

HERMITAGE transitted the canal on 1 May. With the history and significance of the canal, the transit proved both interesting and educational to all hands.

HERMITAGE spent two days in Panama and then proceeded to Long Beach to offload the MSB's. The morning of 10 May we set sail for San Diego on a dependents cruise for HERMITAGE dependents that were on the West Coast. In San Diego we spent several days loading the ship with supplies and attending conferences. We loaded a USMO squadron and equipment for transfer to Danang, South Vietnam.

Our next stop was Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. We arrived there on 18 May and moored across the bay from the battleship USS ARIZONA. The ARIZONA was one of the ships sunk at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. A memorial has been built on the wreckage.

HERMITAGE left Pearl Harbor after a very short two days and proceeded to Danang, Republic of Vietnam. We arrived there on 2 June and left the following day to relieve the USS POINT DEFIANCE (LSD 29) at sea. On 4 June HERMITAGE became an active member of the Amphibious Ready Group in support of combat operations ashore in Vietnam.

HERMITAGE completed her first amphibious operation on 12 June when we sailed for Subic Bay, Phillippines for 12 days of upkeep and rest. Our first two days in port were spent participating in various sporting events with the men from the other ships of the Amphibious Ready Group: USS OKINAWA, USS DULUTH, and USS SEMINOLE.

HERMITAGE departed Subic Bay, Philippines on 26 June 1967 for South Vietnam and more combat operations.

We arrived at Chu Lai, Vietnam just two days later and backloaded our Marines. On 3 July, we went to the DMZ and landed the marines thus commencing operation Bear Claw. This operation lasted until 18 July when we again backloaded our marines. Just three days later, we began operation Beacon Guide and landed the landing force some twenty miles north of Danang. On 26 July 1967, HERMITAGE hosted the village chief, officials, school teachers, and 45 school children of the village of Vinh Nien. A demonstration of our well deck operations was provided followed by the showing of cartoons and refreshments for the children. The adults were given rides over their village in helicopters. Upon returning to the ship, all were given gifts and the school children were given paper and pens. Just a few days later, Robert Stack, the movie and TV star visited us. All personnel took advantage of having their pictures made with Mr. Stack and obtained his autograph. The first week in August found us in Danang preparing for another landing which took place on 7 August, thirty miles north of Danang. Operation Beacon Gate lasted a week and on 15 August we left for Subic Bay. We arrived two days later, having been at sea for almost two months. While in Subic, we performed necessary maintenance and repairs to the ship. Some personnel availed themselves to tours to Manila. We remained in Subic until 27 August and on 1 September we landed the marines near the DMZ in Operation Beacon Point. Rear Admiral Vannoy, Commander Amphibious Forces Seventh Fleet and Rear Admiral Lacey, Commander Naval Support Activity Danang were aboard HERMITAGE to observe the landing. On 5 September, HERMITAGE suffered a material casualty which caused the complete flooding of the after engine room. In an all hands effort, the engine room was dewatered then cleaned so that we could save as much machinery as possible. We arrived in Subic on 10 September. All hands rolled up their shirt sleeves and assisted the Ship Repair Facility personnel so that HERMITAGE could return to the ARG as quickly as possible. On 6 October, HERMITAGE fully repaired and ready for sea, departed Subic Bay enroute Viet Nam as a member of Amphibious Ready Group BRAVO. HERMITAGE then began her last combat operation, Formation Leader. On 18 October the Captain H.S. Matthews, USN, was awarded the South Vietnamese Government Navy Distinguished Service Award by Premier Ky. On 9 November she was relieved by a Pacific fleet LSD and proceeded to Hong Kong for liberty. After five days in Hong Kong, HERMITAGE sailed for Yokosuka, Japan, but was diverted two days for Typhoon evasion. HERMITAGE arrived in Yokosuka on 21 November for a restricted availability. HERMITAGE departed Yokosuka enroute Pearl Harbor, arriving 3 December. The ship stayed just long enough for refueling and sailed for Panama. After transisting the canal, HERMITAGE set course for Little Creek, Virginia, arriving on 19 December.