



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS GRAPPLE (ARS 53)
C/O FPO AE NEW YORK 09570-3223

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From: Commanding Officer, USS GRAPPLE (ARS 53)
To: Director of Naval History (OP-09BH), Washington Navy Yard,
Washington, DC 20374-0571

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12E

Encl: (1) Command Composition and Organization
(2) Chronology
(3) Narrative

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosures (1) through (4) are submitted.


W. J. ROBERTSON

Command Composition and Organization

Commanding Officer: William J. Robertson, LCDR, USN

ISIC: Commander, Combat Logistics Group Two

Mission: GRAPPLE'S mission is to provide rescue and salvage service to the fleet. Her capabilities include:

TOWING: GRAPPLE is capable of rescue and open ocean towing. The ship can develop a bollard pull of 131,000 lbs with an installed double drum towing machine rove with 3000 feet of 2 1/4 inch wire rope on each drum.

SALVAGE: GRAPPLE carries transportable cutting and welding equipment, hydraulic and electric power sources, dewatering equipment and hull repair materials to effect temporary hull repairs on stranded or otherwise damaged ships. GRAPPLE also has a 5 ton boom forward and a 40 ton boom aft to off-load a disabled ship and handle heavy equipment during salvage operations.

BEACH GEAR: A stranded vessel may be extracted from the beach using six sets of beach gear carried by GRAPPLE. Two beach gear ground legs can be rigged on GRAPPLE and four beach gear ground legs can be rigged on the stranded vessel.

OFF SHIP FIRE FIGHTING: There are four fire monitors mounted on board GRAPPLE. These fire monitors are supplied with up to 1000 gallons of sea water or aqueous film forming foam (AFFF) to fight fires on other ships.

HEAVY LIFT: A dynamic lift of 300 tons can be made using the main bow rollers and the stern rollers simultaneously.

DIVING: The air diving system on board GRAPPLE provide divers with capability of tethered dives to 190 feet of seawater. GRAPPLE has a recompression chamber for treatment of decompression sickness or for routine surface decompression. GRAPPLE's recompression chamber is also designed to mate with a portable recompression chamber at the outer lock entry door.

SHIP'S SCHEDULE

01	JAN-16	FEB	UPKEEP
	17-21	FEB	TOW EX-USS BELKNAP
23	MAR-04	APR	TOW EX-USS ORTOLAN
	06-21	APR	IMAV LITTLE CREEK, VA.
	24-26	APR	U/W CHES BAY, NJROTC VISIT
27	APR-12	MAY	TARGET TOW SHIP, USS AMERICA BATTLE GROUP COMPTUEX
	15-26	MAY	CHESBAY, SALVAGE TRAINING/DIVE OPS
	09-22	JUN	U/W KEY WEST EOD SUPPORT OPS
	11-14	JUL	CART II, IPT LITTLE CREEK, VA.
24	JUL-04	AUG	U/W CHES BAY, TSTA I (FTG)
	07-09	AUG	TOW USS OSPREY (MHC 51)
	11-13	AUG	PORT VISIT, FALL RIVER, MA.
	14	AUG	IPT, NEWPORT, RI.
	15-18	AUG	U/W CHES BAY, HURRICANE SORTIE
	28-29	AUG	YFN TOW, PHILADELPHIA, PA.
	02-04	SEP	PORT VISIT SEARSPORT, ME
	11-15	SEP	U/W CHESBAY, ETG
	25-29	SEP	AEC/PMT, LITTLE CREEK, VA.
	03-06	OCT	PRE-INDUSTRIAL ETG, LITTLE CREEK, VA.
	12	OCT	AMMO OFFLOAD, YORKTOWN, VA.
	12-15	OCT	VISIT SHIP, NAUTICUS, NORFOLK, VA.
	16-18	OCT	TOW USS OSPREY (MHC-51)
	19-20	OCT	LMA, LITTLE CREEK, VA.
	23	OCT	U/W CHESBAY, NAVCERT
24	OCT-15	DEC	PMF, BRAMBLETON SHIPYARD, NORFOLK, VA.
	16-31	DEC	CHRISTMAS STANDDOWN.

During 1995, USS GRAPPLE faced a year of diverse, yet fulfilling taskings that fully demonstrated the capabilities of the ship and the boundless talents of her crew. These special skills were particularly evident during a year marked by continued fiscal and personnel cuts as well as the usual high operational tempo the salvage navy has become known for.

The first two quarters of calendar year 1995 saw the continuation of the drawdown of the U.S. Naval Ships and was highlighted by the tows of EX-USS BELKNAP from Norfolk, VA to Philadelphia, PA and the EX-USS ORTOLAN from Charleston, SC, to Norfolk, VA. GRAPPLE earned a small footnote in history for the tow of the EX-USS BELKNAP, the former Sixth Fleet Flagship. GRAPPLE continued to be gainfully employed the rest of the quarter, taking part in the USS AMERICA Battle Group COMPTUEX in the OPAREA north of Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico. In this exercise GRAPPLE provided vital towing services, transporting the target ship, EX-USS CHEROKEE to the OPAREA for the missile and gunfire drills. Upon completing this tasking GRAPPLE closed out the month of May with a highly successful Salvage Training Exercise which included the debeaching of EX-USS KEYWADIN at Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, VA.

The month of June saw GRAPPLE underway again, this time supporting EOD Operations off Key West, Florida. This operation allowed GRAPPLE divers to interact with their EOD counterparts and see a side of Navy diving uniquely different from that of the salvage world. The time underway also gave the officers and crew of GRAPPLE valuable time to polish their damage control and firefighting skills in preparation for the CART II evaluation and the Tailored Ship's Training Availability (TSTA I) which took place in July.

With a highly successful TSTA I behind her, GRAPPLE spent the months of August and September providing crucial towing services as well as showing the flag at various regional celebrations. August started out with the tow of the USS OSPREY (MHC 51) from Norfolk, VA to the proving grounds at Aberdeen, MD for OSPREY's shock trials. Upon completion of this tow, GRAPPLE continued on to Fall River, MA to take part in the city's Celebration of America. Along with the Coast Guard sailing vessel, EAGLE, GRAPPLE was a featured participant in an at-sea parade of vessels leading into the harbor at Fall River. Over the weekend, GRAPPLE sailors conducted tours for thousands of enthusiastic citizens who were extremely impressed with the ship and her crews.

Enroute from Fall River, MA to Little Creek, VA, GRAPPLE ran afoul of Hurricane Felix, which was threatening to strike the North Carolina and Virginia coastlines. Most of the Second Fleet

Enclosure (3)

was ordered to sortie to sea to ride out the storm while GRAPPLE, along with her fellow salvage vessels USS EDENTON(ATS 1) and USS GRASP(ARS 51), were diverted to a hurricane anchorage far up the Chesapeake Bay and ordered to standby to render salvage services for any naval vessels stranded by the storm. Fortunately, Felix spared the Norfolk, VA area of any damage and passed harmlessly up the east coast of the U.S. and, finally, out to sea. After a brief period inport for upkeep, GRAPPLE found herself enroute to Searsport, ME to provide visit ship services in support of Searsport's Tricentennial Celebration. The visit proved to be very rewarding, with the crew again displaying their prowess and at the same time satisfying their taste for outstanding and yet inexpensive lobster.

Upon returning from Searsport, GRAPPLE was faced with completing an assist visit from the Engineering Training Group as well as finishing preparations for the command's Logistics Management Assessment to be held 19 October. Added into the schedule were visit ship services at the Nauticus Museum at Norfolk and the tow of the USS OSPREY back to Norfolk from Aberdeen, MD. Again the crew of the GRAPPLE proved that through their hard work and resourcefulness they were ready to meet any challenge. In between operational commitments GRAPPLE showed well during the Logistics Management Assessment, earning an adjective grade of Excellent, thereby securing GRAPPLE's nomination for a third consecutive Battle Efficiency Award.

The final tasking GRAPPLE faced in calendar year 1995 was the completion of an industrial maintenance availability in Brambleton Shipyard, Norfolk, VA. For two months, the officers and crew worked long hours ensuring that the shipyard work progressed smoothly as well as preparing for an extensive pre-underway Lightoff Assessment that was evaluated by GRAPPLE's ISIC, COMLOGGRU TWO. In keeping with the tone set earlier in the year, GRAPPLE's crew performed professionally, completing the maintenance availability under budget and easily passing the Lightoff Assessment. Upon leaving the shipyard and returning pierside, Little Creek, the crew of the GRAPPLE was allowed to close out 1995 with 30 days of well deserved Christmas leave and standdown.