

**Slide Photographs and Memories of a Proud Vietnam Veteran**  
**By George P. Morgan, Jr.**  
**January 2008**

I am a 68-year-old retired naval officer having served in the navy Supply Corps from 1961 through 1990. I am currently retired and living in Coronado, California. I am very proud of my service and particularly my service during the Vietnam War. I served in Saigon and Danang from May 1965 through May 1966. I also served aboard ship in the South China Sea from February-August 1970. I was not a front line combatant, but a support supply/logistician in a war zone. I am proud of my service and the effort of our country in fighting for the freedom of the Vietnamese people. The fact that we failed when we pulled out of Vietnam in 1975 is something for which I hold our national leaders and politicians responsible.

I submit these thoughts and pictures to add, in my small way, to the body of collective memories of the history of the war in Vietnam. I salute the Texas Tech University Vietnam Center and Archive and their efforts to maintain the memories and history of this important era.

I dedicate this effort to the men who paid the ultimate price in service to our country. In particular I dedicate this to Warner Lutz, Bob Beckman and Raymond Ellis, friends who were killed in action in Vietnam.

I include in this package some 160 slide photographs taken during my tour of duty in Vietnam with a brief summary of the pictures. I also include some of my thoughts during my tour of duty. About five years ago I began to write my memoirs to leave to my children and grandchildren. I have included herein excerpts from my memoirs that relate to my experience in Vietnam. Also included are my thoughts on the political and cultural issues of the time, for which I make no apologies.

My tour in Vietnam was unique in that I had three different assignments for three different commands. From May through August 1965 I was assigned to the **Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV)** as a supply advisor to the Vietnamese River Assault Group. In August 1965 I was sent to Danang to run the Navy Exchange (PX), as I had previous exchange experience. In this job I worked for the **Headquarters Support Activity (HSA), Saigon**, assigned to Danang. When the Army/Air Force Exchange Service took over all exchanges (PXs) in Vietnam, I remained in Danang and was assigned to the **Naval Support Activity, Danang** from March to May 1966.

The following is a summary of the slide collection.

**Vietnam photo collection May 1965-May 1966**

**Taken by then LT George P. Morgan, Jr. (Supply Corps) USN**

**Slide tray 1**

**Saigon - May 1965 (slides 1-63)**

Street scenes  
Helo ride near Saigon  
5 Oceans BOQ in Colon  
Saigon Zoo  
More street scenes  
Racetrack

In slide 61, LT Raymond "Doc" Ellis is the gentleman on the left. Picture taken in July or August 1965. He was killed in action while on patrol with the Vietnamese River Assault Group on September 30, 1965

**Danang – August 1965- May 1966 (slides 65-90)**

China Beach  
Monkey Mountain  
Street Scenes  
Navy Exchange, Danang  
Flying over Danang  
More Street Scenes

**Slide tray 2**

**Danang – August 1965 – May 1966**

Beer and soda arriving during monsoon rains  
Danang air base  
USO show with Bob Hope  
Trip to Chu Lai  
Street scene, Chu Lai  
USO party Danang  
General Westmoreland visit to Danang While Elephant HQ with VADM Whishler  
Parade Danang  
Monkey Mountain Base: Camp Ten Sha  
Officers' Club Danang

*Excerpts from my memoirs:*

**War is Hell II**

In early 1965 I was 25 years old, enjoying an exciting bachelor life in Washington, DC, with a job I enjoyed, living in my own apartment. I had no car payments and I had the opportunity to augment to the regular Navy. Life was good...then one evening the phone rang.

My detailer called and made a cryptic suggestion: They were looking for a junior officer with Navy Exchange experience to go to a place he could not mention. I was a candidate to go to this place or I would be sent somewhere so another officer could go to this unnamed location. My response was that if you're going to uproot me from the good life in Washington, DC, I wanted the glory that went with going to the unmentioned place. As it turned out, they needed someone right away to go to Vietnam to run the exchange in DaNang in support of the Marines who, in March of 1965, were the dominate American force in I Corps, the northern fourth of South Vietnam. The assignment was to be for six months. I agreed to go, although I don't really think I had much of a choice. I had to get out of my lease, sell my car, put stuff in storage, and phsync myself up for going to Vietnam. With plans falling into place, my detailer contacted me again with a change in orders. They found someone to run the exchange in DaNang, a Marine officer from the Marine Corps Exchange on Okinawa. However, they had a need to fill other junior supply corps billets in Vietnam, and since I was preparing to go, I would be sent to one of those jobs in Saigon for a one-year assignment.

I needed to break the news to my family and chose to do that in person so I drove to New Jersey for a weekend in April. I went to Superior Fuel Oil Company to tell my father first; he took it well and appreciated my telling him in person. He wished me well. I then went to mother's apartment in Fort Lee where she lived at that time with my sister Janie. In her inevitable cheery outlook, she took the news well, knowing that no harm would ever come to her golden boy. As an invincible 25-year old, I never felt that I would be in harm's way, however, even in Saigon the threat would always be there. But I was not too worried. I was looking forward to another career adventure.

In early May I left for Saigon via San Diego and Hawaii. I spent a week in Coronado at the Naval Amphibious Base going through a weapons familiarization course. I was quite taken by this beautiful area with palm trees lining the main street, great beaches, and a nice ferryboat ride from Coronado to the mainland. Little did I know that this would be my retired home some 25 years later. In Hawaii I went through survival school complete with a simulated POW camp. I also got to see some of Waikiki. After stops in Wake Island, Guam, and the Philippines we landed at Saigon's Ton Son Nut airport, to a very muggy welcome to the only war in town. I was part of President Johnson's post election build up, and once again I was not to be a spectator in the Cold War, having previously served as part of the Cuban Blockade in the fall of 1962.

I did not know it at the time, but a week after I arrived in Saigon, on June 2, 1965, a fraternity brother from college, Werner "Lucky" Lutz died somewhere in-country flying a helicopter. He was a Marine Corps Captain. Although I had not seen him in years, I will always remember the help and understanding he provided to a young freshman at Davis and Elkins College. He was also from Bergen County, New Jersey.

When I arrived in country there was a need for junior supply officers to serve as advisors to the Vietnamese Navy. There were three branches of their Navy: the coastal forces made up of former US landing craft, the junk fleet made up of wooden junks boats for coastal patrol, and the river assault groups with armored craft used to patrol the rivers, mostly in the Mekong Delta. Once I got settled in my hotel room, I contacted my former executive officer from the USS Neosho, Commander Charles Hanus. He was the senior American advisor to the river assault group and was expecting the addition of a supply officer to his staff. He offered the job to me, and I took it. The Vietnamese river assault groups (RAGs) were precursors to the American brown river navy with their famous swift boats. They operated from about six key locations in the Mekong Delta. Each group had a variety of patrol craft manned by Vietnamese and supported by three to four American advisors. Those Americans assigned to the RAGs were at high risk, making patrols throughout their region and subject to attack from the Viet Cong. The week before I arrived an American Lieutenant assigned to one of the RAGs was killed. His name was Dale Meyerkord. Years later there was a navy destroyer named for him. Things were very bleak among the staff when I arrived due to his death. RAG Headquarters was in Saigon, where I would work with the American and Vietnamese staff. My counterpart was a Vietnamese lieutenant by the name of Le Kim Sa. In 1962, he had attended the foreign officer's course at the Navy Supply Corps School in Athens, Georgia when I was there as a student although we did not meet at that time.

I was assigned to living quarters in the Colon section of Saigon with other junior officers located a block from the 5-Oceans BOQ which had an officers' mess. I would commute to work by jeep every day with others assigned to the RAG headquarters. I became an expediter for supplies and critical parts making their way through the Vietnamese supply system. I would end up spending a lot of my time dealing with American supply officers who were assigned to the Vietnamese supply center. We were really doing what their system should have been doing automatically, but Vietnamese politics often got in the way of logistics, with the Americans coming to the rescue.

Once into a routine, my tour there was uneventful with the exception of a few trips to the field. My boss Charlie Hanus was a true Saigon Commando, limiting his visits out of the city, a good strategy for those who wanted to survive the war. He did earn a Purple Heart for minor injuries received in the bombing of the Brinks Hotel in Saigon and didn't want to earn another one, but he had a responsibility to check on the troops in the field, those at the remote RAGs sites in the Mekong delta. On one of these trips he took me along to see what things were like on the front lines. We hopped rides on various aircraft to visit My Tho, Can Tho, and Long Xuyen in one day. It was a real eye opener to see how the Americans lived in these remote sites. They made several requests of me for some basic items as well as war material needed to carry out their mission. As the new supply

officer I was able to help them out which made them very grateful. We were able to make it back to Saigon that evening which made me appreciate what it meant to be a Saigon Commando. Another adventure took me to Cape de St Jacques also known by its Vietnamese name: Vung Tau, a former French resort town near the coast on the South China Sea. I drove down with Raymond "Doc" Ellis and Bob Docenbach. I'm sure it was a risky trip, but it seemed harmless at the time. We drove by jeep to the town that was about 70 miles southeast of Saigon, driving at top speed over a two-lane road, hoping good guys or bad guys wouldn't stop us. Another trip, perhaps the riskiest of all, took place on a Sunday. Bob Docenbach had a helicopter pilot friend who offered to take us for a ride to check out his recently repaired helo. Test ride in a helo! What was I doing there! I survived.

On September 30, 1965, LT Raymond "Doc" Ellis was killed while serving with one of the River Assault Groups in the Mekong Delta. He was a good friend and, like many others, died too young while serving his country.

After about 3 months on the job I was contacted by LCDR Neil McNeil, the Navy Exchange Officer in Saigon, the guy I would be working for if I had taken the first assignment offered to me. It seems that the marine officer at the exchange in DaNang was leaving the job to return to Okinawa, and they needed someone to replace him. I was the only one in country who could fill the job. I didn't like the idea of leaving my assignment, but duty called, and I agreed to go until they could find someone else. I was able to keep my room in Saigon. I said goodbye to Charlie Hanus and my buddies and headed for DaNang in the northern part of South Vietnam. In a matter of a week or two I took over the exchange that was located in a large warehouse, the front half contained the retail store, an office, a small barracks for the enlisted men assigned to the exchange, and a barbershop. The rear half of the building was the storage area. I had a master chief working for me and a mixed American crew of sailors and marines, in addition to the civilian Vietnamese employees. The exchange supported the American forces in I Corps, but getting merchandise to DaNang was a continuous problem as most of the stock came through Saigon. The shelves were often empty and made for many complaints to the exchange officer, including direct complaints from the Marine Commanding General, Lew Walt.

The build up of American forces in the I Corps had begun in March of 1965 with the arrival of the Marines at ChuLai and DaNang. To support this effort the Naval Support Activity, DaNang was established in late 1965. The Navy would run the port and keep the Marines supplied with everything from beans to bullets. This massive effort would require a large contingent of supply corps officers. After I arrived in DaNang, the build up began, and I witnessed the gathering of supply corps officers under the direction of the senior supply corps officer, Commander Bob Leventhal. I was assigned to a small French style apartment in downtown DaNang with many of the newly arrived junior supply officers. It was a three-story building with three, two-man apartments on each floor. Each apartment had a bathroom. There were no kitchens or cooking facilities as we took most of our meals at the nearby officers' mess. This would be my home for the duration of my tour.

I had a great deal of independence from the others since my boss was in Saigon, and I did not report to the local command. But as the exchange officer I was a major player in the logistic support of the Marines, and all merchandise destined for the exchange had to pass through the port competing for offloading space with ammunition, food, and other war materials. This became a major problem during the monsoon season when soda and beer destined for MY exchange clogged the port and upset the senior marines. Pallets of beer and soda, offloaded from ships were put on smaller craft and transported to the piers. In the heavy rains of the monsoons, the cardboard cases disintegrated, leaving tons of loose cans dumped on the pier, making it impossible for other cargo to be offloaded. The trucks designated to carry the beer and soda to the exchange could not be loaded quickly enough, and the backlog got worse. We ended up having to dump the cans in huge piles across the bay in an open field, making this valuable cargo, for which I was accountable, susceptible to theft and spoilage. In the meantime marines and sailors had to do without basics once again.

With the build up of forces throughout Vietnam and the shift from an advisory role to a combat role for US forces, it was decided that the Army-Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) was better equipped than the Navy to run the exchanges in country. This was known before I went to DaNang and meant that I would soon be turning over the operation to the Army/Air Force. The transfer date was to be at the end of the year, December 31, 1965. AAFES does things right; they sent two lieutenant colonels and two second lieutenants to replace me, a little lieutenant junior grade from Brooklyn. Wow! They determined that the retail store, in the front part of the building would be the exchange under one of the Lt Colonels and a Lt, and the storeroom at the back of the building would be the "depot" under the management of the other Lt Colonel and the other Lt. Once the transfer took place, I remained as the Navy's agent to receive merchandise in the pipeline and turn it over to the AFFES depot.

After about two months in this role and returning to Saigon once or twice to help with the accounting process of the turnover, the detailer back in Washington asked the question: What do we do with Morgan now that his job is over? I was asked for input. Since I had been in Vietnam for about nine months, and 12 months was considered a normal tour, I decided that I'd be better off serving out my 12 months, reasoning that in a couple of years someone might notice that I had not served a full tour and send me back. At this point I did not want to return to Saigon, so a message was sent saying that I would stay until May when my 12 months would be complete. I was to be assigned to the Naval Support Activity, DaNang under Commander Leventual working in the planning department with many of the other supply corps officers who had become friends, including Mike Smith (we would later retire together in San Diego before his untimely death in 1993). Prior to assuming my new job I was entitled to a rest and relaxation (R and R) trip, which I took to Hong Kong. What a fascinating city and a great way to spend a week's break from war weary Vietnam. I would return to Hong Kong in 1970 and again in 1988. It remains one of my favorite cities in the world.

## **Bob Hope and Other Heroes; Jane Fonda and Other Losers**

At Christmas 1965 I had a chance to see the Bob Hope USO show in Danang. In the pouring rain, sitting in mud and a football field length away from the stage, it was still quite a thrill to see this great American entertainer. Bob Hope, of course, started entertaining troops in World War II and continued through Korea, Vietnam, and conflicts since then. It may be corny jokes and slapstick comedy, but it was always great for the troops. I'm glad I had the opportunity to witness this great and entertaining event and see this great American icon in a war zone. Bob Hope died on May 31, 2003 at age 100. There were many other entertainers and sports figures that have visited troops deployed to overseas assignments in peace and war. In Vietnam I met Martha Raye and Georgie Jessel, two old-time entertainers who were there to visit servicemen. In World War II, hundreds visited our troops and contributed greatly to morale. Other entertainers and athletes have served and help boost the morale of the fighting forces. Some were assigned to special services jobs to play their sport while fulfilling their military obligation. Joe DiMaggio spent most of his time in the army playing baseball, although, according to his biographer, Richard Ben Cramer, he was upset that he wasn't making the big money he'd earn from the Yankees. Joe Lewis, the great boxer, did much more. By putting on boxing exhibitions, he tirelessly entertained the troops in World War II. As a black man growing up in a segregated America he put any personal feelings he had aside to show all Americans that he was a true champion. He did a lot to promote morale among the troops, both black and white.

The same cannot be said for Muhammad Ali, formerly Cassius Clay. He was the heavyweight champion of the world, when called up for the draft to serve his country during the Vietnam War. Instead of serving as Lewis and others had done by putting on boxing exhibitions in Vietnam and worldwide, he chose to take a political stand against the war and refused to serve. We were fighting to save people from persecution, a cause he identified with as an African-American. To this day he is held up as a great American and hero by some. To me he was a great boxer, but he is no hero. He could have been if he had followed the Joe Lewis model. He even responded to criticism from Lewis by calling Lewis an "Uncle Tom" for his great service during World War II. What a jerk! In "*Sucker Punch*", Jack Cashill explores what he calls the myth of Muhammad Ali and how Elijah Muhammad took a young, patriotic Cassius Clay, who was proud of his victory for his country at the 1960 Olympics and seduced him to his cause. A good read. By the way, in 1975 while visiting New Orleans for a conference, I met Mohammed Ali and got his autograph for Michael. I did so without making a political statement or asking him about his service to our country.

But he wasn't the worst example of a traitor in my opinion. That honor falls to Jane Fonda, truly an evil traitor to our country. Fonda, from the blame-American crowd, took trips to Hanoi praising Ho Chi Minh and his communist murderers while bringing added hardship to the American POWs. Worse, she has never apologized to those she harmed. What a loser!

## **364 Days and a Wake Up**

Now back to my war. Most Americans in Vietnam counted the days they had left and subtracted one day, thus the answer to the question "How many days do you have left?" was "X days and a wake up." When I was at about 90 days and a wake up, I heard from my detailer and learned that I would be the Navy Exchange Officer at the Navy Regional Medical Center, Bethesda. I was excited about returning to Washington, DC, and the good life I enjoyed before going to Vietnam. I would also be my own boss in my new assignment.

Getting out of Vietnam proved to be a challenge. In the first week of May 1966, the Viet Cong were more active than usual since they were celebrating Ho Chi Minh's birthday. The Buddhists were also demonstrating over their dissatisfaction with the government so that travel of Americans in DaNang was limited to avoid any problems. I had decided earlier that I would not return via Saigon; it had become very crowded and more dangerous in my opinion. The other option I had which I took advantage of was to catch a Marine flight to Okinawa, then on to Tokyo enroute to the US. With my bags packed, a friend from Supply Corps School, Frank Milon, took me to the Marine air terminal to await my flight. With many of the main streets blocked, we had to take back roads. Once there and on board the plane I felt greatly relieved looking back as the coastline of Vietnam faded from sight. (I would return to DaNang five years later for a brief stopover.) I was able to spend a week in Tokyo and visit that exciting city. I stayed with a friend I knew from Washington who was a US government employee. I got to see many of the sights of Tokyo before catching a flight to San Francisco and then on to the east coast. I arrived at my mother's home on Mother's Day, 1966. What a nice Mother's Day present. One of the things I purchased from the money I saved in Vietnam was a 1966 Mercury that I was to pick up in Fort Lee, NJ. After some family visiting, I headed to Washington, DC, in my new car looking forward to my new assignment, knowing that I had served my country in one of the most difficult military encounters in history. And it wasn't over yet.

## **The Vietnam War - My Perspective**

The war in Vietnam dominated our country in the 1960s and well into the 1970s, over half of my military career. I served two tours in the war. I observed first hand the war protests by mostly misguided malcontents, exercising their freedom of speech. I have studied the causes and conduct of the war in Naval War College seminars. I have expressed my dissatisfaction with the Johnson administration's conduct of the war. I have also seen first hand what a communist system does to a country and its people. Communism is an oppressive system that saps the individual spirit. I saw this in Russia in 1994 while teaching there after retiring from the navy. As a result of 70 years of communism, there was complete domination by the state and the system and little individual expression or freedom. In Vietnam we were fighting to prevent this evil system from controlling the people of South Vietnam. As a schoolteacher I was concerned about the revisionist view of the war in which the US is portrayed as the bad

guy in Vietnam. Movies such as "Platoon" and "Apocalypse Now" do not tell the true story but instead depict the anti-war, anti-military, blame-America agenda of Oliver Stone and other Hollywood leftists. This was also the view of John Kerry who returned from Vietnam in 1970 to lead the anti-war movement. His actions were to become a major issue in his run for president in 2004.

In an article written by Robert Caldwell in the San Diego Union on April 29, 2001, he summarized his thoughts on the war in Vietnam which are identical to mine: "American troops in Vietnam, with only rare exceptions, served with honor and courage in a just cause vindicated by history." Caldwell goes on to cite those vindications of time: genocide in Cambodia by the Communist Khmer Rouge, imposition of a suppressive communist dictatorship over the people of South Vietnam, imprisonment of more than a million South Vietnamese in re-location camps, and the exodus of two million boat people.

In 1993 I was asked by the daughter of a coworker to write my view of the Vietnam War for a school assignment. I wish I still had my copy, but here is the essence of what I wrote at that time on the war that tore our nation apart: In spite of the deception of the Johnson administration, our efforts were noble. We became involved in Vietnam for the same reasons we became involved in World War I and II: to stop aggression from tyrants who wanted to conquer and enslave others. The government of South Vietnam was not a perfect democracy, but the people of South Vietnam wanted freedom; they knew what life was like in the north under a communist dictatorship, and most wanted no part of it. In the Paris Treaty of 1954 both the north and south agreed to free elections. The south conducted elections; the north did not. Both parties agreed to leave each other alone; the south did. The north aggressively fought for the overthrow of the south and eventually succeeded. Going to the aid of the people of South Vietnam was the noble thing for our country to do, and I am proud to have been part of it.

I also think that we have to view the Vietnam conflict in the larger context of the Cold War. The Soviet Union was determined to extend communism worldwide. I remember Khrushchev's speech at the United Nations in 1956 in which he said, "We will bury you." There is much debate as to what he meant, but to a young impressionable teenager, I saw this man and the system he represented to be a threat to democracy and the freedoms that we take for granted. During the cold war the Soviets supported revolution throughout the world from South America to Africa and Asia designed to defeat capitalism and democracy. The Soviets dominated the countries of Eastern Europe. With the Chinese they waged war on western democracies fighting to support South Korea during the Korean War. As Ronald Reagan later suggested, the Soviets were truly an evil empire. The war efforts of the North Vietnamese were supported by the Soviets and the Chinese. The pacifists and anti-war crowd were, and still are, very naive to think that if we just reduce our military unilaterally and sit down and talk to our enemy, there will be peace. It doesn't work that way, and that was the case in Vietnam. The failure of our government was not being honest with the American people and gaining their support for a war to stop aggression against the people of South Vietnam. In spite of revisionist history, we did the right thing in going to the aid of people who wanted nothing more

than the freedom that we in the U.S. enjoy. Our efforts were vindicated by the results once we withdrew our forces: South Vietnam fell to the North, and thousands were imprisoned in “reeducation” camps and denied their freedom. The brave people who risked their lives to flee Vietnam on boats are living proof that our efforts to prevent a communist takeover were justified. The 54,000 Americans who died there did not die in vain.

So much for my historical perspective of the Vietnam War. As Caldwell concluded in his article: “Let’s also acknowledge the moral responsibility of a U.S. government that sent America’s best and bravest into a deliberately no-win war. But let us also remember what that war was about”.

The West eventually won the Cold War, not because we followed the vision of George McGovern and other anti-war liberals, or by following the appeasement policy of Jimmy Carter during the Cold War or Neville Chamberlain in World War II. We won the Cold War because Ronald Reagan stood tough against the communists and Soviets. I witnessed the decline of the military under President Carter. He was naive when it came to the Soviets; he was shocked that the Russians would invade Afghanistan. Duh!! They’re communists; that’s what they do: conquer territory and control people. He must have missed that lesson at the Naval Academy. Ronald Reagan understood this, and he was determined to defeat communism. He knew they understood the language of strength, and he was determined to build our military power to the point that they would fall. When he said, “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall,” he was speaking from a position of strength, through his build-up of forces in the 1980s. There is no question in my mind who won the Cold War: Ronald Wilson Reagan. We live in a much better world today because of the defeat of the Soviet Union and we have Ronald Reagan to thank for that. I’m proud to have been a small part of that effort in my 28.5 years of service. It didn’t come cheap; we must always remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

The Vietnam Wall in Washington, DC, is always a moving place to visit. There are three names I always look up: Bob Beckman and Lucky Lutz, fraternity brothers from Davis and Elkins, and “Doc” Ellis, my buddy from Saigon. There are thousands of other brave Americans on that wall who we should never forget.

### **Military Draft: My Thoughts**

During the Vietnam War the draft was a major issue. It was seen by some to be unfair to those who could not qualify for a college deferment. Richard Nixon fixed this perception by eliminating the draft in 1972. Since then the military has been able to successfully carry out its missions relying on the “all volunteer Army”. In 2004 it became an issue in the presidential election as John Kerry claimed that President Bush had a secret plan to re-instate the draft.

As someone who was affected by the draft (I got a draft deferment for college and joined

the Navy as soon as I graduated to avoid the draft), I have some thoughts about the issue. I believe there is a strong case for the fact that the draft introduced all men to military service and that this is a good thing. As citizens in a free and democratic society, we have an obligation to serve our country. In an article by Lieutenant General Victor Krulak in the San Diego Union-Tribune on December 30, 2004, the author makes the case for restoring the military draft and quotes George Washington: "Every citizen who enjoys the protection of a free government owes not only a portion of his property but of his personal services to the defense of it."

Had there been no draft in 1960 I would not have joined the Navy. I would not have enjoyed the 28 plus-year career that followed. I like to think that I made a meaningful contribution to our country and to my own personal growth. I did not fit the stereotypical picture of a hard-nosed career military man. I was what the founders would call a "citizen soldier". I believe the military needs more people like me who are not joining for the money or for the glory, but to simply serve our country as envisioned by George Washington.

General Krulak concludes his article advocating universal training "where every young man and every young woman registers at 18, where our military needs are met by periodic calls for a year of national service, without any exception or privileged deferments." I agree.

*(I pick up again about four years later in my memoir at the time of my second Vietnam assignment, this time as supply officer on the USS Josephus Daniels)*

## **Vietnam II**

It was 1970, and the war in Vietnam continued. Richard Nixon was now president and promised "peace with honor." His plan to turn the fighting over to the Army of South Vietnam (AVN), and phase out the American combat forces was the honorable thing to do. Let the Vietnamese do their own fighting while we supported our ally. I still believed our effort was a noble one, to promote democracy over a totalitarian communist dictatorship.

Many didn't see it that way, and history will tell of the growing war protests. For many these campus riots were just an excuse to flaunt authority. Most of the leadership of the anti-war movement was a bunch of malcontent, anti-capitalist, anti-military, anti-government anarchists. One of these was Lt. John Kerry who would run for president in 2004 on his war record. Very few countries in the world would tolerate these protests, particularly while waging a war, but peaceful demonstrations were free speech and that was one of the things we fought for. Much is written about Woodstock which occurred in 1969 and is over-hyped each anniversary. In my opinion these hippy malcontents met in this muddy field, and it became an excuse to protest the war and the government, an

excuse to do drugs and engage in sex with anyone who was willing. If Woodstock was a turning point, it turned our country in the wrong direction. Since Woodstock drugs proliferate society, sexually transmitted diseases are spreading, and anti-social behavior is commonplace. There is nothing about Woodstock that is worth rejoicing or celebrating. In 1969 I had a job to do and didn't pay much attention to these events. In my case I was once again ready to become a participant in this struggle for freedom and democracy in Vietnam.

The USS Josephus Daniels was designated a guided missile frigate, (DLG) (she would later be designated a guided missile cruiser) a modern, state-of-the-art combat ship designed to support a carrier battle group or operate independently with a strong surface-to-air capability. During the Vietnam War there was a need for our capability, and the Atlantic based ships took turns with the Pacific based ships to provide assets to the war. In early 1970 it was our turn to deploy to the South China Sea for nine months. Although the ship would be gone that long, my two-year tour of duty would be up in July of 1970. This meant my relief would meet up with us sometime in July, and I would return to the States for a new tour of duty yet to be determined.

We left Norfolk in late January 1970; it was a sad day as everyone said goodbye to loved ones. I was very saddened to leave my new bride behind. Chris and I had moved out of our Portsmouth apartment and she was to return to her mother's home and spend the duration of the deployment there. We also planned to have her visit me in Hong Kong later in the cruise. We would await orders to see where we would go next. On the way to Vietnam we passed through the Panama Canal again then on to Hawaii, remembering that five years earlier I passed through Hawaii on my way to Vietnam the first time. As the ship's supply officer I stayed very busy. We had a somewhat inexperienced crew of storekeepers. This was further compounded by the fact that before leaving, our outfitting of spare parts (over 30,000) was hurried and resulted in many parts being stored in the wrong location onboard the ship. This meant that when the ship's radar was down, the spare part to fix it could not be found. Not a good situation particularly in a wartime deployment relying heavily on radar and other key equipment and weapons. This required a massive re-inventorying of all storerooms so that the actual locations would match the locations recorded on inventory lists. Working day and night, I had to lead this effort while training the new storekeepers and a new assistant supply officer. By the time we reached Guam for a short stop at Subic Bay, Philippines, the storerooms were in good shape, and we were ready to report to the front line.

We spent most of the time operating independently, relying on the nearby carriers for receiving parts and personnel via helicopter. We kept watch on the flights of the North Vietnamese MiGs to act as an early warning system against possible attack on the carriers. We were also the search and rescue ship for any American pilots shot down over the South China Sea.

We were on line (named Yankee Station) for about 40 days at a time then went back to Subic Bay for R&R (rest and relaxation), fresh provisions and spare parts. After two such deployments we had a chance to sail to Singapore for R&R. We were hosted by the

British Navy that still had a base there: Her Majesty's Station Terror. There were also Australian navy ships there. We enjoyed the hospitality of the Brits in this port, one of the last outposts of the British Empire. The Aussies were also good party animals.

Upon leaving Singapore we sailed south to cross the equator and participated in another line-crossing ceremony. This would be a special one for our Commanding Officer, Captain William Ross St. George. He was a Pollywog, never having crossed the equator in his 23-year career. The day we left Singapore he gathered his department heads to review major issues affecting the ship's readiness and logistics. We all had a good time in Singapore, and many items on his list were neglected during our port visit. He had a habit of keeping key message traffic to follow up with the department heads. We knew we were in for a rough meeting as his stack of messages was higher than usual, and we knew we should have been more attentive to details while enjoying our port visit. No sooner had the meeting started than a messenger arrived with a message that would change his life and our meeting. He had been selected to the rank of Rear Admiral. He signed the message, smiled, made the announcement, accepted our congratulations, and adjourned the meeting. He spent most of the day touring the ship with a smile on his face. When we crossed the equator, we were kind of easy on the old man, now an admiral select. Vice Admiral St. George retired in San Diego, and I saw him twice in retirement. He was a good CO and drove me to become a better supply officer. He passed away in December 2004 at the age of 80 and I was able to attend his funeral and share my memories of him with one of his daughters.

It was now back to Subic Bay, the South China Sea, and time to plan for our next port visit in Hong Kong. Chris and I had firmed up plans for her to come to Hong Kong in June during the ship's five-day visit. She would be the only wife to come as others had children to deal with. I also knew by then that my relief would arrive in July, and I would be assigned to the Naval Ship Engineering Center in Hyattsville, MD. We liked the idea of returning to the Washington area and looked forward to our new assignment, but first came Hong Kong.

I had visited Hong Kong in 1966 on my R&R from Vietnam. It's a great city, and it was especially great because Chris and I would have a second honeymoon in this fascinating place. I turned most of the supply department duties over to my assistant and enjoyed our visit which included a unique Fourth of July celebration with some other Americans. We also learned that the ship would be returning to Subic Bay from Hong Kong and that at that time Capt St. George would be relieved by Capt Gordon T. Naylor. We decided that Chris would fly to the Philippines and travel to Subic Bay to extend our time together since we would be there for about a week before heading back to the line. That was a great extension of our second honeymoon staying at the Navy Lodge in Subic. Once the change of command ceremony ended, Captain St. George was promoted to Admiral. He and Chris arranged to fly back together, and the long-standing joke was that she was his first aide as he returned to the states as a new flag officer. Before they left we had a "Hail and Farewell" party for those leaving and arriving. As I was due to leave soon, I was being "fairwelled". I remember commenting in my remarks to the group that if someone had told me two years earlier that when I left the ship I would be married,

sharing a farewell party with my wife and a Rear Admiral in the Philippines that I would have told them they were crazy.

A few weeks later my relief arrived at sea. We spent about 10 days getting things turned over, and I was ready to go home. I flew off the ship on a helo to the carrier, America, spent a night on the carrier and then flew on to DaNang, my old stomping grounds, where the war continued. I was not interested in visiting old sights but wanted out of town as soon as possible. Then it was on to Subic Bay by plane, then a bus to Clark Air Force Base, and homeward bound. We stopped in Mather Air Force Base, and I had a chance to visit my sister and brother-in-law, Nancy and Pete Brown. Pete was stationed there, and Nancy was pregnant with Jennifer at the time. It was a nice short reunion before heading on to Washington, DC, to return to my wife and new job.

Although I was excited to get home, I was leaving one of the best jobs I ever had, doing the things I was trained to do at Supply Corps School. I was running the supply department of a major combatant ship under wartime conditions. The operation of radar, sonar, missile systems, engine plant, guns, and other vital systems were dependent on the effectiveness of my department and the people who worked for me. The food service operation, ship's store, laundry, and barbershop were all critical for morale of the crew in this stressful environment. The Navy Commendation Medal earned for this tour of duty is the award I cherish the most in my career. I was a true wartime logistician.