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USS Bon Homme Richard
CVA-31
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Guard



Bon Homme Richard Crew Photo
Wayne Cline, 3rd from Left, Back Row

I didn't wait for the draft. I enlisted when I was a junior in high school in 1965, during the school year. That summer I went to Boot Camp in Olathe, Kansas. They had a Naval air station there. I was 18. You couldn't join before that. I'm sitting there thinking, I love flying, and why in the hell should I get drafted? I want to go where I want!

After Boot Camp in Olathe, I went back to school. Right after graduation, I went to ADR [Airfield Damage Repair] school in Memphis, Tennessee. I got an award for being an Honorman. I was there three months. When school was almost over, we got to go with an instructor and crank up a World War II "tail dragger" plane. That was cool.

My branch of service was called Naval Air. I worked as a reset engine mechanic and was sent to other different schools. Then we went home for a while and were in the Reserves and went to Olathe. They would fly a C-18 up to Des Moines to pick us up and fly us down for the weekend. It was almost a year before we went on active duty in '68.

Everybody going on active duty went to San Francisco. Then I went to the ship from San Diego. My rank was E-4. Before we left, we were down in San Diego, ported for quite a while. All the different mechanics schools were right there in that area. I went to a jet engine school. When we came back to San Diego after the first tour over there, I went to some other schools. I learned about jet engines and other similar subjects like that.

My ship was the Bon Homme Richard, named after John Paul Jones' ship in the Revolutionary War. We were a flagship, which means that of the four carriers that were there in Vietnam during

the two years I was there, the Admiral of all the air operations in Vietnam, Martin Doan Carmody, was on our ship. I got to fly his crew and him around. Before we went overseas we went on two tours to San Diego, then we would do carrier crawls. When we were ready to leave, the air groups came aboard. We had A-4 and F-8 fighters. They'd fly aboard when it was time to leave. The rest of them were from the squadrons. Once they came back to San Diego, they would leave and go back to their different air bases in California. Before we left and took off for Hawaii, they flew aboard. They brought all their equipment and stuff aboard, but the planes had to fly aboard. Then we would go to Hawaii and do carrier crawls there.

My duties were in intermediate maintenance, but on a ship, with all those people, what they do tends to blur. They have intermediate maintenance that does different maintenance jobs on the planes. That's what I was. We had A-4s and the A-7s aboard. On the front of the jet engine they had what they call a CSD, a generator for all their electricity. We built those. I was in the jet engine shop until I got on the flight crew. On that first tour, the squadrons did their own maintenance except when they had a jet go down and the engine needed to be changed. We would change the engine by breaking the jet in half to take the engine out. The new one comes out of a can. They were put in cans for shipment. We would have to take all of the stuff out of the old engine, pull it out, and then put the new engine in when it was ready.

We lost quite a few planes when they were coming in and had gotten too low on the round down, where the flight deck started on the back of the ship. When they hit that round down it scoops

them on up, across the angle deck and off.

We were flying nights. I slept right underneath the deck. I had got used to hearing the sound when they come back aboard and hit where the cables are, and I slept through it. I was on the top bunk, four high, and they were double wide, so you had to ease in. It was up near the air conditioning and the heat, but the air conditioning wasn't that good because it was an older carrier.

I got to travel a lot, especially that second year when I was on the C-1A crew. There were four of us. We took turns. When we were done on the line and came back to Subic Bay, I went on a lot of trips, over to Taiwan because we had the admiral aboard and he was having some teak furniture made. We went there to check on his furniture! We'd stay about three days. Then before we left to come back to the States, I made four trips where I took out all the seats [of the plane], to bring his furniture back to the ship.

In the second year I was on the flight crew of a C-1A. There's a pilot, co-pilot, and one of us would fly with it. When you land, you service it. If anything goes wrong with it, you get it fixed. And if you're on the crew you know if something needs to be looked at. Sometimes contractors or other groups would come aboard from the Philippines and we'd have a full plane. They sat backwards because of the cat shot [catapult]. On one of the trips to Taiwan we were shut down because the carriers spent so many weeks on, then some weeks off. The cats, the catapults, were shut down while the ship was in port. So we deck launched. We went clear to the ass end of the ship; the pilot held on the brakes and cranked it up as fast as it would go. We were on the angle deck because the other planes were forward. My crew was up watching because we'd never done that before! The flight deck is like a hundred feet off of the water. We went over the side and just fell until the props caught ahold of enough to come up and out of there. It takes quite awhile to get the steam up for the catapults for just one plane. You can guess what it would feel like if you went off the edge of the carrier and you dropped! "Come on, baby! Catch hold!" It wouldn't have floated very well, full of fuel.

Every so often, you had to do a complete check of the airplane. and it takes up too much damn room on the aircraft carrier to do it. So when we flew back and forth to Da Nang to bring the mail back, we stayed there for about a week. At night we would get rocket attacks. We slept in the barracks.

We flew the Admiral down into Saigon. When we landed, our airplane blew a tire. The airfield didn't have much in the way of gear but they had a C-1A plane, so I talked them into taking off a tire from that one. All so the admiral could leave the next day! Then we went on down to Singapore, where the ship came down about half a week later for R and R. What was neat was when we went someplace like that, even though the ship came down, me and the other three guys that were on that flight group always got to stay in a hotel. It was nice when we went to Singapore and the Philippines. I liked Hong Kong, too.

I remember when the Pueblo happened we were on our way and they didn't tell us about it. We went up there where the Pueblo was, just in case. The Pueblo was a smaller intelligence ship—it was used as a spy ship but it wasn't supposed to be. The north Koreans captured it because it was way up north of Japan. They finally gave it back.

Back in Vietnam they would bring the cargo ships alongside and resupply. They'd shoot the cables over and then they'd bring all the stuff across. The ammunitions are below. They'd bring them up there on elevators. We had nukes aboard because we picked them up when we got to the Philippines. They would tell us when we went to Hong Kong or Japan, "Don't talk about it!" When they brought them aboard, they had Marine guards and the nukes were covered up with canvas.

At the end of that tour, we pulled back into San Diego. We all knew that the ship was going up to Bremerton to be decommissioned. If your time



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was up, you went home. Me and some other guys were from the Midwest so we rented a car and drove home. We drilled there until our time was up and they even shortened that. Then I was in the National Guard, the Air Guard, for twenty-two years down in Des Moines starting in '72 or '73. I was a Second Class E6 when I got out.

I didn't have any trouble from anybody because we came back here to Slater. I got all the regular medals, but one is the best. It's from the admiral.

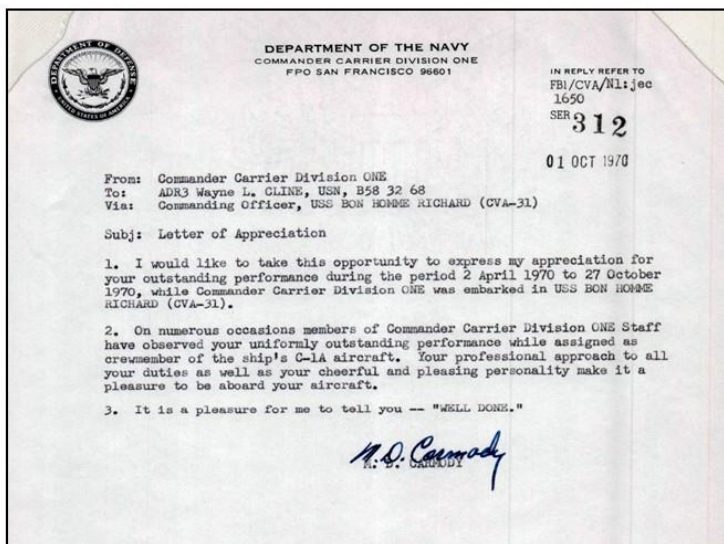
I learned a lot. My job was kind of to keep them flying. I was the only enlisted guy on the crew. The rest were officers. You had a job and you had to take care of it and make sure it was ready to go again. We never did have a job in a foreign port that was hard.

I liked my term of service. I sometimes think that if I hadn't been married, I would have stayed in!

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C-1A Aircraft



**Letter of Appreciation
from
Admiral Carmody**