



J. S. S. BLUE RIDGE (LCC-19)

c/o FLEET POST OFFICE
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IN REPLY REFER TO

LCC19/111:ht
5750
Ser 79
5 FEB 1973

From: Commanding Officer, USS BLUE RIDGE (LCC19)
To: Director of Naval History (OP-09B9)
Subj: Command History (OPNAV Report 5750-1); submission of
Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12B 1972
Encl: (1) BLUE RIDGE "Family Grams" for months of JAN-DEC 72
(2) BLUE RIDGE "First WESTPAC Cruise Book"
(3) CINCPACFLT 062321Z JUN 72
(4) COMSEVENTHFLT ltr FF/8/RLW-GD 1650 ser N1/PD-983-A
of 18 JULY 1972

1. In accordance with reference (a), subject report is submitted for the period 1 January 1972 to 31 December 1972:

a. Command Organization. Commanding Officer: (1) Captain Kent J. Carroll, U. S. Navy, 14 November 1970 - 1 July 1972; (2) Captain Paul H. Speer, U. S. Navy, 1 July 1972 - 31 December 1972.

b. Summary of Operations. BLUE RIDGE began 1972 by shifting berths on 5 January from the Naval Station in San Diego to nearby Ballast Point. She underwent degaussing at the deperming facility and deployed from there on 7 January. The first stop on her maiden WESTPAC voyage was the customary visit to Pearl Harbor (13-15 JAN). In company with USS STERRETT (DLG31) and USS MAHAN (DLG11), she transited to the Subic Bay Naval Base in the Philippines via Guam, Marianas Islands, where she refueled on 25 January, and the scenic San Bernadino Straits.

Arriving at Subic Bay on 29 January BLUE RIDGE embarked RADM W. D. Gaddis, USN, Commander Amphibious Force, U. S. Seventh Fleet, relieving USS ELDORADO (LCC11) of flagship duties. Underway on the last day of the month, she arrived in Okinawa, Ryukus Islands on 2 February, then visited Sasebo, Japan (15-22 FEB). Transiting the Formosa Straits, she crossed the equator 27 February at Longitude 105.24° East, put in to the Republic of Singapore (28 FEB - 3 MAR), Subic Bay (6-11 MAR) and Hong Kong, British Crown Colony (13-18 MAR) before returning to Okinawa on 20 March.

BGEN E. J. Miller, USMC, Commanding General Ninth Marine Amphibious Brigade, embarked BLUE RIDGE in preparation for the joint U. S. - Korea exercise Golden Dragon. But the invasion of the Republic of Vietnam by forces of the Democratic People's Republic of Vietnam aborted the exercise and, carrying two flag officers and their staffs, BLUE RIDGE left White Beach on 5 April for the Gulf of Tonkin.

As flagship for CTF 76 and CTG 79.1 she operated with the Amphibious Ready Group of Amphibious Squadrons FIVE and SEVEN. BLUE RIDGE served as command and control center during several operations in the Song Thanh and Lam Son series, wherein Seventh Fleet amphibians assisted the RVN Marine Corps in recapturing Quang Tri Province from NVN troops. Further, as CTU 76.0.1, escorted by USS JOHN PAUL JONES (DDG32), BLUE RIDGE conducted special operations in the Tonkin Gulf in Operation Venture Road. Except for a brief upkeep period in Subic Bay 7-14 June, the ship was "on the line" (Mod Loc 17-00 North 107-45 East or 19-00 North 107-30 East) until 18 July. In a congratulatory message (CINCPACFLT 062321Z JUN 72) Pacific Fleet Commander-in-Chief, Admiral B. A. Clarey, noted, "... the officers and men of USS BLUE RIDGE can take deep pride in their major contributions to the prosecution of the war. As the first of your class to prove herself in combat, as flagship for CTF 76 and CTG 79.1, on two highly successful amphibious assaults and on other special operations, BLUE RIDGE has met the challenge of intense combat operations and has carried out her duties in an exemplary manner. I want every officer and enlisted man aboard to know that BLUE RIDGE's outstanding work has been recognized and appreciated. WELL DONE."

During Operation Song Thanh 8-72 on 27 June shore batteries on Tiger Island off the Demilitarized Zone opened fire on BLUE RIDGE. She returned 77 rounds from a range of 13,000 yards. For this action she was awarded, on 18 July, the Combat Action Ribbon.

On 28 June, the Honorable Nguyen Van Thieu, President of the Republic of Vietnam, flew aboard via helicopter to confer with Seventh Fleet commander, Vice Admiral James M. Holloway, Admiral Gaddis and General Miller.

On 1 July, in ceremonies on the main deck while the ship steamed outside DaNang Harbor, Captain Paul H. Speer, USN, became BLUE RIDGE's second commanding officer, relieving Captain Kent Jean Carroll, USN. One week later, Rear Admiral W. D. Toole, USN, relieved Rear Admiral Gaddis as Commander Amphibious Force, U. S. Seventh Fleet aboard the ship.

She returned to Subic Bay 20 July, leaving five days later for Okinawa and arriving at White Beach on the 28th. On 2 August the CTF 76 and CTG 79.1 staffs moved aboard USS PAUL REVERE (LPA248). The next day BLUE RIDGE headed for home.

Crossing the International Date Line 9 August, she learned the next day that she'd been awarded the Battle "E" by Commander Amphibious Force, U. S. Pacific Fleet. She returned to San Diego 18 August and began a post-deployment stand down period.

On 6 September, VADM J. F. Calvert, USN, Commander, U. S. First Fleet, broke his flag aboard BLUE RIDGE. The next day, the Secretary of the Navy, the Honorable John Warner, who was keynote speaker at the ship's commissioning in 1970, visited. On 15 September Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., Chief of Naval Operations, boarded to call on First Fleet.

LCC19/111:ht
5750

The ship got underway 4 October for San Francisco, visiting there 5-9 October, and returning to San Diego the 10th. Local operations underway were conducted from 6-10 November and Interim Refresher Training took place 20-22 November. The 14th of the month marked the second anniversary of commissioning.

On 6 December BLUE RIDGE shifted berths from NAS North Island to the Naval Station and began a period of restricted availability and holiday leave that extended to the year's end.

c. Documentary Annexes. Enclosures (1) through (4).


P. H. SPEER

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