

DE Classified
USS Vance (DE-387)

Hello and welcome to DE Classified, a podcast showcasing the history of Destroyer Escorts. Each month a member of the USS Slater's education crew will highlight a specific Destroyer Escort and share the stories of the sailors who served aboard these Trim But Deadly ships. My name is Giordano Romano, I am an intern and tour guide aboard the USS Slater Historical Museum in Albany, NY. I am a recent graduate of the UAlbany Public History Master's program and my area of study is Military History. On today's podcast episode we are going to DE classify USS Vance.

The Vance was named in honor of Joseph Williams Vance Jr. who had served in the United States Navy during World War II. Born on December 4, 1918 in Memphis, Tennessee, Vance would later attend college at both Southwestern University in Memphis from 1936 to 1938 and then the University of Florida at Gainesville. He would eventually enlist in the Naval Reserve on July 26, 1940 as an apprentice seaman. During the summer and early fall of 1940, Vance would serve at sea aboard the dreadnought battleship USS Arkansas (BB-33), a Wyoming-class battleship. After his stint aboard the Arkansas, Vance would be appointed midshipman on November 22, 1940, reporting onboard Prairie State (IX-15). Just a quick mention, this particular ship was formerly named USS Illinois (BB-7) but was reclassified in 1941 so as to make room for the new USS Illinois (BB-65), an Iowa-class battleship.

On February 28, 1941, Vance was commissioned Ensign and began Asiatic Fleet duty joining the crew of USS Parrott (DD-218), a Clemson-class destroyer. He would arrive aboard the ship on April 16 while in the Philippine Islands. The Parrott conducted maneuvers and exercises throughout the Philippine archipelago during the summer of 1941. During this fateful year, international tensions had continued to rise as the Second World War raged across the lands

of Europe, Asia and Africa and the seas in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Seeing as the international situation was considered “tense and unpredictable”, USS Parrott was dispatched on November 24 with her Destroyer Division 58 to Tarakan, Borneo, Dutch East Indies.

On December 7, 1941, “a day which live in infamy”, as quoted by then-President Franklin Roosevelt, Imperial Japanese planes attacked the naval base at Pearl Harbor. By the next day, the United States was at war with the Japanese Empire. Vance was still aboard the Parrott in the Dutch East Indies when hostilities broke out. USS Parrott would then join her sister ships as part of the newly formed American-British-Dutch-Australian (ABDA) effort to stem the Japanese advance from the north. The Parrott continued to operate in the Dutch East Indies archipelago throughout the remainder of 1941 and into the next year.

USS Parrott continued her operations from the naval base located at Surabaya, Java. She would participate in the following two major naval engagements; the Battle of Makassar Strait (January 24, 1942) and the Battle of Badoeng Strait (February 20, 1942). During the first engagement, Vance was awarded the Bronze Star for gallantry in action. He served as the ship’s torpedo officer which meant he had charge of the 12-tube battery of 21-inch torpedo tubes. In a way, they were the ship’s main battery. On January 23, 1942 Destroyer Division 58 began a final approach towards the town of Balikpapan, Borneo which was captured the same day by the Japanese. By this point in the conflict the Dutch had enacted ‘scorched earth’ policies in their colonies and conducted air raids against petroleum storage sites causing immense blazes that were so bright that they actually silhouetted the Japanese transports just offshore.

On January 24, in the starting phase of the battle of Makassar Strait, Vance and his torpedo crews had a stroke of bad luck. They had fired off 8 torpedoes and all of them had missed their mark in their first run-in. The divisions eventually turned to make a second run and

this time they met success. Three “fish” ran straight from Parrott’s tubes on the port battery, striking and sinking the 3500-ton transport Sumanoura Maru. Minutes later, the Parrott teamed up with fellow destroyers USS Pope (DD-225) and USS Paul Jones (DD-230) to conduct another torpedo attack upon the Tatsukami Maru. She was struck and sent to the bottom of the sea shortly thereafter. This action happened to take place at night and because of this there was an interesting moment that took place. The American force retired after sinking approximately 4 transports and in this confusion the Japanese commander had thought that submarines had assaulted his ships and sent his force on a wild goose chase after these nonexistent ships.

As stated earlier, Vance had earned a bronze star for this action. In his citation it is noted that he had skillfully fired four salvos in a battle at close range, in which a wide variety of target speeds and approaches had been used and had directed the fire by means of an old-fashioned open sight. Due to his “ability, resourcefulness and devotion to duty,” Vance had contributed substantially to the success of Parrott’s performance in what was the United States Navy’s first surface action victory, which is seen as a tactical one, in the ensuing war against Japan.

Parrott continued her operations in defense of the Malay barrier where she would take part in the Battle of the Badoeng Strait on February 20th. During this action, Parrott was damaged and ended up in Fremantle. She had been lucky and missed out on the disastrous Battle of the Java Sea where the ABDA force was decimated by the Japanese Navy. The remnants of the Asiatic Fleet had congregated at Fremantle after the engagement. Vance had remained aboard Parrott through the spring where he would be promoted to lieutenant (junior grade) on June 15, 1942.

By mid-1942, the war in the Pacific had shifted slightly in the Allies favor after the Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway had stopped the Japanese offensive. Allied forces began to

gather for their first offensive in the Solomon Islands to land on the island of Guadalcanal. Vance had received new orders to serve aboard the Australian heavy cruiser HMAS Canberra as a liaison officer with the Australian Navy. Canberra, which was once the pre-war flagship of the Australian squadron, departed from Wellington, New Zealand on July 22nd bound for waters off Guadalcanal.

Canberra would help screen American transports landing US Marines on Guadalcanal and eventually retired in company with USS Chicago (CA-29) south of Savo Island. However, unbeknownst to the Allied force, a Japanese cruiser formation had steamed undetected through “the Slot” between Guadalcanal and Savo Island. With the Japanese force opening fire from their 8- and 5.5-inch guns and letting loose their dreaded “Long Lance” torpedoes, the First Battle of Savo Island had begun. Similar to the action that occurred in the Java Sea almost 6 months prior, the Japanese Navy would inflict what is considered one of the worst naval defeats in US history. USS Chicago suffered a torpedo hit but it would be the Canberra that would suffer immensely.

She took the worst punishment of taking shell hit after shell hit. The first two salvos had hit her bridge killing or wounding several senior officers. Although most of her crew would survive the engagement the Canberra would be scuttled later by US Navy ships. Lieutenant Joseph Williams Vance, Jr would sadly be one of the 84 men killed during the action. In his honor, a new type of ship would be named after him.

USS Vance (DE-387) was an Edsall-class destroyer escort. She was laid down on April 30, 1943 by the Brown Shipbuilding Co. in Houston, Texas. She would then be launched July 16th of the same year sponsored by Mrs. John W. Vance, mother of Lt. (jg.) Vance. During the hot and sultry months of August and September, the nucleus crew of the Vance were busy studying and training in all manners of how to conduct DE operation at the Submarine Chase

Training Center in Miami, Florida. This nucleus crew consisted of about 40 or so key officers and men, most of whom had previously served on Coast Guard cutters chasing subs and convoying in the North Atlantic and Caribbean. After the nucleus crew completed their studies they departed for Brown Ship Building Company in Houston. When they arrived they met with 30 other men who were also assigned to the Vance. Most of these men were technicians and specialists coming directly out of Navy Service Schools.

As for the executive officer, gunnery officer and ASW officer who also left Miami, they made their way to the Naval Training Station at Naval Operating Base in Norfolk, Virginia. This is where the remainder of Vance's future crew were assembled for intensive training in DE operation that would last one month. Opposite to the men who were already in Houston, the majority of these 150 personnel had no previous sea duty and yet they were very willing and interested in learning for the difficult task ahead of them.

During the following month of October the crew was working and drilling hard everyday in preparation. The gunnery officer and his gunner's gang spent much of their time studying and firing various weaponry on board the battleship USS New York (BB-34) in Chesapeake Bay. On October 28th, these men finally headed for Houston to join their shipmates.

By morning of November 1st, all hands moved aboard and later that day USS Vance was commissioned and placed under the command of Lieutenant Commander E. A. Anderson, United States Coast Guard, one of 30 destroyer escorts that would be manned by Coast Guardsmen during World War II.

As an Edsall-class DE, the Vance had a displacement of 1253 tons standard and 1590 tons with a full load. She had a length of 306', a beam of 36'7" and a draft of 8'7". Her propulsion consisted of 4 Fairbanks-Morse diesel engines, 4 diesel generators and 2 screws giving the ship a

total of 6000 horsepower. Her top speed was 21 knots or 24 mph. She held a complement of 8 officers and 201 enlisted personnel.

USS Vance was armed with three single 3"/50 caliber guns, one twin 40mm Bofors anti-aircraft gun and eight single 20mm Oerlikon anti-aircraft guns. She also had one triple 21" torpedo tube mount, one hedgehog projector, eight depth charge projectors and two depth charge tracks.

After a tedious week of loading supplies, equipment and spare parts on board, the Vance set off on her first special sea detail. She made her way down the Houston Ship Canal towards San Jacinto, Texas where she would load up on ammunition. After a complete day was taken to load her up she left San Jacinto to make her next port at Galveston. The Vance's crew would hold their first sea and gunnery trials with everything reportedly going smoothly. Many of the crew were beginning to ease into each of their respective and particular jobs on board during this time. It seemed that Vance was indeed becoming an outstanding DE.

By mid-November, the Vance had completed her trials and some necessary repairs were made as she departed for Bermuda for her shakedown cruise. During the last few days of November and most of December the Vance went through a rigorous shakedown cruise off Hamilton, Bermuda. This shakedown cruise included day and night gunnery, surface and anti-aircraft firing, damage control drills, tactical maneuvers, ASW exercises and everything else to prepare the ship and her crew for convoy escort duty.

On December 19th, Commander E. J. Roland, Commander Escort Division 45, reported on board and his command pennant was hoisted on the ship. USS Vance would be designated as the flagship of a division of Coast Guard Destroyer Escorts. This Escort Division (CortDiv) 45

included USS Lansing (DE-388), USS Durant (DE-389), USS Calcaterra (DE-390), USS Chambers (DE-391) and USS Merrill (DE-392).

About four days before Christmas the Vance departed for Charleston Navy Yard, South Carolina. This was no cake walk though. USS Vance sailed right into a storm for the next three days. The crew would have to endure mountainous head seas and a wind gale in force with many of her crew, including some of the old salts, becoming seasick for most of the voyage. It was reported in the ship's history that during this storm, the continual pounding of the seas actually folded back and bent the #1 gun shield. At one point, the ship's diesel engines had to be shut down as there was a doctor on board, Dr. Todd, who was performing an appendicitis operation on one of the crewmembers. While this was happening, the pharmacist's mate assisted by holding a bucket close by as he became seasick too. The ship was tossed around like a match stick and some men in the engine room reported seeing their clinometer indicate a roll of 50 degrees and more. Men had to tie themselves into their bunks around their ankles, waist and chest just to keep from falling out of their sacks.

However, morale amongst the crew did not diminish during this trip. It was soon realized that they wouldn't reach Charleston by Christmas so these men decided to make the best of what they had. To lift spirits, some of them grabbed a couple of brooms, some colorful paper and wire from around the ship and made themselves a homemade Christmas tree. They even outfitted the makeshift tree with battery operated red lights from their life belts to give it that extra holiday look. Christmas Eve was spent singing carols, making good wishes and talking of past memories of celebrations at home. Their Christmas Day dinner was reduced to sandwiches, powdered milk and coffee, eating with one free hand while the ship continued to rock and roll through the storm. On the afternoon of December 26th, Vance had reached Charleston Navy Yard with liberty

posted and those who could made calls to their loved ones. Despite being in dire circumstances, these men made the best of their holiday away from home with what little they had, and they made it memorable.

From Charleston the ship would make her way to Norfolk for her first assignment, convoying a group of oil tankers to Port Arthur, Texas. Once she returned to Norfolk, Vance would serve as a training ship for future destroyer escort crews while she awaited the arrival of the remainder of Division 45.

On February 6th, Vance departed Norfolk on her first assignment to convoy the aircraft carrier USS Core (CVE-13) to New York City. Once this mission was completed, USS Vance and the rest of Division 45 were assigned to their first Atlantic bound convoy. On February 10, 1944, the Vance would conduct local escort operations and then join the New York section of Convoy UGS-33, which was bound for Gibraltar. The section would rendezvous off Norfolk with the rest of the convoy, led by its flagship USCGC Bibb (WPG-31). They would then make their way across the Atlantic where unknown dangers and strange lands awaited them.

In World War II, there were both fast and slow convoys guarded by destroyer escorts and various other warships. The UG stands for United States to Gibraltar, with an F added if it's a fast convoy or an S added if it's a slow one. Vance during her service would be tasked with guarding the slow convoys.

UGS-33, like many convoys during the war, sadly did not make it without loss. The Liberty Ships *Virginia Dare* and *Daniel Chester French* both sank when they accidentally entered an Allied minefield on March 6th, 1944. Although there were no losses to U-boats or aircraft, accidents still occurred and adds the fact that no matter what, these merchant convoys still faced immense danger even if the enemy was nowhere near.

USS Vance did make her destination without incident to itself and then departed from Casablanca, Morocco on March 7th with convoy GUS-33 for its return voyage. This was essentially the same convoy but reversed as it was now a slow, westbound journey from Gibraltar to the United States. Luckily, this time there were no ship losses. When she returned, Vance was put into the New York Navy Yard on March 23rd for her next availability.

USS Vance would be underway the next month on April 12th. She once again traveled with CortDiv 45 and a Navy-manned destroyer escort division to screen the 102 merchantmen of convoy UGS-39, this one bound for Tunisia. UGS-39 would arrive safely in Bizerte, Tunisia on May 3rd without a single ship lost during its travels. Eight days later, the Vance would depart Tunisia with convoy GUS-39.

On May 14th, off Oran, Algeria, a German U-boat was able to slip through the screen of escorts and fired upon the convoy. The U-boat was able to strike two merchantmen, the *Fort Fidler* and *G S Walden*, both of the United Kingdom. Both ships, totaling more than 17,000 tons together, were damaged by the torpedo attack. Vance during this time was holding the “whip” position of the screen. This is where a ship has the duty to shepherd stragglers to make sure they are not left unprotected. As she came up through the convoy, Vance’s crew spotted the periscope and attempted to ram. However, the crew of the U-boat acted quickly and decided to “pull the plug” which meant they would dive deeper to avoid being cut by the sharp bow of the destroyer escort. Vance remained on scene for approximately 10 hours, firing off depth charge and hedgehog patterns until she would eventually be relieved by a squadron of destroyers. Three days later on May 17th, after an extensive hunt, this squadron along with an RAF Wellington bomber was credited with sinking U-616 in the Mediterranean.

Vance's convoy would eventually return to the United States. Altogether she would make a total of eight round-trip voyages to various ports in the western Mediterranean. Each time she returned to either Boston or New York to be refitted and sent out again. USS Vance would also engage four separate times in training exercises out of Casco Bay sharpening her gunnery skills and ability to conduct anti-submarine tactics and strategy.

Vance would end up back in Oran in early to mid July in 1944. On July 14th, she helped fight off a German air attack on another Allied convoy off of Oran. During most of her voyages, Vance was usually holding the whip position in her convoys. It was a grueling and frustrating task at times as some ships in the slow convoys would lag behind causing Vance to slip back to shepherd them but also leaving the rest of the convoy possibly exposed to torpedo attacks in the gap. Vance also held the responsibility of keeping the division doctor on board and on occasion would bring aboard men from other ships to receive medical treatment. So life aboard USS Vance was never a boring nor restful one.

On May 2nd, 1945 USS Vance would depart from New York for her final Mediterranean bound convoy, UGS-90. Nine days later, on the morning of May 11th, just four days after Nazi Germany had surrendered, the crew on the Vance spotted a light up ahead in the convoy. They rang down to full speed to investigate the situation. As they got closer to the light, the destroyer escort soon discovered that they had come upon a surfaced U-boat.

This was U-873, which had been out to sea for about 50 days on what was to become their last patrol. The U-boat crew after realizing their situation and under orders from their commanding officer, Kapitänleutnant Friedrich "Fritz" Steinhoff, they then attempted to make a run away from USS Vance and her convoy. The Vance crew then decided to hail the U-boat via a bullhorn ordering them to 'heave to'. The crew of U-873, realizing their situation and that the

war was over, chose to surrender to USS Vance and her convoy at 35°45'N 42°31'W. As POWs were taken off the U-boat, a prized crew led by Lieutenant Carlton J. Schmidt, was placed on board U-873 to sail her. The captured U-boat would end up in Portsmouth, New Hampshire on May 16.

It's quite interesting as to why U-873's crew made an attempt to run. As of May 4th, just three days before Nazi Germany surrendered, Großadmiral Karl Dönitz sent the following signal to all U-boat commanders: "ALL U-BOATS. ATTENTION ALL U-BOATS. CEASE-FIRE AT ONCE. STOP ALL HOSTILE ACTION AGAINST ALLIED SHIPPING. DÖNITZ." Perhaps U-873's commanding officer and crew were a bit more ideological than most others but nonetheless it didn't matter after they soon surrendered. The U-boat crew, now POWs, were brought to Boston after initial interrogation at Portsmouth Naval Prison. Here they were marched through the streets where spectators crowded to see them, lashing out with insults and pelting them with garbage. They were eventually brought to the Suffolk County Charles Street Jail where Kapitänleutnant Friedrich Steinhoff committed suicide in his jail cell, reportedly despondent over his interrogation and allowing his vessel to be captured and brought to the United States.

Now while researching USS Vance and her U-boat encounter, I discovered quite a unique story that I think is worth mentioning today. When the Vance had captured U-873 they had a select group of sailors nicknamed a 'prize crew' whose job was to escort a captured enemy vessel back to a friendly port. This was a 17-man crew which included Seaman 1st Class Krugher, an 18-year old of German descent who would act as the ship's interpreter. It was soon discovered, while on the journey to Portsmouth, that Krugher's 3rd cousin was a member of the now POW crew. So far some of Vance's history seems like something written out of a

Hollywood film but this was indeed a strange coincidence, although it isn't the end of the peculiar incidents aboard this destroyer escort.

Vance eventually returned to the United States after her final convoy and while back in the states she underwent alterations to add more anti-aircraft armament. When this was completed she then made her way back out once again, this time headed for the Pacific. On July 2nd, they departed Boston to head for Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. It was here that the crew would undergo an intensive two week period of refresher training so as to prepare them for action against the Japanese.

They departed Cuba in mid-July only stopping at the US Navy base at Coco-Solo, Canal Zone before passing through the Panama Canal. Once they made it through, the crew made their first stop in the Pacific at San Diego and then sailed to Pearl Harbor. The Vance again went through another training period focusing on anti-aircraft, surface firing, damage control and anti-submarine warfare exercises to prepare them. When their training was completed they received orders to head for Eniwetok and hence join the Fifth Fleet in Philippine waters.

However, by the time she arrived, it was too late to participate in further operations as the Empire of Japan had surrendered and the war was now over. She would continue in training operations before making her way back to the east coast to begin her decommissioning process. In the middle of October 1945, she underwent her pre-deactivation availability before continuing south. On February 27th, 1946 USS Vance was decommissioned and 'mothballed' being placed in a reserve fleet in Green Cove Springs, Florida.

USS Vance would remain 'mothballed' for about six years until a short reactivation. She would be commissioned on May 9th, 1952 and served as USCGC Vance (WDE-487) as part of the US Coast Guard. She served under direct Coast Guard control as a weather ship until being

decommissioned once again on June 16th, 1954. On the same day, she was returned to the United States Navy.

Vance would eventually be towed to Mare Island Naval Shipyard in November 1955 for her conversion to a radar picket destroyer escort. She underwent extensive alterations during this time. This included the addition of improved air-search radar, extensive communications equipment and complete facilities for fighter-direction operations. These configurations also led to the enclosing of the entire main deck amidships to provide more accommodations for her officers and enlisted personnel. USS Vance was recommissioned on October 5th, 1956 at Mare Island, with command being given to Lieutenant Commander Albert M. Brouner. Vance's new designation was as follows, DER-387.

Between March 1957 and the end of the same year, Vance made her homeport in Seattle, Washington as a unit of CortDiv 5. During this time, she made eight patrols on various stations of the Radar Early Warning System in the northern Pacific. Each one of these tours would last approximately 17 days while the ship had to maintain round-the-clock vigil with air-search radars. Her task was tracking and reporting every aircraft entering or approaching the air space of the northwestern United States.

These tours did not always go without incident. On Labor Day 1957, Vance drew emergency duty, as an engineering casualty prevented the assigned ship from going out. Vance took the reins and set out after 75 minutes. At the time, she was only manned by 60 percent of her complement as many of her officers and enlisted were ashore on liberty or leave. These men could not be notified in time nor could the remaining crew take the chance to wait before she weighed anchor. For 12 days, with just over half of her total crew, USS Vance completed a successful mission.

As of June 1st, 1958, Vance's homeport was changed to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii and she then began to operate as part of CortRon 7, an escort squadron in the Pacific. One month later, the ship departed Hawaiian waters for a 29-day patrol on mid-ocean picket lines. This meant that she would have to provide radar coverage stemming from Alaska to Midway Atoll. By performing this mission, USS Vance thus became the first ship on the Distant Early Warning (DEW) line in the Pacific and the first to set sail under the newly organized Pacific barrier patrol. By mid-January 1959, she underwent routine overhaul and refresher training at Pearl Harbor before once again taking station out in the mid-Pacific stretch of ocean on her second DEW-line deployment.

Vance continued to conduct DEW-line patrols until May 1960 when CortRon 7 was dissolved. She then rejoined CortDiv 5 and served with her old unit until 1961. While in service with her old unit, Vance would occasionally keep Russian trawlers under surveillance whilst undoubtedly the Russian vessels were returning the same compliment.

During an overhaul in Pearl Harbor in early 1961, Vance's communication capabilities were extensively augmented. While resuming DEW-line patrols in late spring, the ship received new orders in August 1961. USS Vance would be designated an ocean station vessel with TF-43, Operation Deep Freeze 62.

She made port in Dunedin, New Zealand on September 10th, 1961 where the crew would spend six days ashore, mingling with the excited locals who were all too eager to meet US sailors. As the many sailors enjoyed their short span of freedom it was once again time to embark on their mission.

The Deep Freeze operations had begun during the 1950s. The destroyer escorts, including Vance, would be serving as a communication relay ship for aircraft bringing in vital supplies to the Antarctic stations.

USS Vance departed New Zealand on September 16th for its first arctic patrol. Soon after leaving port the ship entered choppy seas with the crew and ship being tossed. Thomas F. Jaras, author of *In The Trough*, served aboard USS Vance during this operation and describes the following in detail: “After two hours of being tossed around, I heaved up lunch and retreated to the fart sack until my next bridge watch. Most junior officers were also in their bunks... Conversation was avoided, humor nonexistent, people grumpy...I wasn’t alone being seasick.” One can only imagine how such a small ship would fare in facing 40 foot waves with the crew trying to keep the bow from taking the wave head on to minimize the jarring impact. Jaras, as a junior officer during his initial service, spent a good portion of time on the bridge above the pilothouse. In these watch shifts, he would see firsthand how a DER takes a hit from a wave and would face the aftermath of the water hitting the 03 deck level.

The waves would also cause a ship of this size to easily roll in either direction, rocking it side to side. It is believed that Vance may have rolled to about 72 or 73 degrees in the North Pacific previously. Theoretically the ships could sustain a 90 degree roll, but this was due to testing in port under controlled conditions. Jaras recalls one incident, “When we were stuck without power in the trough this first Antarctic patrol, suspended at 66 degrees, there was enough time—an eternity—to play games with your mind.” The crew essentially has to wait for the ship to roll back over while holding onto anything and keeping things from rolling around. Luckily, the engineers worked frantically and were able to bring one of Vance’s generators online in what was a long fifteen minutes without any power.

On Wednesday, September 20th, USS Vance arrived at ocean station, a patch of water about sixty miles in diameter. It was the navigator Tom Milligan who had to determine Vance's position. Jaras mentions that, "At the time, LORAN (long-range radio navigation), the system then most used for ocean navigation, depended on our intercepting low-frequency radio transmitters from multiple shore stations to fix the ship's position." However, the Antarctic Ocean by this time, was rarely traveled and reception signals were often not possible.

As Vance continued through the unforgiving seas further south, they began to see the appearance of icebergs signaling just how far the ship had gone. The crew watched in awe of these floating ice giants and upon sight of the first, the forward gun mount fired eleven 3-inch rounds into it. The iceberg was unaffected and huge chunks would fall off here and there as Vance's crew worked to dodge the baby bergs.

To help break boredom and attempt to raise some morale, commanding officer Commander Harmon C. Penny suggested that operations officer Ray DeMott try to stand on one of the floating pieces of ice. Jaras describes this event as Ray slipped into a life jacket and while tethered to a line went over the side and attempted to stand on the ice. He only remained on the ice cake for a few wobbly moments before clutching the ladder and climbing back aboard. The crew were delighted over the act as it was indeed questioned as to why the captain would take such a risky chance yet it brightened the mood of the hardworking crew and took some time away from such a long and boring mission as Jaras recalls.

After almost a month in the Antarctic waters, the ship began to run low on fuel and made its way to Campbell Island on October 12th. A day later they were back in Dunedin for another nine days where many crewmen debarked for more leisure time in the New Zealand port.

On October 22nd, the Vance was underway once again for another round of Antarctic patrolling. Same as the first trip, the ship was rocked by waves and the seasick crew anguished for its first twenty-six hours. While on this second patrol, USS Vance came in contact with HMNZS Rotoiti, a Loch-class antisubmarine frigate. Vance was scheduled to relieve the frigate for its Antarctic duty. The crew could see how the frigate's bow plunged over each wave and as the fantail and screws would be left high out of the water and then suddenly dropped back in. Jaras recalls "We felt for the Kiwi crew and then realized that we were looking into a mirror." The crew of the Vance would go through the same beating for three weeks.

After the second patrol was finished the ship left station on November 9th and was back in Dunedin on the 12th after twenty-one grueling days on the Antarctic waters. During this time, Vance's XO Tom Jewell was departing after two years of service on board Vance and was to be replaced with Lieutenant Mel Hoffmann. Although initially wary as Hoffmann had a very different personality from Jewell, it would seem that the crew would have to settle with a friendly new boss.

After a week in Dunedin the ship cast off for what would be the last patrol for Captain Penny. During this time, the ship would be out to see for Thanksgiving, but luckily not without a few turkeys. However, these turkeys weren't added on board to the ship's provisions before leaving. Thomas Jaras mentions this peculiar event, "Several beautiful turkeys, donated by a Dunedin businessman, floated down from the sky for our Thanksgiving dinner. Arrangements had been made to have a navy aircraft make the drop on its way to McMurdo Station." Turkeys can fly alright, but these ones were dropped in canisters into the cold waters where the crew plucked each of them out to bring them onboard.

This Antarctic patrol came to an end when the ship returned to Dunedin on December 14th. Captain Penny gave what was described as a heartfelt farewell to the crew who were in dress whites on the pier. Command was handed over to Lieut. Commander Hank C. Beyer who then had the ship taken out towards Campbell Island for a shakedown cruise. Although this was to familiarize himself with the ship, it still disgruntled some of the sailors who wanted to be ashore with what little time they had.

However, the ship did not complete the shakedown cruise without incident. According to Jaras, "On the fourth day in rough seas, on a hard roll to starboard, a hundred-pound duplex proportioner bounced out of its wall rack and dropped twelve feet through the B-2 engine-room hatch, just missing EN1 Ramirez's head and ripping through his left shoe to cut off his big toe." Ramirez was brought to sick bay where he was given immediate medical attention to have his toe sewn back on. Jaras and corpsman Don Dunn both had to hold him down as the ship continued to roll violently. Luckily, they were able to complete the quick surgery in these unforgiving conditions. The ship did make its brief stop at Campbell Island and then swiftly went back towards Dunedin where Ramirez was brought ashore to be flown to Christchurch and then eventually to Tripler Army Hospital in Hawaii. The rest of the crew would get to spend both Christmas and New Years in Dunedin enjoying themselves alongside the ever eager locals who always greeted them when they returned.

At 1300 on January 2nd, 1962, Vance once again set out for patrol and reached Campbell Island after a day and a half. This would turn out to be the shortest patrol on record as the DER was only out to sea for 13 days. Many questioned why this was. Perhaps it was due to the fact that the Miss USS Vance Coronation Ball, a little charity beauty contest, was being held in the

two days they had for leisure. Regardless, two days go by quicker than you think and patrol duty calls.

On January 17th, Vance set out on patrol and would eventually head for a new destination, the Island of Tasmania. After 24 days out to sea the crew was getting eagerly excited for liberty and to attend the Royal Hobart Regatta in Tasmania. Just as the ship made landfall and continued towards Hobart, Captain Beyer, also excited for the Regatta, decided to make a snap decision. Instead of making their way into port, the ship dropped anchor. To the chagrin of some of the crew and Jaras, "...he decided to waste one of our five liberty days in isolation painting the ship...". So time had to be spent making the ship look just the way as Beyer had intended and then they made their way to Hobart for the festivities.

Officers and crewmen enjoyed amazing hospitality while in port. Many had the chance to attend parties aboard other ships where the luxury of spirits was indulged. Thomas Jaras had even more luxury by getting to play the part of ambassador to the governor of Tasmania, Thomas Godfrey Polson Corbett, 2nd Baron Rowallan, albeit for four days. Here, Jaras and other junior officers, were able to attend an eventful night at Government House amongst other dignitaries.

After the 4 days of parties, meeting various naval officers and drinking to their hearts delight, Vance's crew went back to work on February 14th. Same as the five patrols before, the weather and seas took their toll on the ship and her crew. Daily routine and the long spells of boredom on bridge watch were the regularities for the 17 day patrol.

USS Vance made port at Dunedin at noon on March 3rd. Just 3 days later, it departed for Melbourne, Australia and then was to return home. Unlike the previous times, this departure was quite different. Upon entry, the crew always enjoyed the greeting of hundreds of locals and once

they departed many would wave goodbye hoping to see them again. This time it was as if no one even knew, perhaps the excitement of the ship had finally run its course.

After 4 days of crossing the Tasman Sea and the Bass Straits, the ship entered Melbourne Harbor. The city was in the process of celebrating Moomba Day, and sailors were invited to various parties. Thomas Jaras, along with Jim Kunz and Tom Milligan got the opportunity to go water skiing off Melbourne thanks to a friendly hosting family. On March 17th, the fun was over and the ship's engine warmed up to steam out of port for its next destination.

After months of patrolling in those cold, bleak waters, Vance was slowly making her way back to the US. Papeete, Tahiti would be her next stop. The stop was quite uneventful compared to previous ones. The ship departed on the last day of March but just four hours after leaving port, a sailor was reported missing and according to French authorities on shore, was found. But instead of being placed on a commercial flight to Hawaii as requested, the ship had to turn back around as the French reply was "Come and get him."

A week after Tahiti, they had reached the Hawaiian Islands. At 1300 on Friday, April 6th, USS Vance sailed into Pearl Harbor and her Deep Freeze deployment was completed. Her crew enjoyed their liberty in Oahu but perhaps less energetically than the previous ports of Dunedin and Melbourne.

The destroyer escort then resumed her duties on the DEW-line for the rest of 1962 through the winter. Occasionally she would be interrupted for maintenance, replenishment or training. She would make semi-frequent stops in Adak, Alaska during some of these patrols as well.

In April 1963, USS Vance would commence further DEW-line patrols before heading into port at Yokosuka, Japan. When the ship was just 3 days from reaching Japan, a major issue

arose. A chief aboard the DER mentioned to have been hearing low squeaking sounds in the deck below him. Thomas Jaras and Don Dunn both went to investigate and found something extremely troubling. In his memoir, Jaras states “We had the green asphalt floor tiles removed beneath the table. Finding the steel deck plates cracked, we followed the crack line across the main deck from starboard to port, paralleling the after expansion joint at frame 96. We removed the asbestos insulation below in the engine room, revealing the underside of the crack. To our amazement and chagrin, the steel-plated main deck was severed, extending the full thirty-six feet across the ship from starboard to port.”

This meant that everytime the bow rose to meet an incoming wave, an extreme amount of stress would be placed on the flexing keel and the main deck. Regardless of what may have caused the initial crack, word quickly spread and the ship proceeded directly to Japan for repairs. Along the way, the captain decided to hold an abandon-ship drill. Unlike previous times where the crew sort of laughed it off and acted casually, this time it was met with a “sober, quiet affair”.

Luckily, the DER reached Japan on June 7th without incident. Repairs would take two weeks in port allowing some crewmembers to have liberty and explore the sailor’s town. Since 1947, the once center for the Imperial Japanese Navy in World War II, was now homeport for the US 7th Fleet. USS Vance would be amongst several destroyers, one or two cruisers and an aircraft carrier while moored in port.

On June 21st, repairs had been finished and the ship made her way towards Adak once again. Just five days later, the ship was in Kuluk Bay and began to refuel. By July 13th, she was back in Hawaii completing yet another Pacific patrol.

Later in August, Vance would enter drydock while in Pearl Harbor. The hull was cleaned and repaired along with the sonar dome as the screws were also inspected. During its time in

Pearl Harbor, the DER once again had a change of command. On September 7th, Captain Beyer turned over command to Lieut. Commander Ross W. Wright. In the first few days of his command, Wright decided to pay close attention to the necessity of the ship's engines and the crew who operated them. He even went as far as to visit the engine rooms and talk with the men on a regular basis. It seemed that he knew of the hard work that went into this area of the ship and just how important it was that these sailors receive recognition for their efforts.

On September 17th, Vance was refloated. Morale began to blossom amongst the crew as Wright proved himself to be an excellent ship handler. He began his service during World War II in the US Merchant Marine onboard Liberty ships eventually switching to the navy. He then went on to command various ships including an LST. By mid-October, USS Vance had newly overhauled diesel engines and under the command of a competent ship handler began to run engine tests for upcoming patrols the next year.

January 1964 would be the start of another series of Pacific barrier patrols for the DER. Like the many before her, she was pounded by weather and the sea as her new captain quickly adjusted to the ship. After six months she made her way back to Hawaii, where another crewman would be stepping off. With Oahu now in sight on June 18th, the time was encroaching slowly for another shift in the wardroom. Lieutenant Thomas F. Jaras, after 3 years of service and 18 patrols aboard USS Vance, would depart as so many did before him. Although Jaras was no longer aboard, his naval service didn't end there and the same goes for USS Vance. The latter however, would endure another 5 years of service, where she would be part of what Jaras describes as "one of the US Navy's major public relations mistakes of the Vietnam Era."

By the mid-1960s, improved radar and early-warning capabilities had caught up to the Vance, causing her to slowly become obsolete. However, by this point in the Cold War, the US

government had ramped up its efforts to support the anti-communist South Vietnamese government. Luckily, for Vance, she would receive a new lease on life. Because of her original design, this type of ship would prove invaluable for coastal patrol work. So in February 1965, USS Vance was ordered to the Western Pacific. On March 25th, 1965, she sailed from Pearl Harbor in company with fellow destroyer escorts USS Brister (DER-327) and USS Forster (DER-334), all three ships were members of the Edsall-class. All three would be part of Task Group 52.8, bound for the Philippines.

The task group eventually steamed for Vietnam after departing Subic Bay. However, while on route Vance rescued Captain Leland D. Holcomb, USAF. Holcomb had ejected from his F-100 Super Sabre fighter plane after it had caught fire and begun to burn wildly.

After finally reaching Vietnam, USS Vance would begin to take part in Operation Market Time on April 11, 1965. Having begun a month prior, the purpose of this operation was to stop the flow of troops, weapons and supplies by sea, coast and rivers from North Vietnam to support communist operations in the south. Vance would operate near the 17th parallel as part of Task Unit 71.1.1 until the 24th of April. During this assignment, she maintained communications between airborne Convair EC-121K Constellations and Commander, TK 71.1.1, in USS John W. Thomason (DD-760). This was done to coordinate aerial reconnaissance from the surveillance planes that picked up any unknown aircraft or ships on radar and to allow any patrolling US ships to prepare for search or possible engagement.

From May 15th to June 4th, Vance continued surface surveillance as part of “Market Time”. This time she would be operating in the Gulf of Thailand near the border dividing South Vietnam from Cambodia. She operated in company with small minesweepers (MSOs) and had a South Vietnamese Navy liaison officer on board. Having such an officer on board would help

with the “visit and search” activities the ship was conducting in those waters. She continued to operate and conduct these activities until sailing for Hawaii in early September and arriving in Pearl Harbor on the 18th.

USS Vance would remain in Hawaii operating around its waters awaiting to return back to Vietnam. It was during this time that a shift of command occurred aboard the ship. This was not a shocking event by any means, it happened every so often aboard various ships during their many years of service. By this point in its history, Vance had been under the command of 16 different captains. However, none would seem to have such an impact on the ship and her crew than her new, up and coming commanding officer.

On December 22nd, 1965, Commander Ross W. Wright was relieved as captain of USS Vance, thus handing over command to Lieut. Commander Marcus Aurelius Arnheiter. This is where the fun begins.

Now initially it would seem that Arnheiter was nothing more than a standard Navy officer, albeit with maybe a few kinks in his personality. He had graduated from the US Naval Academy with midclass standing. He was promoted to Lieutenant in 1956, despite initially receiving some “less-than-outstanding” fitness reports beforehand. He spent some time in the early 1960s working in the Pentagon on developing anti-submarine warfare plans. Arnheiter was known to have a reputation for brashness, a flair for verbal criticism, stubbornness and a considerable ego. When he began his command aboard the Vance he was 41 years of age, making him one of the oldest Lieut. Commanders in the US Navy. Even after he was given command it was noted that the Chief of Naval Operations, David L. McDonald, acknowledged that “The board having decided in your favor, albeit with reservations.” So it seems that although

his superiors approved of him, perhaps there were some limitations, or private thoughts that were not spoken at the time.

Before the Vance had even begun to set sail again, Arnheiter went to work on his new ship. It is reported that “Arnheiter, on taking command, immediately disliked the ‘lubberly’ appearance of officers and crew.” It would seem that USS Vance's crew was too relaxed in his vision and ordered officers to dress in clean khaki rather than their previous bare chested, shorts, sweat socks and sneakers outfit they had become accustomed to. His claims continued as he asserted that there was rust under fresh coats of paint and cockroaches in the crew’s mess and ordered the issues to be dealt with.

Within his first meeting with the other officers, Arnheiter had told the men that he wanted them to be audacious, hard charging and always show a can-do spirit. To the resentment of some of the men on board, Arnheiter even referred to Vance under her previous skipper as “McHale’s Navy.” So far, this gung-ho attitude didn’t seem to amuse too many on board.

While still tied up at Pearl Harbor, Arnheiter made an extremely rash decision that would later lead to controversy. He had ordered Gunnery Officer Ensign Luis Belmonte to purchase a 16-foot fiberglass speed boat with a 40-hp motor. This new addition was purchased through the means of \$950 directly from the crew’s welfare and recreation fund. Arnheiter ordered shark’s teeth to be painted on the prow, a .30-caliber machine gun mounted and a big American flag to be flown from her stern. This craft would serve as the scout boat as Arnheiter referred to it, while the officers and crew called it “the Bag of Worms”. According to the officers, Arnheiter’s plan was to use it as bait to provoke firefights with the Viet Cong to spot their positions to engage them.

Belmonte, whom Arnheiter viewed as highly intelligent and articulate, was also dispatched to obtain a further 15 M-1 rifles for Vance's defenses. However, there was an issue, there was only an allowance of 15 rifles on board and they already had them. There was no legal way to actually procure these additional rifles for Arnheiter's new fireteam for repelling boarders. Belmonte, realizing his limited options suggested, "What you desire me to do, Captain, is to use some creative appropriation." To which Arnheiter replied, "That's it, Mr. Belmonte. You can do it." Belmonte would indeed acquire the rifles but proclaimed that he was the one who signed for them and that it would be him "who would have hung if there was any trouble over it." Some time later Arnheiter admitted that while the procurement of the rifles was "a little imaginative" it was also "fully justified" as he intended to return them upon their completion of the cruise.

So far this wasn't looking to be a very fun time for the crew of USS Vance and the fact that Arnheiter had only been in command for a few days at this point isn't a good indication for what was to come. Regardless, Arnheiter was aboard and the Vance sailed back for Vietnamese waters on December 28th. She made port in Guam on January 7th for a short period to refuel and refit and during this time, Arnheiter was apparently up to no good.

It was reported by the engineering officer Lieut. (j.g.) Edward G. Fuehrer that Arnheiter told him to file a false report understating the number of diesel spare parts aboard Vance. At the time, these parts were in critical supply. Belmonte reportedly siphoned gasoline from a Navy vehicle for use in the speedboat in which Arnheiter took the pleasure of "sporting around in the harbor." Belmonte also purloined a dozen or so empty 55-gallon oil drums and sand bags. These were to be used as small arms target practice on Arnheiter's orders by having 30-man teams stand behind makeshift sandbag parapets and fire at the floating oil drums.

When the ship finally left Guam in mid-January, feelings about Arnheiter were filled with misgivings. Belmonte by this point was disgusted by Arnheiter's "leadership" and began to keep a log of his misdeed that was coined "Marcus Madness Log". Although the log formed as a joke between the junior officers to discuss the everyday experiences it was decided that some sort of record should be kept on what was happening.

Arnheiter alleged various peculiarities were recorded such as having the crew awakened in the morning by fife-and-drum reveille rather than the customary bosun's call. This was nicknamed "Hellcats' Reveille" by some crew members. Arnheiter was so deeply disturbed by the crew's lax discipline that he established a "boner box" in the wardroom. This acted as a system to fine officers 25 cents for each infraction he deemed offensive. Even trivial matters such as misplaced cutlery by a junior officer were subject to this new form of regulation. It became so bad that officers began to avoid the wardroom entirely and even the captain's lectures.

By January 27th, the ship was back in the waters off the coast of South Vietnam to continue operating as part of Operation Market Time. Eventually, USS Vance would then take part in Operation Masher. This amphibious operation was designed to clear the northern section of the Binh Dinh province of Viet Cong. Similar to Market Time, Vance's crew would continue its blockade, checking numerous vessels along South Vietnam's coast and also providing shore bombardment where necessary to support inland operations.

However, during these operations, another slew of questionable events occurred aboard the Vance. According to Belmonte and Fuehrer, Arnheiter had to have the control of the ship taken away from him on February 1st. On this day, the crew of the Vance had been ordered to pour 3-inch shell fire into a small building near the shore. Arnheiter had claimed this as "a stone

fortification” containing a “VC machine-gun emplacement.” It turns out that this fortification was nothing more than a religious shrine, confirmed by a spotter plane after the bombardment.

After the shooting had stopped, Belmonte quickly noticed that Vance was heading for the beach nearby. Fuehrer remembers the ship was traveling around 8 to 10 knots. Belmonte claimed that Arnheiter was haranguing the crew via the loudspeaker system and Executive Officer Lt. Ray Hardy took over command and swiftly ordered the ship brought out of danger. These men attested to seeing muddy water boiling under Vance’s propellers. Fuehrer thinks Arnheiter knew very little about the temperamental diesel engines so much that he “was hazarding the lives of 150 men.”

This was further noted when back on January 27th Arnheiter had taken the ship on an extended inspection of a suspected enemy-held shoreline, while within small arms range. During this inspection she only had one engine and one shaft operational, only able to reach a speed of seven knots. Fuehrer said that Arnheiter seldom gave him sufficient time to maintain the engines to meet certain standards.

As Vance continued conducting operations, searching sampans and junks, Arnheiter was remembered as sitting up in his captain’s chair with loaded M-1 rifles on either wing of the bridge. Occasionally he would shoot over the side, taking pot shots at sea snakes, sharks and even the various boats the crew were supposed to stop and search.

During one incident, Arnheiter claimed to have shot a poisonous sea snake that was near Belmonte as he was boarding a junk. Belmonte recalls four or five rounds passing by and splashing the water nearby him. This startled him which in turn caused him to draw his .45 caliber pistol and point it at an old Vietnamese man. Belmonte stated “I came within one

millimeter of killing that old man and everyone else on the junk,... Then to show you what that command was like, I thought, 'It's that silly bastard up on the bridge.'

On another occasion, Belmonte was in a position where innocent civilians may have been killed. A line of people carrying bundles along a beach were spotted by Vance's crew and Arnheiter believed them to be Viet Cong porters. Belmonte and Lieut. (junior grade) Edward Hopkins Mason were both ordered to investigate alongside an armed party in the motor whaleboat. During the investigation the Vietnamese explained to a liaison officer that they were refugees from a bombed village. At this time, Belmonte, who was in the whaleboat just off shore, had received orders via radio to fire bursts over the heads of the group. Immediately, he questioned the orders as firing a machine gun and attempting to control it in such a circumstance would have led to casualties. He refused to fire.

After this strange incident Arnheiter had spotted USS Leonard F. Mason, a Gearing-class destroyer steaming northward up South Vietnam's coast. She was taking part in Operation Masher and Arnheiter ordered Vance to set off after the destroyer at a speed of 17.5 knots. An hour after giving chase, a message had been sent over the radio teletype ordering all Market Time vessels to stay out of an area off the coast where an offensive was ongoing, which the Mason was supporting with offshore gunfire. Arnheiter, against protocol, continued the course and followed the ship into the forbidden zone. He continually pestered the captain of the Mason, even compromising the code necessary to keep these ships safe over the radio. Every action he was taking was against military etiquette and endangered the lives of many men.

During this time, American and South Vietnamese companies were pinned down further inland. Mason maneuvered for a bombardment effort and as they did so, Arnheiter had Vance maneuver as well, however, she was now in between the shore and Mason's gun range. At this

point the captain of the Mason told his communications officer to start a tape recorder and make a record of any and all of Arnheiter's radio transmissions to them.

By midafternoon, Arnheiter ordered Vance's 3-inch guns to open fire on what he believed were enemy held trenches and bunkers above some sand dunes. The captain of the Mason was scanning that same sand dune through his binoculars and saw nothing but sand. He became worried that any of those 3-inch shells may be fired too far and inflict casualties on US or South Vietnamese troops who were operating inland. According to Belmonte, "We sure scared the hell out of those sand crabs over there."

On January 30th, the Vance sailed south and discovered the USS Bache bombarding huts several miles inland, supposedly consisting of a guerrilla training camp. Arnheiter hailed the Bache and attempted to harangue a target from their spotter but similar to the experience with the Mason, Arnheiter would have to locate it himself. So while standing atop the O-3 deck, Arnheiter believes he spotted movement amongst a clump of trees and brush. He picked up an M-1 rifle and fired several shots in the direction of "the enemy" and some of these rounds ricocheted off of rocks causing sparks. Arnheiter now believed this to be counter-fire, despite no one else seeing any movement or fire. He ordered the heavy machine guns and 3-inch guns to fire into the area.

During this "action", the ship's chief medical corpsman, Chief Petty Officer Hector Cornejo, had left the wardroom to see what was happening. He saw that Chief Radioman Everett R. Grissom was leaning on the rail on the main deck watching through his binoculars. Cornejo asked "Hey, Chief Grissom, what're we shooting at?" Grissom then handed over his binoculars to Cornejo and responded, "Two chickens."

Apparently during this engagement Hardy had spotted Arnheiter ducking behind the gun control shield. Williams and some of the enlisted men had also noticed Arnheiter's uncaptainly behavior and soon everyone else on board had heard the story. Arnheiter had reportedly told Hardy that he planned to boost the crew's morale by making it seem as if they were engaging the enemy. It seems as if his gung-ho attitude had scared himself finally, but this is nowhere near the end of his story aboard the Vance.

There are two separate incidents with the whaleboat and the aforementioned 16-foot speedboat that have to be discussed. Firstly, there was one occurrence where Arnheiter had ordered the whaleboat to be towed behind the Vance while they were patrolling the coast. Arnheiter ordered a crew to be in it so when they came upon junks they could easily search them and at a quicker pace. Ensign McWhirter was ordered with several sailors to remain in it despite the danger of possibly being towed into Vances's propellers or swept under by the large swells created by Vance's speed.

Belmonte stood on the fantail with an ax in hand ready to cut the line to save these men by severing the towrope to prevent them from floundering. He grew worried that he may not even have enough time to cut the rope if the whaleboat nosed into a wave as the rope went taut. Vance went from 8 to 10 knots on Arnheiter's orders and as the whaleboat took a worse buffeting Hardy pleaded with Arnheiter to bring the crew back on board. Luckily, Arnheiter's sanity cooled and the whaleboat crew climbed back aboard with an angry McWhirter and the sailors shouting some interesting words at Hardy who did nothing but shake his head and turn away.

A second escapade occurred after the crew had returned from some leave in Bangkok. On March 18th, Arnheiter was summoned to An Thoi Naval Base for a special, secret briefing. Intelligence reports believe that a small Chinese submarine was operating out of Cambodia to

supply communist guerrillas along the southern Vietnam coast. So the Vance, along with a task force of three Coast Guard cutters and three Swift patrol craft were ordered to search for the sub in a secret five-day operation.

Arnheiter, being such an inspirational leader to Vance's crew, gave a fiery, eve-of-battle speech. "I call upon each and every one of you for a supreme effort,... The men on the beach are depending upon us to discover that submarine before she can deliver her deadly cargo of weapons. The lives of our infantrymen are at stake. We must not fail them." Thus the Vance and her task force began their mission. What Arnheiter once again, forgot to point out was that the priority of the mission was to detect the submarine, no orders were given to engage or even sink it. Although Vance's officers and crew had grown accustomed to these imaginary interpretations.

Belmonte had been ordered with a couple sailors to climb into the speedboat below the fantail and similar to the whaleboat incident a month prior, be towed behind the Vance. As the Vance continued its search efforts, it reached a speed of 15 knots and Arnheiter ordered the ship to turn so sharply that the speedboat would skip up one side of Vance's wake and down the other like a water ski. Belmonte radioed the ship to request that the speed be decreased, to which Arnheiter replied "Don't worry about it, Mr. Belmonte." As they approached a nearby junk the captain let them go and Vance disappeared into darkness, now out of sight and radio contact.

The sounds of an engine began to increase nearby the speedboat and Belmonte recognized the silhouette as a World War II-era twin engined Douglas, specifically an AC-47. This was a heavily armed gunship, outfitted with rapid-fire miniguns. Belmonte became fearful that they may be mistaken as an enemy boat and fired upon. Thinking quickly, he grabbed the American flag that Arnheiter had ordered onto the speedboat and began to wave it frantically.

The plane eventually veered away and the speedboat remained in the water, waiting, for whoever or whatever may come first.

Belmonte and two sailors had nothing but a couple of sandwiches, a .30 caliber machine gun. No compass, no charts, no water and they sat in water about twenty or so miles away from a coast that the Viet Cong continuously operated on. As night turned to day, the seaman on the speedboat spotted a Coast Guard cutter and they started the outboard engine. They tied alongside the cutter as the Coast Guard crew were bewildered by such a peculiar incident. Eventually they were returned to their ship.

During the final day of this operation, Arnheiter had declared a general holiday for the crew. Beer was brought to the whaleboat and the speedboat was lowered into the water for sailors to ski at their leisure. Sailors stopped doing their jobs on board to take part in the festivities as Arnheiter had grown bored of searching for a submarine. The next morning after their little party, USS Vance was relieved by USS Brister (DER-327). They then turned for Manila for a two weeks' maintenance.

USS Vance arrived in Manila on March 26th and was tied up alongside USS Markab. It was here that other members of the US Navy would experience life under Arnheiter. Hellcats Reveille would sound as the "nest" of ships in the bay would be able to hear its blaring sound. Sailors from the Vance would regale their stories to other sailors, one of Vance's crew was brought to the psychiatric ward at the Clark Air Force Base Hospital as he could no longer stand Arnheiter's leadership.

On March 31st, 1966 at around 10 am, a teletype machine in the radio room of the Markab tapped out four coded lines, directly addressing the captain of the Vance. Markab was

receiving this message because Vance's teletypes were being repaired while in port. The message was brought to the captain who sent for Hardy and tried to make sense of it all.

The message read the following: "Lieutenant Commander Marcus A. Arnheiter... hereby detached as Commanding Officer U.S.S. *Vance*. Proceed immediately and report to U.S.S. *Dixie* (Destroyer Tender-14) for temporary duty and for further assignment by Chief of Naval Personnel..."

Both Arnheiter and Hardy couldn't make out the true intention of the message and only speculated as Arnheiter would need to travel to Subic Bay where *Dixie* was docked. Arnheiter scrambled to make sense of what was happening, going as far as to contact Commodore Baird who told him that he was being relieved for an impending investigation. Commodore Milligan's plane arrived late and greeted several officers of Vance's crew including Arnheiter. He was aboard Vance by 8pm, placed his bag in the wardroom and spoke with Arnheiter alone in the captain's cabin. A short time later, Milligan ordered Hardy to have the quartermaster log that at 2015 he had relieved Lt. Cmdr. Arnheiter, and assumed temporary command of USS Vance. After 99 days, Marcus Aurelius Arnheiter was no longer captain of USS Vance.

From all I have spoken about, including the many events I did not discuss and the insanity of these stories, it wasn't any of those incidents that had caused this outcome. As it turned out, during his command Arnheiter had ordered the crew to attend religious services frequently on the fantail. While this doesn't seem to be too out of the ordinary, there was one major issue. Arnheiter was a Protestant, while many of the crew including Belmonte, Cornejo and William T. Generous, were all Roman Catholic.

Arnheiter had essentially violated the Constitution by forcing these men to attend services not compliant with their own religious teachings. Hardy on several occasions had attempted to

dissuade the captain from issuing these illegal orders but to no avail. Even Generous on one occasion expressed his displeasure and told the captain that he would not attend such services to which Arnheiter replied "...you'll go." This was the ticket to getting the Navy's attention. Not the speedboat, not the extra rifles or following friendly ships into no-go areas and abandoning their own post. Not the boner box, or Hellcats Reveille. It was the violation of one's freedom to practice their religion that got Arnheiter into hot water. Generous, who initially had been supportive of Arnheiter's command, had been the one to send a letter of complaint to a Navy chaplain. This is where many believe the colloquial 'Arnheiter Affair' began.

Now by this point, Arnheiter is no longer in command of USS Vance, so I won't go into too much detail about what follows as that is not the intention of this podcast. But I will provide a quick overview of the events that followed.

Arnheiter had to face an inquiry in Subic Bay that lasted six and a half days about the events that occurred during his command. He had many supporters, including several Vance crewmembers who believed he was looking out for the crew and acting in the best way he could. Eventually, Arnheiter filed a formal court-martial against Hardy and Generous for "mutiny and conspiracy to commit mutiny." However, the Navy refused to comply, so he went as far as to charge the admirals who presided over his inquiry for which he was not even reprimanded. By this point, Arnheiter had reached out to supporters in Congress such as Congressman Joseph Y. Resnick of New York. However, this support quickly fizzled out as well and the Navy once again refused Arnheiter's attempts to save face. They also refused to take any further action against him as subsequent charges were dismissed. On repeated appeals his case was continually dismissed as Arnheiter tried his best to save his reputation and turn blame to his subordinates and those whom he believed wronged him.

An important fact I'd like to mention is that during this inquiry, Arnheiter did have support from one particular Navy officer, Richard G. Alexander. Alexander was set to become captain of USS New Jersey (BB-62). However, the Navy was disappointed in his decision and due to his selection and patronizing of Arnheiter, it was decided at the last minute to assign Captain J. Edward Snyder as the reactivated battleship's commanding officer. It seems that no matter where Arnheiter went, what he did or said, it always had some sort of effect on those around him. Arnheiter went down swinging though, trying to convince fellow servicemen, reporters and anyone who would listen that the charges against him were nothing but conspiracy. But nothing ever came of any of it and he retired from the US Navy on February 1st, 1971. Generous was discharged in 1967 and dabbled in anti-war activities whilst attending Stanford University. Belmonte pondered the idea of staying in the Navy but he too would leave after just one more year of service. According to a Navy spokesman, "No matter what happens, Arnheiter will never, never, never command another of our ships."

To close out this particular section of Vance's history I need to say a few words. I have been studying Military History for close to 5 years now and I have gone through various accounts of different battlefield commanders and the etiquette of their leadership. I am not here to give a negative viewpoint of those mentioned above as I was not present for such events so my interpretation is somewhat obscured. But from the information I have researched about Arnheiter, his demeanor and his overall command structure, I feel that the evidence provided has shown clear misgivings. Yes, mistakes were made and there are examples of incompetence that were rightly addressed. Arnheiter, in my opinion, showed that he was not prepared to lead anyone and perhaps would have performed better in a non-combat role.

Now after all that, we can return to the rest of Vance's history. She was once again underway on April 11th to patrol off Cap de Ca Mau, along the southernmost tip of South Vietnam's coast. Vance continued her pattern of searching junks and surveying traffic patterns in the South China Sea. Some time later, while operating off Binh Dinh province, Vance was investigating a trawler and came under fire from Viet Cong. The ship suffered hits from small arms fire which penetrated and left holes in certain areas but her crew reacted by firing from their 3-inch guns. This fire quickly ended the threat by killing or driving away any of the pestering but unseen snipers.

Despite all the fighting that Vance had been through in Vietnam, there was room for humanitarian work. During its service, the ship's crew and a swift boat had taken to rescuing 56 South Vietnamese men, women and children from a swamped boat near Qui Nhon. The crew took on the task of cleaning up some of the babies and children and providing comfort to the more elderly refugees. They handed out blankets, towels and food to help those in need.

In late July, Vance was relieved by USS Haverfield (DER-393) and made her way to Hawaii. Although during this journey she only got as far as the San Bernardino Strait in the Philippines before being ordered to return to Vietnam for more duty in Operation Market Time. She would once again be relieved from duty, this time by USS Surfbird (ADG-383) on August 6th. Vance set sail for the Philippines and luckily without interruption made it to Pearl Harbor.

On January 15th, 1967, she would return to the Far East for another 7th Fleet deployment where she relieved USS Koiner (DER-331) at the mouth of the Saigon River. Once again her duties were the same as before, monitor waterway traffic, hunt for contraband carrying craft and intercept any attempts at infiltration from the north to support Viet Cong efforts. Although this

work was quite tedious and sometimes frustrating, it was vital to helping South Vietnam and protecting the soldiers patrolling further inland.

The ship conducted two more patrols as part of Market Time during her third WestPac deployment. Occasionally she would report to Kaohsiung, Taiwan for tender availability, Hong Kong for rest and relaxation, or Subic Bay for general upkeep. At the end of her last Market Time assignment she patrolled the Taiwan Strait before returning to Pearl Harbor for routine overhaul. In late 1967, she began her final WestPac deployment performing the exact same duties she had done so many times previously. After this final deployment, she returned to the west coast of the United States in late 1968 for inactivation.

The Vance was placed in reserve at the Inactive Ship Facility in Vallejo, California. USS Vance (DER-387) was decommissioned on October 10th, 1969. She was struck from the Navy list on June 1st, 1975 and prepared for her final fate. She was sunk as a target off the coast of California in 1985.

The Vance has one of the most unique stories of any destroyer escort I have recently researched. It was one of the longest serving DEs, from World War II to Vietnam. Protecting convoys in the Atlantic from U-boats, blockading South Vietnam from the Viet Cong and 99 days of being under command from the Navy's version of Custer in the 20th century. She may no longer be afloat, but her stories, no matter how wild and ludicrous, still survive.

Thank you for listening to DE Classified. This podcast is brought to you by the Destroyer Escort Historical Museum aboard USS Slater. You can find a transcript of this episode, accompanying photos and a bibliography at usslater.org/de-classified. I am Giordano Romano, and I hope you join us next month when we DE Classify USS George A. Johnson.

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