

Join the Navy, See the World

My military service was with the U.S. Navy. My Dad, Marvin Kruse, encouraged this because he served in both the Army and Navy. I attended Reserve Officer Training Candidate (ROTC) classes seeking to become an officer.

During college we had to participate in a summer ROTC cruise; my initial assignment was the USS Ozbourn (DD-846) destroyer. But in May 1968, an event would happen to change my career. The USS Scorpion (SSN-589) nuclear submarine was missing, and all vessels on the East Coast were looking for it. My orders were changed to the USS Chara (AE-31) ammunition ship out of Concord, CA. Upon arrival in San Francisco, I called Orin Adair who showed me some of the area before I reported. I even saw the San Francisco Giants play, my first baseball game outside of Chicago. After sightseeing, Orin took me all the way to Concord to find my ship. Within a few days all the other midshipmen were there and off we went. The focus of this cruise was a fleet exercise off the coast of Southern California. I spotted a sleek looking destroyer-type ship and wanted to serve aboard that type ship.

Before commissioning we filled out “dream sheets” indicating our preferences for homeport, department, and ship type. I asked for Yokosuka, Japan in the Operations Department on a DLG class ship (destroyer leader with guided missiles). The DLG was the sleek ship I spotted.

Upon graduation from the University of Mississippi, I was commissioned Ensign, USNR with orders for schooling in San Diego then on to my ship. The USS Mahan (DLG-11) was home ported in Yokosuka. And I was assigned to the Operations Department as Assistant Communications Officer. In fact, the USS Mahan was the sleek ship I noted as a midshipman.

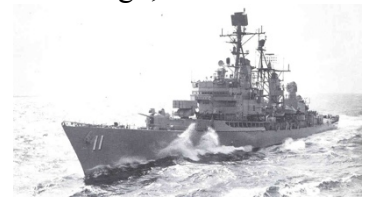
After communication schools I headed for the Western Pacific and the Vietnam War. The initial flight was a Super DC-8 from Travis AFB, California at 5:30 AM to Honolulu to Wake Island to Clark Air Base in the Philippine Islands arriving at 4:30 PM local time, seeing daylight for a long, long time. Then a 2-hour bus ride was necessary to get to Subic Bay, which was the main debarkation point. Have you ever slept on a



real bumpy bus ride? Usually a C-2 *Greyhound* cargo plane flies from there to the Tonkin Gulf, but since a C-2 went down a week earlier and all were grounded, I had to get a C-1 *Trader* plane flying from Da Nang, Vietnam. I was stuck in Subic Bay for about 3 days, but found an A-3 *Skywarrior* attack plane going to Da Nang. Upon arrival at the Bachelor Officers Quarters (BOQ), I noticed the wall was boarded up. They were attacked the previous week, which gives one little comfort while sleeping. The next morning I was on the C-1 headed to the USS Hancock (CV-19) aircraft carrier. After lunch I got on a helicopter for ferrying passengers to all ships in the Tonkin Gulf. After about a dozen stops we finally made it to the USS Mahan. That evening they served steak cooked on the barbeque on the fantail. I thought this was going to be great, especially when we were in Hong Kong within 3 days. Had I known their schedule I would have waited there for the ship to arrive rather than taking the circuitous route!



The ship shared its time between Yokosuka, the Tonkin Gulf and the Sea of Japan with port calls in Taiwan (Keelung), Japan (Sasebo), Philippine Islands (Subic Bay), and Hong Kong. While taking

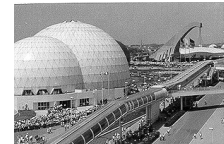


pictures of steam engines in Taiwan, I was asked to stop. Apparently they were concerned about spying or something. Taiwan was still zealously aware of China. From Sasebo I did get to visit Nagasaki. They have a large Peace Park with a statue pointing to the sky.

A museum has a scorched barn wall except for the human outline. Real scary! I almost expected the Japanese visitors to come up to me and kick me in the shins. The highlight of my time off ship was when my Mom & Dad visited. I met them in Yokohama, where the three of us started our tour of Japan. We even rode the bullet train to Osaka for the World's Fair



called Expo 70. After leaving them in Tokyo, I took a flight from Yokota Air Base to Clark Air Base. This time the bus had the windows barred on the 2-hour trip to Subic Bay.



USS Mahan spent 240 days of her Western Pacific deployment as PIRAZ (Positive Identification Radar Advisory Zone) ship in the Tonkin Gulf. In this capacity, the ship provided positive radar control and advisory vectors for all strike, reconnaissance, and combat air patrol aircraft operating in the near-saturated controlled airspace off the coast of North Vietnam. In addition, the ship was responsible for identifying all friendly, unknown, and hostile surface and air contacts in the North Tonkin Gulf, providing advanced position picket protection for the strike forces operating to the south on Yankee Station.

USS Mahan spent 111 days on PARPRO (Peacetime Aerial Reconnaissance Program) Picket Station, accumulating more time in this assignment than any other ship in U.S. Naval history. In the aftermath of the April 1969 downing of a Navy EC-121 reconnaissance aircraft by North Korea, this picket station was created to support the U.S. Peacetime Aerial Reconnaissance Program in the Sea of Japan. In this capacity, USS Mahan provided surface-to-air missile protection and positive radar control for friendly fighter aircraft supporting unarmed reconnaissance flights.



When in the Sea of Japan the Russians would test us periodically and always win. They knew our radar capability (or limitations). Once, we had an intelligence report of airplanes from Vladivostok. After calling for air support from Pusan, Korea, those Russian airplanes would retreat in the clouds while our Air Force planes searched in vain. In another instance, a large Russian cruiser snuck up on us during real bad weather. Our radar didn't even see it. Before daylight they hit us with their searchlights to let us know we were had. Thankfully it was quiet in the Tonkin Gulf for us. The Captain of our ship was Commander David M. Altwegg. He later made the rank of Admiral and comes calling often at Tucson. He is an advocate of the sailor and visits quite often speaking about missiles, which we make here at Raytheon.



After our Western Pacific tour ended we traveled back to Long Beach. The routing took us to Guam, Manus Island, Brisbane, Sydney, Wellington, Pago Pago, and Honolulu.

My next tour of duty was as an instructor in San Diego. I taught the data link system now used on all Navy ships. The Mahan was one of the first three ships to experiment with this. The data link reports all local contacts to other linked ships giving a big, broad picture of the threats.



After leaving the Navy, I went to work with a defense contractor, Litton Data Systems, who was building the next generation Navy destroyers, getting the job because of my Navy experience. I stayed in the defense arena, working in San Diego, Albuquerque, and Tucson working for Syscon (which became Logicon) and Hughes Aircraft (merging with Raytheon). At Syscon I traveled even more, teaching Navy personnel in Bermuda, Hawaii, Iceland, Newfoundland, and Wales. While in Iceland, I did get to visit with Mike Schnurstein when he was stationed there! And with Hughes Aircraft, I traveled to Germany. So I truly have seen a lot of the world because of the U.S. Navy.

Tom Kruse
1483 E. Ganymede Dr.
Oro Valley, AZ 85737
(520) 390-7487

email:
Tom-Kruse@comcast.net

