

The Barker Chronicles
of the
Minnetonka's Deployment to Vietnam
17 December 1967 to 17 October 1968
Excerpts From My Letters to Kay

Friday, January 5



Well, as you can see, I made it O.K. The old man, as well as the rest of the crew thought it was really funny. The Capt didn't say a word to me, but I don't think I had better be late again. I got on about a mile outside Pearl Harbor, the Minnie was moving real slow so as to give me time to catch up.

We crossed the 180th last Saturday and lost the 31st of December. Of course King Neptune made his appearance and we had the ceremony - cutting off hair, dousing with a fire hose, etc. ... Tomorrow we will dock at Guam and will leave for the Philippines on Monday. Since we are so far south, it is really hot but the humidity is worse. The sea temperature is 82° so even a swim wouldn't help. We are cruising along with not much happening. So far our schedule in Vietnam looks pretty good - Philippines until the first of February then to the Mekong Delta, off of the Saigon River for 2 weeks then to Taiwan for a few days, then to an area off Qui Nhon for 21 days then to Sasebo, Japan. It really looks like I will be seeing some interesting countries. After these patrols, the rains (monsoons)

will start and from what I understand, things will quiet down in the areas where we will patrol.

Thursday, January 11

Well, right now we are going through the Philippine Islands. We made it to Guam, and I got out and drove and walked around. Bill Crumrine, Bob Sinclair and I went to the main town of Agana to look around - what a dump. The night before we left, the officers of the Coast Guard Base gave all the officers of the Minnie a going-away party at the O-Club, which is on top of a mountain overlooking part of the island. You would have really liked it up there. The trip from Guam to the Philippines was really bad - following seas, which really pushed us around, some of the guys even got seasick. We hit the middle of the Philippines early this A.M. and started going between the islands. ... We arrive in Subic Bay tomorrow for about 11 days. John Harris, Denny Bauer, Mike Ferguson all told me to say "Hi." ... Give Steve Plusch a call and tell him that the old Minnie has never run better - no trouble at all.

Sunday, January 14

Yesterday, we had a "wetting down" party at the O Club for making JG ... Steve Benson, Chuck Vedder, Rick Reichersamer and I were the honorees. The town of Olongopo is just outside the main gate here, it makes T.J. look decent!

Thursday, January 25

Well, we went out Tuesday morning for firing exercises. Boy, we really shot good,

the best I ever saw. ... We leave at 0500 tomorrow for patrol. We will be on patrol this Sunday morning. Monday morning, some Senator Moss from Utah is coming aboard for and inspection - wow! Also on Monday, I will have to go ashore in Nha Trang for a briefing...

Monday, January 29

Well, we are here. The trip from the Philippines was boring as usual. It took us about 48 hours to get here. We relieved station yesterday, so we haven't done anything in our area yet. Our area is several miles north of Saigon, about 120 miles south of Nha Trang. Today we had to go to Nha Trang to meet with the bosses of Market Time. Naturally, I had to go ashore for a briefing. A swift boat came out and picked up all the officers except the engineers and took us ashore. We got into jeeps and drove thru the town towards the Operations Center. The people are just like the pictures we have seen - small, in black pajamas and extremely poor. I even saw a woman with a pole on her shoulders with 2 buckets of water on either end of the pole. The area around Nha Trang is supposedly pacified, as is all the area in our patrol zone, but in the mountains you could see clouds of smoke where there, apparently, was some fighting going on. The whole town is barbed wire and small huts, there are also many junks around as Nha Trang is a fishing village. After the briefing, they gave us lunch and we left for our area. We are just plodding along at about 15 miles offshore. This is our barrier for patrol, we can go 5 miles either side of it. So we wont be closer than 10 miles at any time, unless we have to shore bombardment, which will be very rare. Also, Senator Moss of Utah came on board for a while in Nha Tran. Boy, was he all smiles handshakes.

Friday, February 2

There really is a war here and we have a ringside seat to it. On our patrols (10 - 15 miles out) you can see the sky lit up with flares and then the bombs start to fall. We all sit in CIC and listen to the radio and can hear what the Army s doing. We are outside the town of Phan Thiet and the VC are really in a push now. They attack at night and pull back during the day. I understand this is going on all over Vietnam now. Some people over here think this is a final push before they talk truce. By the time you get this letter, we will probably know what they are up to. By the way, this letter will go into Phan Thiet this morning (I am on the 4 - 8 watch) from there to Saigon, then to the states. ... The mail service out here isn't too good because the mail has to accumulate in Subic Bay, then it is brought out here by tanker so the mail will take about 2 weeks to get here from the states.

Saturday, February 3

As you probably heard, the VC are making their big push right now ... we are still 15 miles from shore, but we can see the battles going on all night. We are outside the town Phan Thiet and all we can see are jets and flares. It must be something in there. ... I found out that our main job here is a deterrent!! We are here to keep the VC from coming by sea ... it is just our presence that keeps them away.

Friday, February 9

Well, I suppose you have heard all about this new wave of attacks the VC are making. We all have a ringside seat 15 miles from it. It is really scary seeing bombing raids and hearing the guns as well as all the flares. It is not the same as actually being in combat here, it is like watching a movie - John Wayne or Robert Mitchum type of war movie. We boarded our first junk yesterday - just 6 innocent fishermen in their sampan.

We will be relieved from station on Feb 1 and go back to Subic Bay to pick up a small boat to replace one of ours which has crapped out. We will be there for 5 days, the back out here in a different area.

Sunday, February 11

I don't know if many of the letters I sent you will get there because we have given the mail to a swift boat and they dropped it off in Phan Thiet. Phan Thiet has been under fire from the VC for two weeks now, so I guess the mail is still sitting there. This letter is going by tanker in about 2 hours ... By the way, one of our Chief's had to go on emergency leave Friday ... his name is Porter Ballard.

Nothing is new out here, we are still plodding along 15 miles from the war, doing nothing except identifying ships and boarding a few junks. ... Harris is just about the same - chubby but still lonesome for the kids and Lani. He got a copy of their report cards and he has been showing them to everybody. He is really proud of those two kids.

Wednesday, February 28

Well, we are now on patrol off of Qui Nhon. We relieved last Saturday morning after a pretty nasty trip over from Subic Bay. I didn't go ashore this time and I am glad. Qui Nhon has about 110,000 people in it, so it is a pretty big town. Since it is so big, it is also a VC target.. Anyway there were 12 or so merchant vessels there unloading cargo. They all had to anchor and unload by the cargo by small boat because the VC would sabotage the ships if they tied up at a pier. The patrols are even more boring than the last area. We are closer though - 10 miles from the beach. Again, there are a lot of flares along the beach at night.

Monday, March 4

Sorry that I haven't written you sooner, but a lot has happened here in the last few days. You might have read in the paper about an infiltration attempt by the North Vietnamese and its subsequent failure. Well, we had a part in it. On the 29th of Feb, we received a report of 4 unidentified trawlers heading toward the coast from seaward. We were ordered out to investigate one of these, which was heading for our area. We picked him up on radar about 25 miles from the coast and commenced surveillance on him - he was changing course and speeds very strangely. Meanwhile, the other three trawlers made a run for the beach (they were nowhere close to us). The CGC Winona (a 255' like us) took one of them under fire and destroyed it. A second one was taken under fire by the CGC Androscoggin (another 255') and was destroyed. The 3rd was taken under fire by 2 82' Coast Guard patrol boats and some Navy swift boats and was destroyed.

Apparently, the one we were tracking heard this and immediately headed for sea. We were ordered to turn the trawler back to shore by any means short of taking it under direct fire. So, we closed in on the trawler. At 0210 in the morning, we went to G.Q. About 0230 we were 2,000 yards from him (he had no lights showing) and started to flash him by light, nothing happened. So we fired an 81 mm illumination shell at him and really lit him up. Immediately, he put on his running lights but did not answer our call by light. We kept on illuminating him and the Captain said for me to shoot across his bow. We shot one 5" round which exploded right in front of him. Nothing happened, so we fired another, and another, and another, still nothing. We then got our South Vietnamese interpreter to call him in Vietnamese and tell him to stop, he kept on going. So we kept on illuminating him. We cut across his bow, shined the 24"

searchlight on him. Still, he kept on going. We fired .50 cal bursts across his bow and 2 more 5" rounds and he still kept on heading for sea. At about 0545 we secured from G.Q., but kept on tracking him. At about 0645 we went to G.Q. again and shot another round of 5" and crossed his bow at about 50 yards with the ship. He still kept on going to seaward. We then received orders to fall back out of visual range and track him by radar, so we fell back.

About this time, we got a message from Commander, Naval Forces Viet Nam, saying that the events of the night 29 Feb - March 1 were considered the greatest naval victory of the Vietnam War - 3 trawlers destroyed, 1 turned back (ours) and 3 sampans captured with arms and ammo on board. Commander CG Three (our boss) sent us a really nice message congratulating us on our fine job. He said that the efforts of the Minnie, Winona, and Androscroggin have saved countless Vietnamese lives and American lives (Boy, do I feel like a hero). Anyway, we were to track the trawler to his homeport. So we followed him for two days. Out to the Parcel Islands and then north. We followed him for about 250 - 300 miles. We were called off the search when we were 100 miles from Red China, where we think he was going. We are now heading back to our patrol area. It was sort of exciting, but I don't particularly want to get that close to China again (except Hong Kong).

Would you give Steve Plusch a call and read the first part of the letter to him. I am sure he would like to hear about it. Tell him we fired a total of nineteen 81mm illumination, seven 5" rounds, and twenty-five .50 cal rounds.

Well, we feel that we are really doing a job out here now and feel that we may have now contributed to the war effort. We may even get a medal out of this mess, but I doubt it. Apparently, after the Tet

Offensive, the VC used all of their hidden away guns and ammo, and were very desperate, so they tried the trawlers. I hope they realize that it is rather a fruitless venture.

Thursday, March 7

We again had some excitement on the morning of 5 March (about 0100 early). We were called in to do some shore bombardment ... We shot 32 rounds of 5" at some VC on the beach. Apparently we must have scared the hell out of them because they dispersed quickly. They weren't expecting any fire from the sea, they were busy fighting the Army towards land. This was near the town of Tuy Hoa, a few miles south of Qui Nhon.

I guess that the trawler business is really big, as we have gotten several congratulatory messages, even one from Admiral U.S. Grant Sharp, CO Pacific Fleet.

Monday, March 11

We are having some engine trouble, so it looks like it will be slow trip to Sasebo, too bad, we were going pretty good until now.

Friday, March 15

Well we get relieved tomorrow at about 0700. Then we head for Sasebo at that breakneck speed of 13.5 knots due to our engine trouble. ... We had another trawler scare last night, but it turned out to be a Japanese trawler going towards the fishing grounds.

Friday, March 22

We arrived in Sasebo yesterday after a long, long trip from Vietnam. The best speed we made was 15 knots and that was with a 3 knot current!

Monday, April 1

We leave (Sasebo) tomorrow for Vietnam and 42 glorious days before seeing another port.

Saturday, April 6

Not much going on now, we are just cruising along toward our new area. We will relieve on Monday and then start our 32-day patrol (in area 9). ... This next patrol is going to be the worst one of them all, mainly because of the length and all the activity that goes down here. Oh well, Hong Kong in May.

Tuesday, April 9

We relieved here yesterday and started our patrol. It is unbelievably hot down here - temperatures have averaged 95° with 90% + humidity. We are at 8° North, so the sun rises exactly in the east and sets exactly in the west. At noon, it is 88° high and that is about straight up. We are in the transition period between the NE monsoon and the SW monsoon. In a about a month the SW monsoon will be in full effect, 8 - 10 ft swells, 30 knot winds and thunderstorms every day. To make matters worse, the air conditioning is going in spurts. When it is off, the heat from the boilers make the ship like an oven, so there is really no escape from the heat. Also, the evaporators are not working now, so we haven't been able to take any showers for 2 days. Whew!! It isn't as bad as it sounds because we can take 85° salt water showers, then a quick rinse with fresh water, lots of deodorant and foot powder.

Today, we had a rendezvous with one of the Coast Guard 82 footers...Neil Harding, my roommate from OCS is the XO and Tuneski let me take a ride with him for 2 hours. ... There isn't too much else that is happening here, except that the chances are very good that we will get quite a bit of shore bombardment in, as this is an extremely

active Viet Cong area. ...we can only get within 5 miles of the beach because this part of the Gulf of Siam is extremely shallow. In fact, it is only 6 feet deep at 4 miles out and we draw 17 feet. Tomorrow we are going to An Thoi, which is on the tip of an island in the gulf. It is the headquarters for the coastal group in the area. We have to go to a briefing there. ... We saw "How the West Was Won" last night.

Wednesday, April 17

Sorry to have so long in writing, but we have been extremely busy for the last week. Every day we have had something different to do. We have had several swift boats and CG 82s along side, we had to tow a trawler to a small island. He had been out of food for several days and had no water for the last 2 days. We gave him what he wanted then started to tow him to the island and he started to balk at the idea because he thought there were VC on the island. It turned out that there weren't though. The next day we saw him drifting again and we gave him more food and water, then called an 82 to tow him in.

Anyway, we had 5 shore bombardment missions since last Thursday with many more to come. The first on the 11th was 15 rounds of 5". We destroyed one sampan in a rice paddy and killed 2 VC. The next was on the 15th. We fired 100 rounds, just north of the town of Son Ong Doc, about 30 miles north of the southern tip of Vietnam. No results yet. Yesterday we had two missions, the first south of Son Ong Doc and the second about 2 miles north. 50 rounds in the first and 30 rounds in the second. No results yet. Today, we went way north and shot 75 rounds about 7 miles from the Cambodian border near the town of Ha Tien. It was kind of scary there as the spotter plane was getting shot at, although he didn't get hit. That makes a total of 270 rounds in the last week. ... We can't shoot

tomorrow because we are almost out of ammo! We are scheduled to get some on Friday though and we will start again.

Saturday, April 20

We shot yesterday, 50 rounds. We destroyed 5 VC training buildings and killed 3 VC. Dr. Wray had an appendicitis case from an 82 today - it was ok though, only indigestion.

Monday, April 22

We fired shore bombardment every day last week except for Saturday. Sunday was our best shoot so far - 3 structures destroyed, 13 damaged, 6 sampans damaged, 5 VC killed, 5 wounded. Not bad for 50 rounds. We have an unrep scheduled for today, tomorrow we go north to Ha Tien to fire on Wednesday. Our target there is 100 yds from the Cambodian border.

Thursday, April 25

...we only fired 150 rounds yesterday. We fired 50 near Ha Tien, 500 yds from Cambodia and the other 100 on Phu Quoc Island - about in the middle of it. We never did see the fall of shot in any of the rounds.

Sunday, April 28

So far, we have fired 9 shore bombardment missions in Area 9. One on Phu Quoc Island, two near Ha Tien, and six around Song Ong Doc. Only 12 more days then we leave for Hong Kong. We get relieved on the 10th of May and will arrive Hong Kong on the 14th. By the way, the monsoons have started here. It is about 90° here and cloudy. It is really starting to rain and really comes down in buckets. By the way, (on the map), Con Son Island is where Bill Crumrine spent his (first) year over here.

Thursday, May 2

Not much has happened since I last wrote you except that we shot 120 rounds on Phu

Quoc Island yesterday. That brings us to 13 shore bom missions and 705 rounds total.

Sunday, May 12

We were relieved Friday morning after 32 days on station. It was our best patrol - the time went the fastest. We are on our way to Hong Kong now, about half way. We will get there on the 14th, early AM.

Wednesday, May 22

I have been busy shopping, boarding ships, and going on tours. On Friday, the USS Enterprise is coming here. There are 420 officers and 4,880 enlisted on her. Boy, is it ever going to be crowded.

Friday, May 31

Hong Kong has been the best port we have seen, even though we spent all our money here. The people here are just great. ... Well there is a little old lady, Mary Soo, who does all kinds of work for all the Navy ships that come here, like clean and paint the sides, take care of garbage, etc. ... Box Score - Minnetonka vs VC as of 1 June: 24 VC killed, 30 VC wounded, 12 structures destroyed, 34 structures damaged, 4 sampans destroyed, 8 sampans damaged, 1 secondary explosion, 1 fire started, 3 bunkers destroyed/damaged, and 1 rice cache destroyed.

Monday, June 3

We got into Kaohsiung yesterday after a short 24 hr trip from Hong Kong. It wasn't too bad, little choppy. Kaohsiung is the main port of Taiwan and it is really crowded with merchant ships, trawlers, and other fishing type vessels. We are planning to have a ships party on Friday - big dinner with free booze. Guess who is in charge.

Sunday, June 9

Last Friday we had the ships party, it was quite a blowout. Everyone got good and

loaded except me. I had to make sure everything went well.

Wednesday, June 12

Yesterday, a few of the chiefs, Wallis, Camunas, and Kelly, took me to the Chief's Club at about 1:00 PM and I came back to the ship around 6:30 PM and slept until 7 this morning. My head still hurts.

Friday, June 14

We leave here tomorrow and head for Subic Bay where we will have 4 days to get last minute supplies and spend one day on the gun range to get the 5" back into shape. Then we head to Area 2 for 4 weeks. The weather is lousy, it has rained almost every day since we have been here. It will be nice to have it cold and rainy instead the hot tropical rains.

Tuesday, June 18

We have had a change in schedule and are leaving tomorrow for patrol. The Winona broke down in Area 9, so the entire schedule got shifted around. We are not going to Area 2 now, but to Area 3 for at least 30 days. ... It is so hot here that you can't believe it. The air conditioning is out - of course. Everybody is constantly sweating, I mean we are all soaking wet, you can see the wrinkles in the paper from the sweat from my forearm. This is really the hottest I have ever been, of course the humidity is high - it was 108 degrees yesterday and, at 4 AM, it was 102 degrees. Good old J. V. Harris is sitting next to me on the fantail writing to Lani, we can't even go below decks because of the heat.

Monday, June 24

So far we have been pretty busy on the patrol - thank goodness it makes the time go faster. The morning we relieved - 21 June - we were called in for gunfire support. We

fired 222 rounds into a VC rest area and really tore up the countryside. The firing was so intense at one point that we caused a landslide. We pounded that area.

Yesterday, we were called in to shoot again. We shot into another VC rest area, this time only 100 rounds. We fired 75 high explosive and 25 White Phosphorous (WP). We got about half the area burning with the WP and it was still burning about 3 hours later.

Right now we are towing a Vietnamese junk to Qui Nhon. He had engine trouble and when we boarded it, the crew didn't have the proper identification papers. So we got the word to bring it to Qui Nhon harbor. As you can see, we have been pretty busy. Also we have had two unreps since we arrived here. Only 123 days until Long Beach.

Saturday, June 29

So far, we have had 4 missions, with the 4th today...120 rounds. That makes a total of 592 rounds in one week. In area 9, we fired 865 in one month. If it keeps up at this rate, we will shoot 2500 rounds by the time we leave the area.

Saturday, July 6

Underway as before, not much else to report. Although we have been doing some more shooting, things are fairly dull. Our total count is now 24 VC killed, 30 VC wounded, 47 structures damaged, 42 structures destroyed, 12 sampans destroyed, 1 rice cache destroyed, 3 bunkers destroyed, 11 secondary fires and explosions, and 1400 meters of trails and trenches destroyed. Not bad for the old bean shooter. Yesterday, we had a misfire with the gun loaded, this is a very dangerous situation, but we cleared it out OK. ... We are getting 3 Ensigns from the academy around the first of August.

Friday, July 12

We are now in Area 7, we got a schedule change last Sunday and we were told to head south to Area 7. No real apparent reason. We stopped over in Vung Tau for briefings, then we went on down here. So far we have shot every day, twice yesterday. So far we have shot 1513 rounds since we left Subic. This area is a real drag. No towns or anything to get a fix from. All the land is VC held and the adjacent water is only about 6 feet deep out to 3 miles, so we don't get very close when we shoot. The charts all call this the area the mouths of the Mekong River. In my last two letters, I have forgotten to tell you something. Two weeks ago, I spent the day in Qui Nhon doing a service project. 12 of us went to a hospital and worked all day. Some of the guys helped put barbed wire around the hospital, while the rest of us helped them move into a new pharmacy. I hefted pills around all day. It was really a lot of work. ... They (the people from the base) took us on a tour of the town and I got some good pictures of where the VC and ARVN troops had a tremendous weeklong battle during the Tet Offensive.

Sunday, July 21

Same as before, only we haven't been shooting as much. We have only shot twice since last Sunday and only 250 rounds. We have now shot 2048 rounds since we left Subic last month and 2952 since we left Long Beach. Other than the shooting, it has been as boring as usual. We get relieved from here next Wednesday by the USCGC Bibb who is making her first patrol. She is the first of the relief ships to arrive, she came all the way from New York. The first 3 relief ships from the east coast have arrived and the Minnie and the Winona are the only ones left from the second group of 5 in Squadron 3. From here we head to Subic, Bangkok, Area 9, Singapore and Subic, then

home. We just received word that we are moving towards the beach for another shoot in about an hour. We have been shooting in the peninsula around where the Mekong River hits the sea. This is apparently all VC held.

Monday, July 22

Well, I spent the day working and shooting. We shot 150 rounds today at a VC weapons storage area, destroyed 3 structures, damaged 12, destroyed 3 camouflaged objects, either bunkers or structures, and had one secondary explosion. The spotter said that he saw VC running into houses just before we started to shoot and they didn't come out. We had 5 or 6 direct hits on those structures, but don't know how many we killed or wounded. This was one of our better shoots and I am really happy about it. We even got mentioned over the Armed Forces Radio about what an outstanding shoot we had.

Wednesday, August 7

We left Bangkok this morning and are now heading for Area 9. Bangkok is just about as nice as Hong Kong, except we are really in the jungle. We had to go 30 miles up a river before we moored and it was all mangroves, palms, and swamp. ... We picked up 3 brand new academy ensigns and they seem to be pretty sharp guys. ... This was our first R & R and we really made the most of it. ... It is great to be heading out to our last patrol. Only 28 days on station, then Singapore, and home.

Sunday, August 11

So far we have done nothing but inspect trawlers in this area. Tomorrow morning we are scheduled for a shoot on the western edge of Phu Quoc Island. We really aren't sure of what we are shooting at, but it will be good to do something. Also there are several swift boat operations going on as

well as Army, Air Force, and Vietnamese operations. We are right off the U Minh Forest where most of the action is taking place. This might be a more exciting patrol yet.

Tuesday, August 13

In 2 days, the USCGC Wachusett leaves Seattle to relieve us. We are kind of glad. We had our first shoot yesterday, only 38 rounds, damaged one structure and there was one secondary explosion. ... The weather here is miserable - the Southwest Monsoon is going full strength now, so there are 4 - 6 foot seas, cloudy, and raining. Although it isn't as hot as the last time we were here, the humidity is worse.

Friday, August 16

I got my orders!! I am going to the District Office as an RCC Controller. I am to be detached from the Minnetonka the day we get in.

Tuesday, August 20

Today we were in a big operation. 2 swift boats and several Vietnamese junks with troops went up the Song Ong Doc River. We softened up the landing area as well as the Air Force doing some bombing. Anyway, we shot 437 rounds (of 5-in 38 rounds) over a period of about 5 hours. It was really bad staying that long at G.Q. Our results were 45 structures damaged, 7 destroyed, 19 sampans destroyed, 4 trench lines destroyed and 1 large secondary explosion. This was one of our best shoots so far. Tonight we had a medevac. One of the men on Puolo Be Island had a butane tank explode on him and he was burned seriously. He is aboard now and we will take him to An Thoi for evacuation to a hospital.

This patrol is really starting to drag now even though we are pretty busy. It feels like we have been here 2 months and it has been

only a week and a half. I guess that I am ready to go home now.

Monday, August 26

Since I last wrote to you, we have only fired 60 rounds in H and I (harassment and interdiction) missions (30 each day).

Friday, August 30

We finally did some shooting today, only 60 rounds at a half sunk trawler. It was 70 feet long and 30 feet wide. We were shooting at a range of 7 miles. The rounds were close, but no bananas. We came as close as 20 meters from it, but just couldn't quite hit it. I really don't know why they wanted us to shoot at it though, it was half sunk in a canal.

Sunday, September 1

Everything is quiet here, we haven't done a thing except patrol up and down. We are all real anxious to see the Bibb next Saturday morning.

Friday, September 6

This will be my last free letter, as we get relieved tomorrow and it is finally over. We finally started shooting again. We fired 245 rounds on Phu Quoc Island the day before yesterday and another 30 yesterday. This makes a total of 51 shore bombardment missions, firing 4,684 rounds of 5".

Tuesday, September 10

We made it to Singapore without a hitch. Our relief ship was, naturally, 10 hours late and we were all really anxious to get moving. This place is really nice. It is the cleanest town we have been in, you can even drink the water straight from the tap. The weather is the best we have seen since leaving the states ... 95° - 100° during the day and about 75° at night with no humidity or rain. It is hard to believe that we are only 60 miles from the equator.

Saturday, September 21

It was Happy Hour at the O Club (in Subic Bay), 10 cents for any drink. After Happy Hour, my gunners mates had a party to the EM Club on the base - steak dinner and, of course the old boss bought all the drinks, but it was worth every penny of it, these are the greatest guys on the ship. Anyway, they gave me a beautiful plaque with all their names on it, wait until you see it, it must have taken them months to make, it is fantastic. I nearly cried all over the place. I have never been so choked up.

This morning we had a personnel and material inspection by the Commodore of Squadron 3 and he was really impressed with the crew and the ship. We are really going to look good sailing into Long Beach.

Monday, September 23

It looks like we are finally going to leave Subic tomorrow, everything is just about ready to go in the engineering area. ... The weather has been unbelievably hot. With no air conditioning and a metal ship, it is 120° inside during the day and cools off to about 100° at night. I must have sweat off 10 lbs per night. When I wake up, it is just like stepping out of a shower, the sweat just rolls off. It is the worst I have ever seen.

Saturday, September 28

Our first leg of the trip is over. We will be in Guam tomorrow and then leave, after fueling, for Hono. It took a day to get through the Philippines and when we got through, Typhoon Elaine was there waiting. We made a 120 mile south detour to miss it. We only had some wind and bad seas, nothing too bad though and it lasted only a day and a half. The area between the Philippines and Guam is known as "Typhoon Alley" because they all head up that channel.

Thursday, October 10

My last letter!! We got here Tuesday morning, and in the afternoon and evening Archie Yano and I went up to the Indermuehles. We are leaving today at about 1:00 and heading for home. ... We will be home at 10:00 AM Thursday, the 17th.