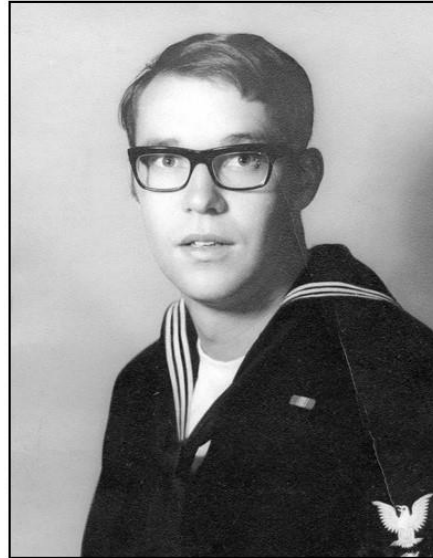


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U.S. Navy
USS John F. Kennedy CV-67

Japan
Mediterranean Sea



Do you remember the slogan “Join the Navy and see the world?” I enlisted in the U.S. Navy in June 1967 for four years.

During the early days of Boot Camp, the Brigade Commander handed out post card wish lists. The wish list asked us where we would like to be stationed. As far as I knew, nobody asked for Vietnam or Kansas. On my card I put Hawaii, Japan, and the East Coast. I was lucky. I ended up being stationed at Hawaii, Japan, Virginia Beach, and the Mediterranean Sea.

My first duty station was Barbers Point Naval Air Station, Oahu, Hawaii. Little did I know that there was a rule that the Navy would not send you overseas direct from Boot Camp. I was assigned to clean the galley, twelve hours a day, nineteen days on duty and two days off. Two days off was just enough time to get too much to drink and too much sun at Waikiki Beach. Unfortunately, I was there for only five months.

My second duty station was on the Administrative Staff for the Admiral at Atsugi Naval Air Station, Atsugi, Japan. Since typing was not my forte, I was assigned as one of the staff duty drivers. I drove the Admiral around the base. With the Admiral Flag on the front bumper, I could park anywhere I wanted. I also drove high ranking officers and civilian VIPs to Tokyo for flights back to the United States. This was more fun than it appeared. For the trip back I had a shiny black car all to myself. Another important assignment, since I had a security clearance, was that I was able to go into the secret safe room

and mop the floor all by myself.

When I checked into the base at Atsugi, I had to stop by the available facilities and have my incoming chit sheet initialed. Some of the facilities were the gym, the galley, the Disbursing Clerk, the Navy Credit Union, the dentist, and the Church. I talked too long with the dentist and the Chaplain. Little did I know that the dentist was the Base basketball coach. I ended up joining the base basketball team and the church choir, both under duress. When I checked into my duty station, I told the Senior Chief Petty Officer that I would have to take off early once a week for choir practice. If that was a problem, I wouldn't go. He said that was no problem at all. He was the church organist.

Japan was a great place to be stationed. When off duty, I visited Tokyo, Yokohama, Yokosuka, and many other towns.

I climbed Mt. Fuji on a tour, a two-day event. We started at the tree line and walked until near dark. We slept in a hostel. One room held 300 people, all fully clothed and shod (like parking at Disney). The next morning we walked to the summit before sunrise so we could see the sunrise from atop Fuji-san. After two years in Japan I was ready to return to the United States.

Toward the end of my duty in Japan I received my next assignment, Attack Squadron 34, stationed at Naval Air Station Oceana, Virginia Beach, Virginia. For the first six months, it was a nice place to be with my new wife, Regina. Good

things never last forever. Attack Squadron flew the A-6 attack bombers fitted to fly off an aircraft carrier. We were going to sea.

In August of 1970 we moved from the base to the USS John F. Kennedy CV 67, an attack aircraft carrier. We were headed for the eastern Mediterranean Sea. After ten days, anything “fresh” to eat or drink went to powder. Breakfast with powdered milk and powdered eggs, yum! There was an uprising in Jordan and the USA wanted to be ready to help. Where is Jordan? Who is Jordan? Who cares? After a couple of weeks we must have settled the war, enabling us to go to ports of call.

We had great ports of call: Naples, Malta, Athens, Barcelona, Palma de Mallorca, Cyprus. In my opinion, Naples was not much of a city, but they had train service to Rome. On my trip to Rome, I was sitting on a bench, looking at a city map, when two girls from the US asked if they could borrow my map. The first thing they did was turn the map right side up. They kept me from getting lost so I bought them dinner. Then they made sure I got on the right train to Naples.

The Navy decided to boost morale by asking six hundred married men if they would like to go back to the United States for two weeks for a Christmas break and another six hundred married men if they would like their wives to join them in Athens, Greece, for Christmas. Regina was able to join me in Athens.

On our way back to the United States in 1971, the Navy, in an effort to downsize the fleet, offered an early-out to anyone being discharged in the next 120 days. For me and several others, we were out of the Navy the day the ship hit the dock! I was back in Iowa that night.

It took several years to make my conclusions about the Vietnam War. When Dwight Eisenhower was leaving the presidency, he said, “Beware of the Military-Industrial Complex.” What started the war? What did the United States gain after six years of war? Who profited from the war? My conclusion is that it was a waste of lives and money.



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