could hitch a ride. He took me to the back of the truck, where there were at least eight different weapons lying on the flatbed. He asked if I could fire any of them. I told him that in fact I could fire all of them but if given my choice, I'd choose the Thompson machine gun.

On the way down, I shared the back of the truck with six marines. I asked them if they made the mail run every day. "Every day except Sunday" one of them replied.

I asked whether they were afraid of an ambush, especially considering the predictability of the route. One of the marines said to me, "We are always on time. If Charlie wants us, he'll know when to come."

By 1400H, I had arrived at the Coast Guard base and I reported to the Commander, U.S. Coast Guard Division 13 as Prospective Commanding Officer (PCO) USCGC Point Welcome, an 82-foot Point-class cutter. I was informed that the Pt. Welcome was not in port at that time but would be arriving shortly.

I waited. I later learned that waiting for something to happen was to be a big part of life in Vietnam.

About two hours later, the Point Welcome came in from patrol. I was surprised to see that the outgoing CO was Harry Reid, who had been one year ahead of me at the Coast Guard Academy. I knew him because he was the same man I had relieved a year ago as the Captain of the Cape Fox in West Palm Beach Florida. I guess I shouldn't have been too surprised; it was common

knowledge that if you requested the assignment to command a 95-foot Cape-class cutter, that was a precursor to a tour in Vietnam.

The Point Welcome was due to be in port for several days, but Harry got her underway again the next morning for an "introductory sortie." For all the stateside training we received in the US, this was the first time I had ever been on an 82.

That night, several CO's and XO's invited me to what was generously called an "Officers Club." The roof was thatched, with half walls and a couple of ceiling fans, which I was very grateful for. I was raised in the American south and had lived all over the world as an "Air Force Brat" but the humidity in Vietnam felt unlike anything I had ever experienced. Little did I know this was far from as bad as it could get.

As the Guest of Honor at the club that night I was "allowed" to buy the beer. At some point in the evening, I was given my official SQUADRON ONE belt and buckle, which I have held onto to this day.

On Sunday 22 October, I assumed command of the Point Welcome. On 26 October, the Point Welcome was transferred to Coast Guard Division 12. We left early that morning, heading about 500 nautical miles north for Danang Harbor, RVN. I had been in Vietnam for one week.

## **BAD SHOT CHARLIE**

**Gerald A. McGill**

**July 29, 2019**

I flew into Saigon RVN on an American charter flight early in the morning of 17 October 1967. I caught a ride with the U.S. Marines who were making their daily mail run to Cat Lo and Vung Tau about 30 miles south of Saigon at the mouth of the Mekong River. I reported to the Commander, Coast Guard Division 13 as Prospective Commander Officer of the USCGC Point Welcome, an 82-foot steel hull Point-class cutter. On 22 October, 1967, I assumed command of the Pt Welcome. I was 24 years old.

On 26 October, 1967, Point Welcome was transferred to Division 12, Da Nang RVN about 400 miles to the north. On 28 October, 1967 I arrived in Da Nang. It was a large harbor that reminded me of Pensacola Bay, in my hometown of Pensacola, Florida. The main difference between the two is that the mountains that formed Da Nang harbor came right down to the edge of the water. We could actually be right up to the water's edge and have 100' or more of water under us.

Our orders were to moor at the South Vietnamese Navy Junk Force Base. There were 2 or 3 other 82's that moored side by side to save dock space and we moored to the outboard 82. Most of the other CO's of 82's were from CGA classes 1963 and 1964. I was one of the first of the class of 1965 to arrive.

The Junk Force Base was at the foot of Monkey Mountain - so called because of the monkeys that lived there. Monkey Mountain was at the extreme southeast edge of Da Nang Harbor. At the Base was housing for the Vietnamese Navy Officers, enlisted men and their families. There was even an Officer's Club and an Enlisted Club.

A sniper lived on Monkey Mountain. No one ever knew whether he or she was Viet Cong or North Vietnam Army. However, on occasions, apparently random, shots would be fired into the ARVN housing area sending the base into General Quarters and forcing the 82's to get underway out into the harbor. Our 82's were underway about 75-80% of the time but the Point Welcome was present at least twice when this happened.

Amazingly, the shots would hit in the middle of an empty street or the walls of the buildings but to my knowledge no person was ever hit. Hence the saying, "Bad Shot Charlie' lived on Monkey Mountain."

Upon reflection, many years later, I think "Bad Shot Charlie" was probably an excellent shot. If he had ever hit anyone in the village, I believe the ARVN Marines would have gone up the mountain and hunted him down. Even worse, the VC or NVA might have replaced him with someone who could and would shoot people.

## **AN UNEXPECTED CHRISTMAS PRESENT – December 1967**

**Gerald A. McGill**

**November 15, 2019**

In mid-December, the Point Welcome assisted a U.S. Navy Destroyer in a search for equipment they believed to have lost overboard.

Unfortunately, the search was unsuccessful and was eventually called off. The Destroyer's Commanding Officer thanked us for our efforts and asked whether we had the ability to prepare meals while underway.

I assured him we had a complete galley with a stove, oven, and a freezer. This was a unique feature of the Cutters and distinguished us from the Navy swift boats where the crew had to eat MREs during their 2 to 3 day patrols.

The Destroyer's CO then asked if we would like "a few" extra frozen turkeys that they had on board as thanks for assisting them. I said we would be happy to take them.

We pulled the Welcome alongside and they lowered a pallet by crane to us. When we unwrapped the pallet we were astonished to see that they had given us at least 40 birds!

These turkeys didn't look like any turkey we'd ever seen before. To save space for shipment, the center bone had been removed, making the two legs and the breast the same size in a neat square package. I had my cook get on the radio to get preparation instructions from the Destroyer's cook.

As it turned out, the turkeys could be cooked intact without worrying about the white meat getting cooked before the legs were done. Each turkey took about 2 hours to prepare to perfection and we could cook four at a time. For the next two patrols, we cooked turkeys around the clock and shared them with the Swift boats in our patrol area.

We even traded turkeys for fish with the local fishermen. What a wonderful and unexpected Christmas present from the U.S. Navy!

## A PRACTICAL JOKE ON THE CAPTAIN

Gerald A. McGill

June 23, 2020

On December 12, 1967, the Point Welcome was assigned to assist the Americal Division of the U.S. Army in an anti-exfiltration patrol along the coast of Area 3C, south of Da Nang Harbor. Throughout central Vietnam, inland rivers that flowed to the sea made the area ripe for NVA and VC ground troop transport.

To disrupt the movement of enemy fighters, U.S. Army soldiers and Marines on the ground would attempt to flush NVA/VC out of the jungles and force them towards the shore. Together with Navy Swift Boats, the Point Welcome's objective was to create a naval blockade to prevent evacuation of NVA/VC personnel trapped on the beaches.

This was a bit of a reverse operation for us, as our usual objective was to prevent suspicious incoming vessels from infiltrating the coast, not shut down enemy escape attempts by sea. Since it was not uncommon for local people to collaborate with the NVA/VC to smuggle fighters and arms on fishing vessels (either by choice or by coercion), we were ordered to intercept every local boat that attempted to make a sea passage. Every boat we stopped was a potential ambush. Every person we spoke to was a potential enemy combatant.

We intercepted and boarded boats day and night. In addition, the Point Welcome was equipped with enormous loudspeakers that would blast messages in Vietnamese commanding the locals to "Get ALL junks out of this area immediately!" There was no mistaking our intent.

We would also broadcast recorded messages from PSYOPS at all hours. These messages were intended to discourage the VC/NVA from fighting and encourage them to surrender. The messages told the enemy that they could not win, and that the Americans and the RVN would treat them fairly if they turned themselves in. We would get as close as half a mile to the beaches and it always made us hold our breath – they could (and did) shoot at us from that distance!

We had already been out for ten days in Area C3 when we received orders to return to Da Nang harbor on 22 December 1967. We had no sooner arrived back at port than we were notified of another exfiltration event in Area 1C that we had been assigned to patrol.

While the crew refueled and resupplied the boat, I walked up to the Officer's Quarters and took a shower. When I changed back into my uniform, I noticed that my belt was a little tighter than usual. There was a scale in the dressing area, but I didn't bother to step on it because I was in a hurry to get back to the boat. Within a few hours, we proceeded to Area 1C.

I have mentioned before that on my first real evening in Vietnam I was given my official SQUADRON ONE belt and belt buckle. The belt itself was a "one size fits all" khaki colored web belt. When the belt was run through the buckle and tightened, the "bitter end" was cut off to keep the excess end from showing.

The first morning on our new patrol, I woke up and noticed that my belt was tighter again. There was no scale on the Welcome as it would have been impossible to get a good read with all of the pitching of the boat, so I wasn't able to weigh myself. I had been a soccer player at the Academy and at 5'8" weighted a pretty reasonable 160 lbs due to regular running and exercise. I remember thinking that maybe sea life was catching up with me and I would just have to lay off the desserts.

The next day, my belt was even tighter. I thought this was weird, but just decided to again skip dessert AND forgo the bread and potatoes served with dinner.

By the morning of day seven on patrol, I couldn't even fasten my belt. I skipped breakfast (again) and walked into the galley to get some coffee. I looked up at the bulletin board and noticed that tacked to the center was about an inch and a half long strip of khaki fabric, unmistakably taken from a standard-issue belt. A closer inspection revealed the strip was made up of smaller pieces of belt fabric, about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch each, that had been glued together. I put down my coffee and shook my head. They got me.

I never figured out which one of the crew members had spent the last three weeks sneaking into my quarters whenever I was sleeping and painstakingly cutting small slices off of my belt to make me think I was gaining weight. No one ever confessed or claimed to have any idea what I was talking about.

I couldn't even be angry with my crew. It was a good joke.

## **A COAST GUARD CHRISTMAS - 1967**

**Gerald J. McGill**

**January 8, 2020**

Christmas Day 1967 found us aboard the USCGC Point Welcome (WPB 82329) on patrol in the South China Sea about sixty miles south of Danang. This was usually a quiet area as there were no significant rivers in the coastline.

At approximately noon, everyone gathered together and I took a picture of the crew. We were proudly flying our best American flag, but just above it, at the top of the mast, was a 3-foot artificial Christmas tree. We had mounted the tree on top of our radar transmitter which was constantly rotating 360 degrees (full circle) so that our radar screen would show any vessels in the vicinity. Surprisingly, there were none that day, not even fishing vessels.

My electronics Technician (ET) had rigged the lights on the tree so that they would stay on unless we turned them off. We ran them from about one week before Christmas until New Year's Day, but only when we were underway.

At about 1300 we gathered on the mess deck for Christmas dinner. It wasn't a formal dress affair but we did have turkey, dressing, and all the trimmings. Our cook is on the left in his white T shirt. The other person on the right in the same attire is my Executive Officer, Lt (jg) Paul Froehler.

We gave Thanks and dug in. Christmas came even in the South China Sea.

## **RUN, SKIPPER, RUN! (TET – January 30, 1968)**

**Gerald A. McGill**

**August 29, 2019**

The Point Welcome had just completed a 5-day patrol in area 3B just off the coast near Qui Nhon. Rather than make the longer trip back to Danang, we moored at the U.S.N. Swift boat base located on the north shore of the harbor. It was January 30, 1968 at approximately 1600h. As usual we took on fuel and fresh water.

The harbor at Qui Nhon was a much smaller harbor than Danang. On the south side of the harbor was the city of Qui Nhon. On the north shore approximately one mile away was the U.S.N. Swift boat base.

Rumor had it that the city was an in-country R&R (Rest and Recreation) center for both Viet Cong and South Vietnamese Forces. The South Vietnamese Forces used it during the day and the VC used it at night. I don't know if that was true or not but neither I nor my crew visited the city.

The Swift boat base had an Officer's Club and an Enlisted men's Club - each complete with a cash bar, pool tables and tables and chairs, many of which were used for playing poker or other card games.

There was a mountain behind the base. The other side of the mountain was considered VC and NVA territory. The U.S. Army had a couple of tanks on the city side. On occasion, the tanks would fire Harassment and Interdiction (H&I) rounds over the Swift boat base into the mountain top on our side. We always worried about a "short round" when they were firing over our heads but we were glad they were there that night.

At about 1830H, after supper, I walked about 100 yards from the pier to the Quonset hut that served as the Officer's Club and also for the berthing area for Swift boat officers who were not on patrol.

I was in the Quonset hut playing poker with several Swift boat officers. We were in the back part of the Quonset hut about 150 feet from the front door. About 1930H we heard the sounds of small arms and automatic weapons fire. Then the tanks began firing. Suddenly the front door was kicked open and a person dressed in all black who appeared to be carrying a weapon burst in.

Thinking it was a bad joke, one of the Navy officers said words to the effect, "C'mon man, that's not funny." And it wasn't as the man fired two or three shots. The Swift boat officers ran for their weapons.

I did not have my side arm (a .45 caliber pistol) with me but even if I had, I still felt that I needed to get back to my boat. I recall that I was winning at poker for a change but when the firing started, we left everything on the cable spool we were using for a table.

Apparently, the VC came over the mountain into the base. I went out the back door of the Quonset hut and dropped to the beach. Fortunately, the beach was about six feet below the path I took to the Officer's Club, having been eroded by the waves.

I had played soccer and baseball at the Coast Guard Academy, but I was not noted for my speed. But I am certain this was the fastest 100 yard dash I ever ran.

As I got closer to the boat, I could hear some of my crew yelling "Run, Skipper, Run". Apparently, they could see me with the night vision glasses. When they pulled me aboard, I was proud of my crew. The vessel was blacked out, both engines were running, all mooring lines had been cast off and all the machine guns were manned. Someone said, "All hands are accounted for."

We turned the boat and headed out into the harbor. All lines of communication were so overloaded no one could communicate with anyone.

I made the decision to return to our previous Market Time area in 3B. We didn't know at the time that this was the start of the Tet Offensive throughout South Vietnam.

Once back in Da Nang, the in-port 82's sortied each night for several nights dropping concussion grenades around the anchor chains of the supply ships anchored in the harbor. I don't recall if anyone got any sappers but we did get enough edible fish to have several fish dinners.

## **FISHING IN DA NANG HARBOR (February 1968)**

**Gerald A. McGill**

**September 16, 2019**

As I wrote earlier in "Run, Skipper, Run!" the Point Welcome was moored at the Navy Swift Boat base in Qui Nhon, about 120 miles south of Danang when the Tet Offensive began on 30 January 1968.

After the events of that night, we quickly left port around 2030H. Once out of the harbor, we were unable to communicate with any other American units because all the communication frequencies were overloaded. I made the decision to return to Da Nang. At near maximum speed of 15 knots, the trip would take about 8 hours.

It was dawn when we got to Da Nang. We moored as usual alongside three or four other Coast Guard Cutters. As the crew began the standard procedure of taking on fuel and water, I disembarked and talked with a couple of the other Commanding Officers. I told them what had happened to us in Qui Nhon and they told me of similar reports from other outposts. No one knew much about what was going on as there was supposed to be a "cease fire" for the Tet Holiday.

Later that morning, the in-port CO's met with the Division 12 staff. They did not provide us with much additional information about what was happening in-country, but we did get an additional assignment. We were told that while we were in-port we would be providing extra security for the merchant cargo ships anchored in the harbor, in the event of further enemy attacks.

Da Nang Harbor was a large, deep water harbor and it was not unusual to have 20 to 30 large cargo ships anchored awaiting dock space to unload their cargo, which was usually highly flammable aviation fuel or high explosives such as bombs and large and small arms ammunition.

The biggest threat to these anchored vessels was an attack by a Viet Cong swimmer sapper armed with limpet mines or other explosive devices. VC swimmer sappers were highly trained and very skilled. From a swimmer sapper captured in Cam Ranh Bay, it was learned that the swimmer sappers underwent up to two full years of training. This training included swimming distances of 600 meters underwater and up to 50 kilometers on the surface. Sappers were also trained in hand-to-hand combat, demolition techniques, and infiltration and exfiltration techniques.

Because it was known that the VC conducted significant reconnaissance before a sapper mission, the Coast Guard believed that scare tactics would be the best deterrent. In this case,

that deterrent was dropping concussion grenades into the water around the cargo ships at irregular intervals.

The grenades contained the equivalent of one-half pound of TNT and they were useful within 70 feet of a swimmer. At 5 feet, the blast was lethal. Out to 30 feet the swimmer was stunned but could recover. Beyond 50 feet there was no physical harm, but the loudness of the explosion could frighten the sapper away.

Since most sapper attacks were expected to be at night, the in-port Cutters took turns doing random sorties dropping grenades around the anchored ships. So far as I know, none of the 82's ever hit a swimmer sapper, but there was a good by-product of our efforts.

At first light we broke out scoop nets with long handles and collected any floating fish. We usually collected enough fish to have a fish fry for all of the in-port WPBs and Division staff and any excess was given to the Vietnamese Junk Force Base.

Hence, "fishing" with dynamite in Da Nang Harbor. This would never have been legal in the United States.

## NO MORE SWIM CALLS

Gerald A. McGill

July 23, 2020

By late February of 1968 the combination of high humidity and daytime temperatures in the high 90's made life on board the 82s pretty uncomfortable.

We were on a routine patrol in area 1C about 45 miles south of the DMZ. It was a pretty boring area, not many boats transiting and very few fishing junks. My crew asked if we could do a swim call and I saw no reason not to, so I agreed.

We had seen an occasional shark but not so frequently that I felt they were a real threat. Still, just to be sure I threw a concussion grenade into the water and posted one of our riflemen on the bow with an M-14 as a shark guard.

I decided I would let two groups of four men in the water for swim call. About 10 minutes after the explosion, I let the first group go into the water. They had only been in the water a few minutes when what looked like a snake floated to the surface. We were able to recover it with a boat hook. It was dead.

My guess is that the concussion grenade had probably killed it. I had one of the crew get our Vietnamese liaison officer. I wanted to know if the snake was poisonous. The liaison officer looked at the snake, shook his head vigorously and said, "VERY bad". He took my left wrist in his left hand. With his right hand, he curled his four fingers together to resemble the snake's head. Then he cupped his right thumb to resemble the snake's lower jaw. He then pressed his fingers and thumb together in a simulated bite and said "Bite." in English. He then said, "Dead."

In as calm a voice as I could I immediately yelled to the swimmers to get out of the water and back on board. Once they were back on the boat, we showed them the sea snake lying on the deck and I told them that we had reason to believe the snake was poisonous. I had the cook put the snake in a bag and put the bag in the freezer.

When we got back to base in Danang, none of the Americans, not even the country boys, knew whether it was poisonous. When we took it down to the Vietnamese Junk Force Base, however, the fishermen verified our worst fears. This type of snake was well known to the fishermen and they confirmed it to be very venomous and dangerous.

No more swim calls

## A COAST GUARD CHRISTMAS - 1967

Gerald J. McGill

January 8, 2020

Christmas Day 1967 found us aboard the USCGC Point Welcome (WPB 82329) on patrol in the South China Sea about sixty miles south of Danang. This was usually a quiet area as there were no significant rivers in the coastline.

At approximately noon, everyone gathered together and I took a picture of the crew. We were proudly flying our best American flag, but just above it, at the top of the mast, was a 3-foot artificial Christmas tree. We had mounted the tree on top of our radar transmitter which was constantly rotating 360 degrees (full circle) so that our radar screen would show any vessels in the vicinity. Surprisingly, there were none that day, not even fishing vessels.

My electronics Technician (ET) had rigged the lights on the tree so that they would stay on unless we turned them off. We ran them from about one week before Christmas until New Year's Day, but only when we were underway.

At about 1300 we gathered on the mess deck for Christmas dinner. It wasn't a formal dress affair but we did have turkey, dressing, and all the trimmings. Our cook is on the left in his white T shirt. The other person on the right in the same attire is my Executive Officer, Lt (jg) Paul Froehler.

We gave Thanks and dug in. Christmas came even in the South China Sea.

## TRAWLER INTERDICTION INCIDENT – March 1, 1968

**Gerald A. McGill**

**April 5, 2020**

On 29 February 1968, the Point Welcome returned to Da Nang from a four-day patrol in Area 1 Golf, 70 miles southeast of Da Nang. Since we were headed home, we did not feel the need to conserve fuel so we were running at our best cruising speed of 15 knots. The trip took about four and a half hours. We arrived in Da Nang about 16:30.

We moored outside of three or four WPBs which were moored alongside a large U.S. Navy support ship. As usual, as soon as we were moored, we began taking on fuel, water, and food supplies.

About 15 minutes later, the Division 12 Commander, CDR (O-5) Richard Bauman crossed the inboard WPBs and came aboard the Welcome. This was a little unusual as normally our post patrol de-briefing took place in the conference room aboard the Navy ship.

CDR Bauman was not a Coast Guard Academy graduate. He graduated in 1943 (the year I was born) from what is now the Massachusetts Maritime Academy. He served in the Merchant Marine as Third Mate on the liberty ship Stephen C. Foster, which off loaded bombs on Omaha Beach at Normandy from shortly after D-Day in June 1944 until that September. He served as a Merchant Marine Officer for 14 years until he joined the Coast Guard in 1957.

When CDR Bauman came aboard the Point Welcome he asked me, "How soon can you get underway?"

I replied, "20 minutes sir, 30 minutes max."

"Good", he replied, "You'll be going back out."

I told him, "The only problem is, I let two of my petty officers go ashore to the Post Exchange."

He asked if I would take two comparable petty officers from the other in-port boats.

I had no problem with this as everyone in Squadron One had gone through the same training. I told CDR Bauman I needed an Electronics Technician and a Gunners Mate. Fortunately we were able to find one of each aboard the other WPBs.

Then Cdr. Bauman said something that surprised me, "Captain, with your permission I would like to ride on the Point Welcome with you." He continued, "This is your boat. You make the decisions and I will not interfere."

I had no problem with any of that and we soon departed. As we got underway, CDR Bauman told me, that the previous evening, a P-2 Neptune aircraft had detected what was believed to be a North Vietnamese SL-class naval trawler heading towards the South Vietnamese coast from just north of the DMZ. The trawler in question was a steel hulled vessel, 100 feet long, flying no flags to identify its origins. It was observed to be approximately 150 miles (240 km) south of the DMZ. CGC ANDROSCOGGIN (WHEC-68) had taken the trawler under surveillance with a plan to intercept as necessary.

By the next day, three additional trawlers of similar description had been discovered along the coast. This appeared to be a coordinated movement in what we knew could be an attempt to smuggle weapons and other materiel to the VC.

For the first hour underway, we ran "general quarters" drills to integrate the new crew members. The individual Captains of the WPBs had the discretion to assign crew members among the positions as he felt best. For example, I always put my ET on the bridge where the radar screen and other electronic gear were located. It was also my practice to have the gunner's mate man a 50-caliber machine gun on the fantail. With four machine guns back there I felt that if anything was going to jam that's where it would happen.

The Point Welcome was joined by the Point Grey and several U.S. Navy swift boats. We secured from GQ drills to eat dinner and rest up for what I expected to be a long night.

At about 0100 on the morning of 1 March the Androscoggin closed and challenged the trawler as the trawler had closed to within seven miles (11 km) of the coast. After receiving no response, Androscoggin illuminated the target with 5-inch (130mm) star shells. The trawler, positively identified as a North Vietnamese SL-class vessel, opened fired on the Androscoggin with recoilless rifle and machine gun fire and began speeding towards the beach. (1)

At this time, the Point Welcome joined the chase - accompanied by the Point Grey, two Navy Swift boats and two U.S. Army helicopters. CDR Bauman and I were on the bridge along with my ET and a helmsman.

Androscoggin opened fire with her 5-inch battery, scoring one hit on the trawler's "after starboard side." At about 0140, we were ordered to take the trawler under fire and the two helicopters took the trawler under fire while the Point Welcome, Point Grey and PCFs closed. Welcome illuminated the target with illumination rounds fired from her 81mm mortar while GREY and the Swift Boats fired their .50 caliber machine guns into the trawler.

The trawler grounded 50 yards (46m) from the mouth of the Song Tha Cau river. Welcome then hit the target with two high explosive mortar rounds. Moments after Welcome's mortar

rounds hit, the trawler exploded, leaving little trace and sending steel shrapnel into the air so thick that I later learned the Point Welcome's radar signal disappeared from the Androscoggin's radar screen. They thought we were lost. At least two of the trawler's crew were killed in the explosion and a third was wounded.

The two cutters were showered with debris from the explosions and it is a miracle we suffered no personnel casualties. The Point Welcome's forward windows were completely blown out. We eventually realized that the port and aft windows were actually blown out from the inside by shrapnel passing through the bridge. "That's the closest I ever came to buying it." CDR Bauman later told friends.

As the shrapnel was raining down, three of the crew members manning the 50 caliber machine guns on the stern took shelter under the Boston Whaler small boat which was tied down on the stern. I will never forget this. After the fight was over, we discovered a bent carbine bayonet under the small boat. It had come from the trawler. Apparently, the force of the trawler's explosions was sufficient to bend a steel bayonet and blow it 500 yards through the air. When the incident was written up for military news, the press release included a photo of the bayonet, referring to it as an "Unexpected Souvenir."

After the firefight, most units were returned to their normal patrol areas. We stayed in the area for two days providing security for VNN Junk Force and US Navy divers during recovery operations.

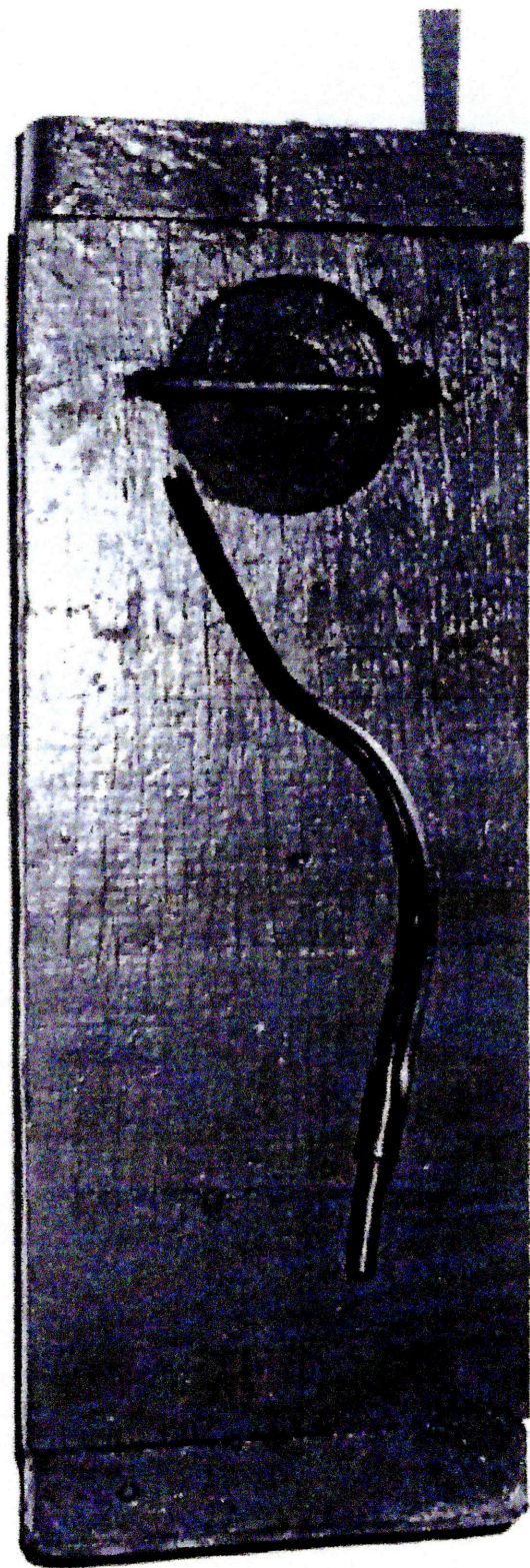
Materiel that the trawler had been carrying was found scattered for 2000 yards in all directions. The following items were discovered:

- Approximately 600 K-44 carbines,
- One 12.7 heavy machine gun,
- Eleven 7.62 light machine guns,
- 41 sub-machine guns,
- One 57mm recoilless rifle,
- Multiple rounds of ammunition of all types,
- Medical and personal gear.

In later years, I learned that three of the North Vietnamese trawlers involved in this attempted infiltration had been destroyed by U.S. and R.V.N. armed forces. The fourth vessel turned around and headed back to the South China sea, where it was visually trailed until it approached the Chinese coastline.

Rear Admiral Richard Bauman retired in 1983 as the Commander of the 1st Coast Guard District in Boston. He died at the age of 80 on 15 February, 2005 at his home in Annandale, VA.

(1) (See Larzelere, Alex (1997). The Coast Guard at War, Vietnam, 1965-1975. Naval Institute Press, Annapolis.)



I have an original  
photo of this

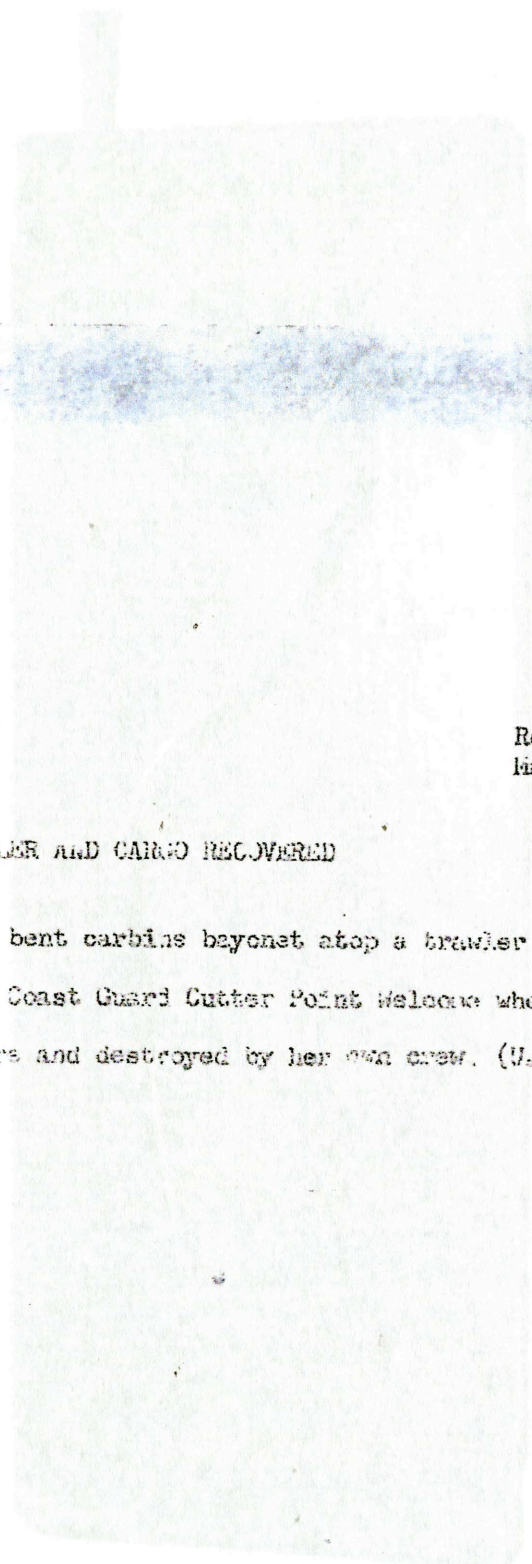
Handwritten text, possibly a signature or note, located at the bottom left of the page.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Release Number 23-68  
March 23, 1968

REMAINS OF ENEMY TRAWLER AND CARGO RECOVERED

DURING March 16 --- A bent carbine bayonet atop a trawler hatch board recovered by the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Point Welcome when the enemy craft was forced ashore and destroyed by her own crew. (U.S. COAST GUARD PHOTO)



*Original on page 2  
with photo*

*Printed in blue ink  
on yellow paper*

# **REMAINS OF ENEMY TRAWLER AND CARGO RECOVERED**

**(Press Release March 18, 1968)**

**Gerald A. McGill**

**August 22, 2019**

Commander  
Coast Guard Division 12  
Box 88 NAVSUPACT  
FPO San Francisco 96695

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Release Number 23-68

DANANG March 18 – The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Point Welcome crew received an unexpected souvenir of the enemy trawler forced ashore 85 miles south of here March 1.

Closely pursuing the arms and munitions laden vessel to shore, the cutter was showered by bits of ship and cargo when the enemy craft was destroyed by her own crew to avoid capture. The Point Welcome, a scant 500 yards away, discovered a bent enemy carbine bayonet under her small boat and a single board from one of the trawler's hatches floating nearby following the blast.

Salvage crews and divers later recovered some 600 enemy carbines, 41 submachine guns, a heavy machine gun and an assortment of hand grenades, mortar rounds, detonators and ammunition scattered over a two-square-mile area.

The Point Welcome is one of 26 Coast Guard 82-foot patrol boats operating off the coast of South Vietnam in support of Operation Market Time. The cutters conduct frequent patrols in search of the enemy attempting to infiltrate men and supplies into South Vietnam by sea.

The Point Welcome is commanded by Lieutenant (jg) Gerald A. McGILL, USCG, from Pensacola, Florida.

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Box 88, NAVSUPACT  
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## LIFE ABOARD THE CUTTERS

**Gerald A. McGill**

**September 20, 2019**

The 82' Point-class Coast Guard Cutters were designed for search and rescue missions and law enforcement under any weather conditions at sea. Since being commissioned in 1960, the 82's had been put into service along the Atlantic, Pacific, and Gulf Coasts of the United States. In the United States, the 82' vessels carried an enlisted-only crew of eight. The Officer-in-Charge was usually a Master Chief Boatswain Mate (E-9).

For Vietnam duty two commissioned Officers were added to the crew in order to comply with international law regarding stopping and searching vessels at sea. An enlisted gunner's mate was also added to the crew. The original accommodations for 10 persons were expanded to 13 allowing for an 11 man crew, a Vietnamese liaison, and an extra rider.

With deployment dates only a short time away the U.S. Coast Guard preferred to keep the experienced stateside crews intact. The Commanding Officers initially were U.S. Coast Guard Academy graduates who had previously served as Commanding officers of a 95 foot Coast Guard cutter in the U.S.

Modifications were made in armament and to make room for the larger crew. The forward deck mounted 20 millimeter machine gun was replaced with an 81mm mortar topped with a .50 caliber machine gun. Four .50 caliber machine guns were installed on the main deck, aft of the deck house, two amid ship and two astern. On the fantail, a steel frame was installed to the deck to stock five thousand rounds of machine gun ammunition.

Even with an eight-man crew in peace time conditions, the 82' crew found their 17' x 82', three story home quite snug. With an additional four persons and additional weapons and munitions aboard, space was at a premium.

The mess deck and recreational area was 16 feet long and 6 feet wide with a green settee which continued up the starboard side. Arranged inboard of the settee were two metal tables with just enough separation between them to get to the cushioned bench. A sticky green rubberized mat covered the tables to keep dishware from sliding when the weather was rough.

Immediately to the left was the galley, a U-shaped lay out containing a stove, and refrigerator and enough space for the cook to prepare meals. Fortunately, the Point Welcome carried a cook and, more fortunately, he was a good one. He was a good baker too. The tables had three circular seats each on the inboard side which could swing out to provide additional seating and then swing back under the table to provide more walking room.

The watertight door at the front of the mess deck led into the main crew's quarters, a cozy 10 feet long. Each side had three pipe bunks made of canvas stretched within the tubular metal frame and topped with a thin mattress. When not in use they could be folded up against the bulkheads.

Two crew members were always on watch on the bridge and one additional was on deck - generally on the stern as a lookout and messenger if needed. An engine watch was not required because the 82's were designed so that all engine functions could be monitored and controlled from the bridge.

Beyond the crew's quarters came the crew's head with barely enough space to accommodate the sink, shower, and commode.

On the deck above the mess deck was the Captain's cabin. This cabin had two sets of bunk beds. Usually the Captain, Executive Officer, Vietnam liaison and the Chief Engineman or Chief Boatswain Mate occupied these bunks. There was also a small head.

The interior living spaces of the 82's were air conditioned. This "luxury" enabled the Cutters and their crews to engage in longer-term out of port missions than other WPBs. The crew could expect to do three - five day patrols, followed by an in-port day. This process would be repeated five times, and then we would have a few days of rest before going back out.

During the break, ship's maintenance would occur. It has been said that one year at war was equal to eight years of peacetime service for the Cutters.

## **DOUBLE DUTY**

**Gerald J. McGill**

**January 16, 2020**

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Previously I wrote about our how we had mounted a lighted Christmas tree to the top of the rotating radar transmitter on the Pt. Welcome.

I wanted to note that the wiring was done by our electronics technician, who was also our Vietnamese Liaison Officer. He is the man on the far left in this photo, which is another one I took on Christmas Day, 1967.

Every WBP carried a Liaison Officer, who was an officer in the Republic of Viet Nam Navy (RNN). The primary job of the LO was to communicate with the fishermen and other marketers we encountered while on patrol. If we boarded a vessel to conduct a search, the LO would speak to the crew and passengers, verify that the boat's manifest was accurate, and help gather intel about what was happening on the shore. The LO's presence was important to establishing a rapport with the locals, and we were glad to have him on board.

As you might imagine, however, with such tight quarters on the Welcome, every man had to be willing and able to do more than one job. Fortunately, our LO was a gifted electrician and always ready to help out, although he was quiet and didn't speak much English.

Our LO was much older than me. When we were not on patrol, he lived with his family at the Junk Force Base at the foot of Monkey Mountain. He was married with three children – all girls if I remember correctly.

I am sorry to say that I cannot remember our LO's name and I don't know what happened to him after I left. It probably wasn't good.

Following the fall of Saigon in 1975, hundreds of thousands of people (military and civilians) who had supported the Republic of Vietnam were sent to "reeducation camps" where they were subjected to forced indoctrination and torture. In time, many who survived these prison camps were able to leave Vietnam and restart their lives in other countries.

# CAPTAIN DRACULA

**Gerald A. McGill**

**October 14, 2019**

When the Point Welcome was underway, the crew stood 3-man watches. Two men were on the bridge and the third man was roving around the ship as a lookout, fire watch, or messenger. Sometimes the third man would have other duties such as bringing coffee to those on the bridge or waking the oncoming watch.

The watches were four hours each around the clock. The mid-watch began at midnight and ended at 4:00 am (0400). The next watch was 0400 to 0800 and so on around the clock. This meant that all men stood watch for eight hours per day. In addition they had their special duties such as gunner's mate, boatswain mates, enginemen, and electronics technician.

The officer of the Deck (OOD) on the bridge was usually the Executive Officer (XO), the Chief Boatswain Mate (BMC) or the First Class Boatswain Mate (BM1). The second person on the bridge could be a seaman (SN), Electronics Technician (ET), even an Engineman (EN). They served primarily as helmsman steering the vessel. The OODs remained on the bridge throughout their watch, but the helmsman and the "rovers" would switch off from time to time subject to the approval of the OOD on watch.

As Commanding Officer I stood no scheduled watches as I was on call 24/7. My written STANDING ORDER, night or day was, "If you have any doubt as to whether you should call me, CALL ME!"

In addition, I am somewhat of a night person and would sometimes relieve the OOD an hour or two early on the mid-watch so he could get a couple extra hours of sleep that night. I guess that was the reason that one night I overheard one of the crew members say to another "Captain Dracula is on the bridge tonight."

The next morning I told the BMC what I had overheard. He said, "I'm sorry, Skipper. I'll tell the men to knock it off".

"No need to." I said, "I think it's funny." But I never heard it again.

## **PAINT THE CUTTERS!**

**Gerald A. McGill**

**August 25, 2019**

At the time of the first combat encounters in Vietnam, Coast Guard cutters had white hulls. This had always been true of Coast Guard vessels, large and small. The main reason for having white hulls is that the primary mission of the Coast Guard is search and rescue of vessels in distress. In these missions, visibility is desirable.

Soon after the initial combat engagements, however, an order came from Market Time Headquarters that all the WPB's were to be painted gray. In retrospect the order made sense but Guardsmen take great pride in their white hulled vessels and, at the time, many were displeased. Some felt if they had wanted to go to sea on gray ships, they would have joined the Navy. But there was no choice given.

Ever resourceful, Coast Guardsmen soon discovered that by adding a couple of tablespoons of black paint to each gallon of Navy gray paint they created a black-gray shade giving the cutter a more menacing appearance and a lot less visibility. This ended most of the grumbling.

In the United States, the 82's had white hulls and their hull numbers were painted in black for contrast. All hull numbers consisted of five numbers with the first two numbers 82. The Point Welcome was 82329. When the Vietnam cutters were painted "Coast Guard" gray, the numbers were painted the lighter "Navy" gray for contrast.

## LETTER HOME

Gerald A. McGill

May 11, 1968

Dear Mom and Dad,

Got a pleasant surprise today. My bronze star and citation came in. I didn't even know for sure that I had been written up for it and I certainly didn't expect to get it. I was embarrassed to even read the citation it made it sound like such a big deal. Much bigger than it seemed at the time.

Don't know when it will be presented - probably not until Capt. Austin's next trip up here from Saigon. Anyway you can imagine, I have a grin as big as Marc's.

By the time you get this, I'll be down to 5 months. The rest should go by pretty fast. Just in case I forgot to tell you, I'll be staying on the Point Welcome to train the incoming CO. After that, I'll be riding along any 82's that need me as much as I can. I really don't want to go up on the barge now, even if it means I won't get to go to Japan.

I have been thinking about it and I think Harry is making the right decision to take classes at the Junior College for right now. Everything is changing so fast and I think staying in school is a good idea.

Speaking of, I can't believe Jeannie will be starting high school in the fall. Please tell her that big brother misses her and please let everyone know I'm looking forward to seeing them soon.

Love,

Gerry

## TOO DONE EGGS - (June 1968)

**Gerald A. McGill**

**August 16, 2019**

I was the Commanding Officer of the Point Welcome, an 82-foot Coast Guard Cutter from 22 October 1967 to 23 May 1968. For most of this time, I operated out of CG Division 12 in Danang Bay, approximately 40 miles south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).

During my seven months as CO of the Point Welcome I was underway in the South China Sea 70% to 80% of the time. This was typical of most of the other 82-foot cutters.

On 23 May 1968, I was relieved as CO of the Point Welcome and assigned to the Coast Guard Division 12 staff as the Readiness, Psychological, Operational and Intelligence Officer. Once attached to the Division Staff, I lived aboard a U.S. Navy APL which was a large permanently moored ship tied up on the opposite side of the pier that the Coast Guard cutters and U.S. Navy PCFs (swift boats) moored while in port in Danang.

I was not too keen on shore duty, so I took every opportunity to do fill in duty aboard any of the 82's that had an opening. For example, I would occasionally ride for a few days on an 82 that had been transferred to Danang from other Divisions to assist that unit with I Corps indoctrination and policies.

In addition to these short trips on WPBs, I was also sent for two weeks as the U.S. liaison officer to the South Vietnamese Coastal Group 16 about 30 miles south of Danang. Coastal Group 16 was at the mouth of a small river. It was a contingent of South Vietnamese soldiers consisting of a few officers and a good many more soldiers and their families. There were also civilians living there who were mostly fishermen. The importance of the military was to prevent the Viet Cong from using the river to infiltrate weapons, ammunition, medical supplies and food up the river to their forces further inland.

On the morning of my arrival, I was told that there would be a feast in my honor that evening. I was also introduced to my translator. I spent the rest of the day looking around the compound. Truth is I was looking for my exit strategy.

At the end of the workday, probably around 1730H, there was a gathering of 14 to 16 individuals sitting in a circle on the ground. The village chief was seated at the head of the circle. To his immediate right was a man, another civilian, who I assumed was the assistant chief. I was shown to sit to his immediate right. The rest of the circle was made up of a couple military officers and enlisted men and several civilians who I assumed from their apparent age were the village elders.

When everyone was seated, a person appeared with a basket containing what appeared to be eggs. I recalled hearing somewhere, probably from the Filipino cooks who served on Coast Guard high endurance cutters, that they ate a Filipino dish called "balutes" which were fertilized and fermented duck eggs. I was hoping that these eggs were not the Vietnamese version of "balutes."

The first egg was presented to the village chief. He held the egg in his left hand, smaller end up. He took his knife and used the blade to break off the top of the egg, looked at the contents and then turned the eggshell up and in one motion drank the contents. The next egg went to the assistant chief who performed the same ritual. The next egg was presented to me.

I decapitated my egg with my knife and looked at the contents. To my horror, I saw forming feathers and blood vessels. Not wanting to offend anyone, particularly since my life could depend on them in the event of attack, I upended my egg. In order to swallow the mass in my mouth, I had to chew several times.

Suddenly all eyes were on me. I turned to my interpreter and said, "What did I do?" He said only, "Too done, too done". Apparently, I had eaten an egg that they would have rejected. I saw on at least 2 occasions that night when others would look at the contents and, deciding their eggs were "too done", they would throw them out of the circle for the dogs to eat. They would then be given a replacement egg.

Apparently by trying not to offend anyone, I came off as a barbarian. No wonder some of the village children ran away from me the next day.

## GOING HOME

**Gerald A. McGill**

**January 30, 2020**

In October of 1968, I was getting ready to rotate home. I wasn't expecting to fly out of Danang for a few days but I was notified that space had opened up on a flight leaving in a few hours if I wanted to take the seat. Saying "yes" was the easiest decision I'd made all year.

I left so quickly that I didn't even get to change out of the field uniform that I'd been wearing for a few days. The first flight was to Hawaii, then to the army base in Oakland, California, then to LAX in Los Angeles and a final connection to New Orleans.

I could not get a flight reservation out of New Orleans to Pensacola, which is about 200 miles east, but I knew that if I could get that far I could get home even if it was by bus. In those days active duty military personnel in uniform could fly "military standby" for one half the ticket price, so that was my plan.

On the flight out of Los Angeles, the older woman sitting in the aisle seat looked up as I moved past her to the window seat. She was not excited about me sitting next to her and I didn't blame her. It had been a while since I'd taken a shower. When the plane was in the air and the 'No Smoking' sign went off, I grabbed my carry-on bag and headed to the forward bathroom. I took as much of a towel bath as possible, shaved, combed my hair and changed into my dress uniform and shoes.

I folded my field uniform and put my boots on top. When I came out of the bathroom, I ran into a stewardess and asked her for a garbage bag. I stuffed the whole uniform, including my boots, into the bag and asked if she would take it and get rid of it. She took the bag and looked at me puzzled, "What do you want me to do with it?"

I told her, "I don't know. You can burn it for all it matters to me. I don't have any use for it anymore."

When I returned to my seat, the lady in the seat next to me stood up and moved into the aisle so I could get to my window seat. She smiled and now was quite friendly. Either she didn't recognize me as the same person who had sat by her earlier or she appreciated my effort to "clean up my act."

Once we arrived in New Orleans, I was able to get a seat on a flight to Pensacola. I called home collect from a payphone. My mom gladly accepted the call, telling me that she hadn't expected to hear from me for another week or so. I asked her if she would be able to meet me at the

Pensacola airport. "Of course!" she replied and asked when she should be there. "In about two hours" I said, laughing.

When we landed in Pensacola, I was met by my Mom, Dad, and younger sister, Jeannie. They had brought the family toy poodle, Pepe, who to my surprise remembered me.

In 1968, Pensacola was a small Regional Airport so all luggage was loaded on an outdoor carousel. We claimed my seabag and headed home to Perdido Bay.

## **SEAWORTHINESS**

**Gerald A. McGill**

**October 9, 2019**

The 82' WPBs were very seaworthy but with the weapons added for Vietnam (five .50 caliber machine guns, one 81mm mortar and a locker holding 5,000 rounds of .50 caliber ammunition on the main deck), they tended to roll significantly when the seas were off the beam. Many times the crew members having dinner down below had to lift their plates while eating to keep the food from sliding off.

The 82's were built for law enforcement and search and rescue missions in harsh conditions such as the North Atlantic and the Gulf of Alaska. In the couple of years of their existence before going to Vietnam, the craft were repeatedly praised for their foul weather endurance.

A typical report came from a cutter entering the North Carolina coast at Cape Fear in 35 knot winds and 15 - 20 foot seas which broached and lay on her starboard side (a 90 degree roll) for about 20 seconds before snapping upright.

In those days the crew was all enlisted men and the officer-in-charge was a Chief Boatswain Mate. The Chief wrote in the log about the roll concluding with, "Everything OK. These boats are well built and could probably weather almost anything."

I didn't know this story at the time but on more than one occasion I assured a Point Welcome crew member, usually a younger seaman, that these boats would not turn over.

Up to January 1964 when deployed to Vietnam, the boats were identified only by number. Upon deployment they were given names after points of land in the U.S. It was cutter 82329 that had the 90 degree lay down off North Carolina. She became the Point Welcome.



## ATTACKED BY FRIENDLY FIRE

### PT WELCOME (WPB-82329)

Gerry McGill

#### **FRIENDLY FIRE INCIDENT - 1966**

USCGC POINT WELCOME (WPB-82329) was about three-quarters of a mile south of the 17th parallel, in the limits of the Vietnamese Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), when she was attacked in the pre-dawn hours of 11 August 1966 by three U.S. Air Force aircraft while on patrol in the waters near the mouth of the Cua Viet River. Her commanding officer, LTJG David Brostrom, along with one crewman, EN2 Jerry Phillips, were killed in this friendly fire incident. Brostrom and Phillips were two of seven Coast Guardsmen killed in action during the Vietnam War. The ship's executive officer, LTJG Ross Bell was severely wounded leaving Chief Boatswain's Mate Richard Patterson in charge with several of the crew injured. A South Vietnamese liaison officer, LTJG Do Viet Vien, and civilian freelance journalist Tim Page, were aboard during the incident.

Patterson saved the cutter and the surviving crew at great risk to himself and was awarded a Bronze Star with the combat "V" device for his actions – described in his citation:

"The first attack caused a blazing gasoline fire on the fantail of the cutter that threatened to engulf the entire after section of the vessel. Chief Patterson, displaying the finest qualities of bravery and leadership, took charge of the situation and using a fire hose, forced the flaming liquid over the side, thus extinguishing the fire. Even as he was accomplishing this task, he saw the second aircraft attack rip through the pilot house killing the cutter's commanding officer and seriously wounding the executive officer and the helmsman. Unhesitatingly, and with complete disregard for his personal safety, Chief Patterson climbed to the bridge and took command. He ordered the crew to carry the wounded to the comparative safety of the below decks area. Alone on the bridge, he then maneuvered the cutter at high speed to avoid subsequent attacks. When it became apparent that he could not successfully evade the attacking aircraft, he ran the cutter close ashore, and directed the crew to abandon ship. Under his composed leadership, the wounded were wrapped in life jackets and paired with the able bodied before going over the side. Chief Patterson kept his crew calm and organized while they were in the water and until they were picked up by rescue craft."

USCGC POINT CAUTION (WPB-82301) came to the assistance of the WELCOME and, along with other units, rescued those in the water. Soon thereafter Patterson and those of his crew that were not seriously wounded returned to their cutter. They then sailed the WELCOME back to Da Nang under her own power. She was repaired after a three-month overhaul and returned to service. Investigations by the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) involving 37 witnesses were conducted from 15 to 23 August 1966 and concluded with a statement to the Commandant of the Coast Guard that:

"It is evident from the record that there was a lack of coordination between different component forces operating in the same area, and that existing orders and instructions pertaining to identification and recognition of friendly forces were not observed."

**VIETNAMIZATION - 1970**

WELCOME was transferred to the Republic of Vietnam Navy as RVNS *Nguyễn Hấn* (HQ-717), 29 April 1970.

McGill 68

Dear Capt,

Thank for the card and note. I am always amazed that you have time to write everyone at Xmas time.

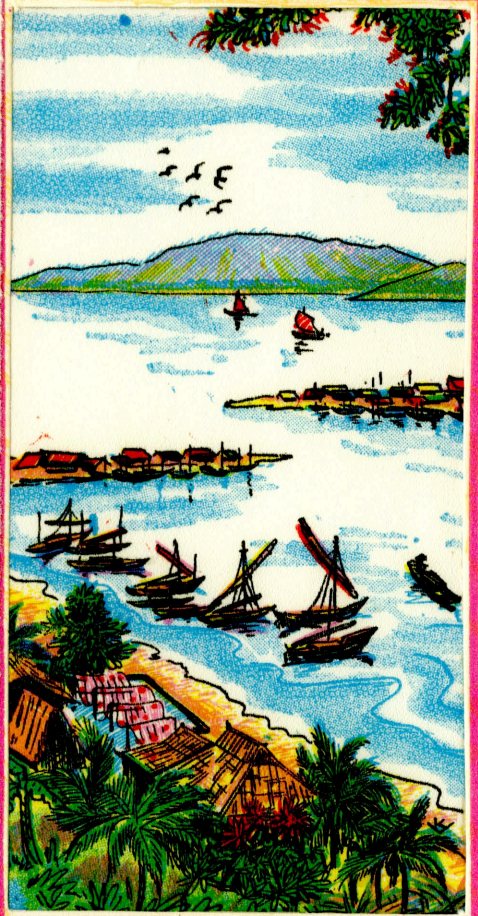
I'm the "G" Company Advisor.

Things have changed since we were here, and as with all changes most seem for the better.

The year in Viet nam was like Swab year - good experience but once was enough.

I'm taking leave so I'll be home for Xmas. I didn't get to see much of either of my brothers who are both in college this fall, but they'll be home at Xmas.

I won't at the Academy for Homecoming but will probably be here next year and look forward to seeing you then - Give my best to your family  
Jerry



Merry Christmas

VIET-NAM

McGill 67



I appreciated very much your card and especially the list of the class. I've not been as successful at keeping track of any of them. I saw the entire flight bunch in Pensacola in Aug. before coming over here. Most seemed quite settled down and well suited to family life. I'm still a bachelor and no immediate plans. There were a couple of new Mrs. in the file since the Academy but I guess I'm still too much of a maverick.

Give my best to all your family. Will write a letter soon to let you know who's up here from our class.

Jerry McGill