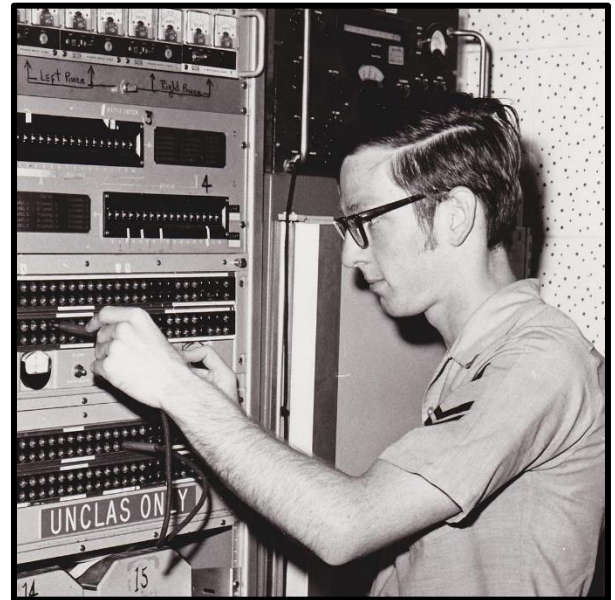


CHUCK PATTERSON

U.S. NAVY

Radioman (Data Communications)

Service Dates: 1972 - 1979



I participated in the Vietnam Evacuation and Mayaguez Incident/Rescue in 1975. I spent most of those 7 years aboard ship, but did spend 2 years of it at Pt Mugu, CA Pacific Missile Test Center, where they first tested the cruise missiles, among others.

In Operation Frequent Wind (the Vietnam Evacuation) in 1975, there were numerous boats loaded with people trying to flee the Communists, and we helped them with supplies and food, while working with other Naval forces in that exercise. Some of the boats were so overloaded that they almost capsized. It was awful, as we did what we could, but we couldn't take them all aboard. Years ago, I was programming with a man who was a Vietnam native. It just so happened that he was one of the children aboard on of those boats – that was a very weird feeling.



(Note from Holly: The following is a story that Chuck asked for me to keep private, but I was able to get him to allow me to share it. Thank you, Chuck).

While in the Philippines, the ship was undergoing repairs and refitting, mostly by hired Filipino workers. I was working in the scullery (cleaning dishes) at the time. I would take the food trays and bang them out into the trash cans and then send them through the steamer. Every time I turned my back, some of the workers would be digging in the garbage can to salvage food that they put into coffee cans to take home. I finally told them, "Give me your cans and I'll do this for you.", and as trays would come in, I would pick out the meat and bread that was still good and fill their cans. When it came time for us to put out to sea, one of the workers came to me. He couldn't speak English, but he handed me two plastic calendars that he had gotten from one of the Catholic churches. It was his only way of saying thank you. I still have them, and they mean more to me than gold.

Fun Story:

While serving aboard a ship, we had a guy who had a habit of yelling in his sleep at the top of his lungs, "HELP!!!" in the middle of the night. He might only do it once a night, but eventually everyone got used to it and just rolled over and went back to sleep, no big deal. Then one day we got a temporary assignment aboard to help us repair our teletype machines, and we forgot to warn him about the yelling. He happened to be sleeping in the bunk above the yeller. That night, sure enough, like clockwork, our yeller went off, "HELP!!!", and this new guy was jerked out of sleep, jumped out of his bunk, turning on the lights, and was scared to death the ship was going down or something. "Oh, sorry, we forgot to tell you. He does this sometimes, no big deal, you'll get used to it. By the way, don't wake him."



With Bill Starrett – Winter, 1972

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