

HEINZ PARK

U.S.S. MANSFIELD DD-728

**FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO, 96601**

1 February 1967

Dear MANSFIELD Family,

As Executive Officer of USS MANSFIELD (DD-728), I would like to take this opportunity to bring you up to date on the ship's operations since the Commanding Officer last wrote in July, 1966. At that time, MANSFIELD was nearing Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on her way to her new home port in Yokosuka, Japan. The ship spent 3 days in port in Pearl Harbor, giving the crew some relaxation and effecting needed repairs before continuing her long voyage to Japan. It is difficult to imagine how vast the Pacific Ocean is until you have sailed across it in a destroyer.

When MANSFIELD arrived in Yokosuka, she spent 15 days in her new home port and then got underway enroute to Buckner Bay, Okinawa, for a minor anti-submarine warfare exercise.

After leaving Okinawa, MANSFIELD headed south toward a station off the coast of the Republic of Vietnam to provide Naval Gunfire Support to operations ashore. On the way to Vietnam, the ship was forced to turn and run into Subic Bay, Philippine Islands. The side trip was necessary to drop off a man who had become seriously ill, and needed hospital care. Continuing toward Vietnam, MANSFIELD arrived on station on the 8th of August. While on station, we had occasion to go into the mouth of the Saigon River to deliver gunfire support. From our position the ship gave very effective support to several units in the area.

On the 19th of August, MANSFIELD was relieved, and started back to Yokosuka for liberty and an upkeep period, arriving in Yokosuka on the 26th of August. On the 7th of September, she cast off her lines once again to steam south and take part in the recovery operation for one of our last Gemini spacecraft. The ship's function was to cover an area designated as an alternate recovery area in the event that something went wrong, and the astronauts could not bring their craft to earth in the Atlantic as planned. For her special assignment, the MANSFIELD had been fitted with a new crane on the fantail; the crane carried a cradle type device that was designed to pick up the Gemini spacecraft. The ship had also trained men as swimmers to put in the water and attach a floatation belt to the Gemini vehicle. Though it was a slight disappointment to the men of the MANSFIELD not to be in the actual recovery, everything went well for the Gemini team, and the landing was in the Atlantic as planned.

The ship returned to Yokosuka on the 16th of September, and remained until the 1st of October, when she left enroute to Kobe, Japan. The MANSFIELD went to Kobe on a good-will visit, and to let the crew have some rest and relaxation in a port other than Yokosuka. Kobe turned out to be more than any of the men could have expected, situated as it is in the center of one of the most picturesque and famous areas of Japan. Many of the men took advantage of the opportunity to go on day-long bus tours of the country in and around Kobe. Some of the sights of interest were ancient palaces of the Japanese Emperors, very old and famous religious shrines, and industrial complexes in the city of Kobe itself. The MANSFIELD had an open house while she was tied up in Kobe, and over 1,000 Japanese Citizens from Kobe and the vicinity visited the ship. As a demonstration of American friendship with the

Japanese people, and as part of the Navy's PEOPLE TO PEOPLE program, the ship presented several sets of American encyclopedias to the universities and high schools in the Kobe school district. The MANSFIELD also sent a group of volunteers to the Kobe Boy's Town. The Kobe Boy's Town is an orphanage for boys patterned after the Boy's Town in the United States. The volunteers did a wonderful clean-up, fix-up job at the orphanage by painting, repairing siding, plastering walls, and replacing windows. After the repairs at the orphanage, the sailors invited the boys down to the ship, and they were treated to a dinner in the crew's mess hall. The dinner was followed by a movie show of cartoons, and was much enjoyed by all. As the boys were leaving the ship, their new friends from the MANSFIELD presented them with a large quantity of toys, games, and athletic equipment. On the 8th of October, when the MANSFIELD left Kobe all hands had very fond memories of the wonderful experience behind them.

From Kobe, the ship went to Kaohshung, Taiwan (Formosa). In Kaohshung, we prepared for another anti-submarine exercise. This was a larger exercise than the first, and required very detailed planning. The ship participated in the ASW exercise for three full days. The entire crew gained much valuable experience, and morale was improved by the opportunity to work together as a team. After the exercise the ship returned to Kaohshung for two days before getting underway for Subic Bay, Philippines. In Subic Bay, the ship completed some minor repair work, and refueled before getting underway for what was to us then - a classified operation.

The operation is now history. The MANSFIELD and one other destroyer were the first Navy ships assigned to interdict enemy shipping off

the North Vietnamese coastline. Our job was to destroy junk and sampan traffic from the North into South Vietnam. This waterborne traffic is one of the Communists' main supply routes for their war of infiltration into South Vietnam. On two occasions while the ship was cruising off the coast and firing at supply junks headed south, the Communist North Vietnamese opened fire with shore batteries directed at the MANSFIELD. The crew responded superbly during these attacks and the ship scored many hits on the gun emplacements ashore without receiving a scratch. Having completed ten days of operations in the North, and destroying or damaging 109 enemy craft along the coast of North Vietnam, the MANSFIELD turned south for more gunfire support duties. On the 19th of November, the ship left the area of Vietnam to go to Hong Kong, British Crown Colony, for duty as the "Station Ship."

The Station Ship in any port is the ship which assumes the majority of the administrative and logistic support responsibilities for all other Navy ships. The length of our stay in Hong Kong, from the 22nd of November until the 9th of December, 1966, gave the crew an excellent chance to take advantage of the fantastic shopping and low prices of a free port, and also the beautiful scenery of Great Britain's most famous Island Colony. Getting underway from Hong Kong, the MANSFIELD again headed for her home port. In Yokosuka the ship went through an extended repair period, until after the first of the year.

On the 3rd of January, the ship again got underway from Yokosuka enroute to a station off the coast of the Republic of Vietnam, to provide more naval gunfire support to United States, Vietnamese and South Korean troops fighting ashore. Upon arrival off the coast of Vietnam, she

immediately began to answer calls for supporting fire from units on the beach. The entire twelve-day period of gunfire support duty was marked by long hours and extra work on the part of all hands. The ship remained at the ready 24 hours a day, with the crew manning their stations for 6 hours and then resting for 6 hours. Besides missions in direct support of ground operations, the ship also provided harrassment and interdiction fire through the night. This proved to be a very heavy strain, but if we didn't sleep much, the enemy didn't either. Periodically, the ship was forced to leave her station to refuel or rearm, and as a general rule these operations were carried on at night hours. Through the fast tempo of operations and long hours of watch, the crew performed in an outstanding manner, once again proving their "can do" spirit. The high morale demonstrated by all hands showed that each man had a feeling of his own importance, and the importance of the vital task his country has entrusted to him. It is the same spirit of the American fighting men that has kept our nation great, and will continue to do so even in the face of communist aggression. I believe each man realizes that he is here not just to protect the freedom of the Vietnamese people, but ultimately the freedom of all peoples the world over, including our own.

The 1,515 rounds of 5-inch ammunition that the ship fired on this trip south brought her grand total of rounds fired in support of the Vietnamese conflict to 13,250; this is believed to be the largest number of rounds fired by any West Coast destroyer. The MANSFIELD proudly claims the title of the "Biggest Gun in the West".

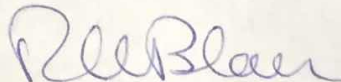
On the 22nd of January, MANSFIELD was relieved of her duties of

gunfire support, and began her trip back to Yokosuka, Japan. Enroute home we made a stop in Danang, Republic of Vietnam, and Buckner Bay, Okinawa. In Yokosuka, we are enjoying a period of rest for the crew and repair for the ship.

Although most of us were away from our homes and loved ones during the recent holidays, isolated as we are by thousands of miles and many hours, they were in our hearts, and thoughts of home were foremost in our minds. The memories of Christmas at home that we have, were made even more beautiful and enjoyable by the miles separating us. It may be of some comfort to know that the ship was in her home port of Yokosuka during the holidays, and that at least those members of the crew who have their families in Japan with them were able to enjoy the traditional holiday festivities at home. As always, Americans in far corners of the earth stand by one another and help each other as much as possible. The crew members of the MANSFIELD are no different, and many of the men with their families in Japan invited others into their homes to celebrate the holidays.

In closing, let me extend to you and yours my best wishes for the year 1967. I hope that the new year will fulfill all the promise it holds for you, and that your home will be blessed with love and plenty.

Sincerely,



R. W. BLAES
Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy
Executive Officer
U.S.S. MANSFIELD (DD-728)