



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
COMMANDING OFFICER
USS BLUE RIDGE (LCC-19)
FPO AP 96628-3300

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From: Commanding Officer, USS BLUE RIDGE (LCC 19)
To: Director of Naval History (OP-09BH), Washington Navy Yard
Subj: COMMAND HISTORY (OPNAVINST REPORT 5740-1)
Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12E

1996

- Encl: (1) Portrait of Captain T. P. Labrecque, USN
(2) Official Biography of Captain T. P. Labrecque, USN
(3) Teruo Ito's Retirement Ceremony Brochure
(4) Copies of Family Ties for Calendar Year 1996
(5) Vladivostok, Russia Port Visit Guide
(6) Chronological List of Significant Events, Calendar Year 1996

1. Per reference (a), the Command History for 1 January 1996 through 31 December 1996 is submitted:

a. Command Organization: USS BLUE RIDGE (LCC 19) Commanding Officer: Captain T. P. Labrecque from 19 July 1995 to present.

b. The mission of USS BLUE RIDGE (LCC 19) is to support the staff of Commander of SEVENTH Fleet. One specific support mission is to "show the flag" in ports of the SEVENTH Fleet Area of Responsibility. Additionally, the SEVENTH Fleet Flagship is designed to serve many purposes, depending on the crises. Specifically, it is designed to be the flagship for C7F as a CJTF or CCNCC, to accommodate JFACC Afloat, to serve as a SACC for MEF size landing, and to be a combined operations center.

c. Summary of operations: USS BLUE RIDGE commenced 1996 pierside in Yokosuka, Japan. The new year kicked off with the traditional poetic midwatch entry and blowing of the ship's whistle.

On January 12, BLUE RIDGE got underway for a successful one day sea trial. On 18 January, BLUE RIDGE got underway to anchor for one day then, transited to Beppu, Japan. On the way to Beppu the ship conducted a PACFIRE for CIWS, and 25mm and 50 cal. machine guns, in addition to several man overboard drills, general quarters, and Engineering Casualty Control Drills. BLUE RIDGE anchored in Beppu Harbor on 23 January. The crew enjoyed the spas and hot baths in Beppu during a three day visit. On 26 January BLUE RIDGE got underway to return to Yokosuka for repairs to the astern throttle valve.

On 2 February, BLUE RIDGE pulled into Yokosuka. The crew spent four days in homeport then got underway on 6 February to head for Hong Kong via the Taiwan Straits. The ship enjoyed a four day port visit pierside in Hong Kong. On 16 February, BLUE RIDGE got underway from Hong Kong and headed for Darwin, Australia. The first day underway the ship conducted an underway replenishment with USNS PECOS. The ship arrived in Darwin on 29 February. During the month of February, the ship was visited by the Chief Minister of Northern Territory; Northern Command, Staff Administrator Northern Territory; Staff Northern Territory Coonawarra; Staff Northern Territory Palmerstown; Commodore Royal Australian Navy; Assistant Secretary Royal Defense Force; Brigadier Royal Australian Army; and the Australian American Association.

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The ship got underway from Darwin, Australia on 4 March. On 11 March, the ship arrived in Jakarta, Indonesia. On 14 March, the ship got underway and headed for Sembawang, Singapore via the Singapore Straits. The ship moored in Sembawang on 22 March and was able to have a 5 day availability while in port. On 26 March, the ship got underway and headed back to Yokosuka to begin the Selected Restricted Availability 28. Throughout the month of March, BLUE RIDGE trained intensely for the scheduled Operation Propulsion Plant Examination in the beginning of April. Due to plant casualties the exam was cancelled.

On 5 April, the ship returned to Yokosuka. On 22 April, Selected Restricted Availability 28 officially began. The month of April saw the following VIPS visit BLUE RIDGE: Ship Repair Facility; Mr. Navy; Battle Force Seventh Fleet; religious ministries; Amphibious Force Seventh Fleet; USS INDEPENDENCE; Naval Forces Japan; Fleet Activities Yokosuka; Public Works Center; and Submarine Force Seventh Fleet.

Through the month of May the ship pressed on through the Selected Restricted Availability. BLUE RIDGE conducted daily fire drills and frequent security alert drills. The month of May saw the following distinguished guests visit BLUE RIDGE: Commander Fleet Activities, Yokosuka; Deputy CINCPACFLT; Submarine Force Seventh Fleet; and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

On 11 June, BLUE RIDGE set sail to test out the repairs completed during Selected Restricted Availability 28. The two day sea trials and Tiger Cruise went well and was enjoyed by family members and friends. From the 13th through 16th BLUE RIDGE remained in port Yokosuka. On the morning of the 17th BLUE RIDGE departed Yokosuka, in fog, and headed to Apra Harbor, Guam. Enroute BLUE RIDGE and the JMSDF ship Marakumo demonstrated leap frogs, flaghoist drill, and radio drills. June 17th through 20th BLUE RIDGE continued training the crew in ECC Drills, General Quarters, and gunfire exercises. Upon entering Guam, BLUE RIDGE practiced a Mediterranean Moor to simulate the type of mooring needed for the upcoming port visit to Vladivostok, Russia in July. BLUE RIDGE departed Guam on 24 June to head back to Yokosuka with a one day stop in Okinawa.

On 2 July, BLUE RIDGE arrived back in Yokosuka for a two week upkeep period in preparation for exercise ULCHI FOCUS LENS 96. On 22 July, BLUE RIDGE got underway and headed for Vladivostok, Russia to celebrate the Russian's Navy 300th Anniversary. BLUE RIDGE arrived on the morning of the 26th. A Russian ship led BLUE RIDGE to a Mediterranean moor between ships from Japan, China, South Korea, and Russia. In Russia, BLUE RIDGE was visited by U.S. Consulate General; Russian Navy Pacific Fleet; Staff Russian Navy Pacific Fleet; First Deputy Russian Navy Pacific Fleet; Staff First Deputy Russian Navy Pacific Fleet; CAPT Russian Navy; Pacific Border Guard; South Korea Naval Training Center; China Northern Fleet Navy; Escort Flotilla 2 Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force; Mayor of Vladivostok; China Northern Fleet; Pacific Fleet; and Governor of Vladivostok. On 30 July, BLUE RIDGE departed Russia and headed for Otaru, Japan.

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The three day transit to Otaru ended on 1 August. The crew enjoyed a three day visit in Otaru and then continued on to Sasebo, Japan on 4 August. Along the way to Sasebo, a JMSDF ship conducted leap frogs, radio drills, and a dry UNREP. The ship moored in Sasebo on 7 August. The expected three day visit was extended to a six day port visit due to a typhoon to the South. BLUE RIDGE got underway on 12 August heading for Okinawa, Japan to pick up embarkees for exercise ULCHI FOCUS LENS. The ship arrived in Okinawa on 15 August to refuel, pick up embarkees, then continue on to Chinhae, Korea. On 17 August, BLUE RIDGE arrived in Chinhae for a three day port visit. ULCHI FOCUS LENS officially began on 20 August. On the 20th, BLUE RIDGE got underway to a modified location in the Sea of Japan off the coast of South Korea. BLUE RIDGE conducted seven days of flight operations, man overboard drills, and engineering casualty control drills while off the coast of South Korea. On 27 August, BLUE RIDGE moored in Pusan, South Korea for two days while exercise ULCHI FOCUS LENS continued. On 29 August, BLUE RIDGE got underway and headed for Chinhae, South Korea. ULCHI FOCUS LENS officially ended on 31 August. BLUE RIDGE moored for five hours in Chinhae for debarkation. BLUE RIDGE arrived in Okinawa on 2 September and completed the debarkation of the personnel from the exercise. Throughout the month of August, BLUE RIDGE was visited by Consul General; Republic of Korea Fleet; Korean Submarine Flotilla Nine; Korean Flotilla Squadron Five; RADM Fussell; RADM Cotton; Landing Force SEVENTH Fleet; Amphibious Force SEVENTH Fleet; Logistic Support Force SEVENTH Fleet; Marine Forces Pacific; Combined Forces; and ADM Baggett, USN (Ret.).

BLUE RIDGE arrived back in Yokosuka earlier than planned on 4 September to prepare for Commander SEVENTH Fleet Change of Command Ceremony and Selected Restricted Availability 29. The ceremony took place on 13 September. The month of September brought the following distinguished guests: Naval Surface Force Pacific Fleet; Patrol and Reconnaissance Force SEVENTH Fleet; Patrol Wings Pacific Fleet; Pacific Fleet Chaplain; USS JOHN S. McCAIN; Landing Force SEVENTH Fleet; Battle Forces SEVENTH Fleet; Submarine Forces Pacific Fleet; Japanese Self Defense Fleet; VADM Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force; Ship Repair Facility; Fleet Activities Yokosuka; Commander Naval Forces Japan; Pacific Fleet; Amphibious Force Seventh Fleet; and Submarine Force Seventh Fleet.

Selected Restricted Availability 29 continued throughout the month of October. The crew began intensive training for the upcoming Light-Off Assessment by performing daily fire drills and training. The ship also was able to say farewell to the RLPA tower and hello to a new forward masthead light. Throughout the month the following distinguished guests visited BLUE RIDGE: Submarine Force SEVENTH Fleet; Amphibious Force SEVENTH Fleet; Ship Repair Facility; Commander Naval Forces Japan; and Fleet Activities Yokosuka.

The beginning of the month of November brought the Light-Off Assessment to only three weeks away. The crew went to three sections to train twice a day for the fire drills. Afloat Training Group Western Pacific arrived on 19 November to drill and evaluate for three days. BLUE RIDGE successfully completed the training evolution and promptly got underway on 26 November for sea trials. Once back in port, BLUE RIDGE closed out Selected Restricted Availability 29 on 1 December. The following day BLUE RIDGE got underway for

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its last port visit for calendar year 1996. On the four day transit to Hong Kong, BLUE RIDGE conducted ECC drills and General Quarters. While in port Hong Kong, BLUE RIDGE hosted a big top for dignitaries in the area. On 10 December, BLUE RIDGE headed back to Yokosuka to begin the Holiday upkeep. On 20 December, BLUE RIDGE hosted a retirement ceremony for Mr. Teruo Ito for 44 years of service at Yokosuka's Ship's Repair Facility, and as BLUE RIDGE's SRA superintendent for 17 years. BLUE RIDGE remained in port for the rest of the Holiday season.


T. P. LABREQUE

Chronological List of Significant Events, Calendar Year 1996

1 - 17 January - SRA 27.
 12 January - Seatrials.
 18 January - Anchored Tokyo Wan.
 19 - 22 January - Enroute Beppu, Japan.
 26 - 01 Jan-Feb - Enroute to Yokosuka, Japan. Exercise Keen Edge.
 2 - 5 February - Upkeep.
 6 - 15 February - Enroute to Hong Kong.
 16 - 28 February - Enroute to Darwin, Australia.
 19 February - ADM Clemens fly-on Cebu, PI.
 29 - 3 Feb-Mar - Inport Darwin, Australia.
 4 - 10 March - Enroute to Jakarta, Indonesia.
 11 - 13 March - Inport Jakarta, Indonesia.
 14 - 21 March - Enroute to Sembawang, Singapore.
 22 - 25 March - Inport Sembawang, Singapore.
 26 - 4 Mar-Apr - Enroute to Yokosuka.
 5 - 10 Apr-Jun - Inport Yokosuka.
 22 - 13 Apr-Jun - SRA 28.
 11 - 12 June - Sea trial/ Tiger Cruise.
 14 - 16 June - Inport Yokosuka.
 16 - 30 June - Exercise Tempo Brave
 17 - 20 June - Enroute Apra Harbor, Guam.
 21 - 22 June - Inport Guam.
 23 - 28 June - Enroute Okinawa, Japan.
 29 June - Inport Okinawa, Japan
 30 - 1 Jun-Jul - Enroute Yokosuka
 2 - 22 July - Inport Yokosuka
 22 - 26 July - Enroute Vladivostok, Russia
 26 - 30 July - Inport Vladivostok, Russia
 30 - 31 July - Enroute Otaru, Japan
 31 - 4 Jul-Aug - Inport Otaru, Japan
 1 - 10 August - JMSDF Sister ship cruise
 4 - 7 August - Enroute Sasebo, Japan
 7 - 10 August - Inport Sasebo, Japan
 10 - 11 August - Enroute Okinawa, Japan
 12 - 14 August - Inport Okinawa, Japan
 14 - 16 August - Enroute Chinhae, Korea
 16 - 20 August - Inport Chinhae, Korea
 20 - 27 August - Enroute Pusan, Korea
 20 August - Commenced ULCHI FOCUS LENS
 27 - 29 August - Inport Pusan, Korea
 30 August - Completed ULCHI FOCUS LENS
 29 - 31 August - Enroute Chinhae, Korea
 31 August - Inport Chinhae, Korea
 31 - 3 Aug-Sep - Enroute Okinawa, Japan
 2 September - Inport Okinawa, Japan
 2 - 4 September - Enroute Yokosuka
 4 - 26 Sep-Nov - Inport Yokosuka, SRA-29
 13 September - C7F Change of Command
 19 - 21 November - Light Off Assessment
 26 - 27 November - Sea trials
 28 - 2 Nov-Dec - Inport Yokosuka

2 - 6 December - Exercise Tempest Express
2 - 6 December - Enroute Hong Kong
6 - 10 December - Inport Hong Kong
10 - 14 December - Enroute Yokosuka
14 - 31 December - Inport Yokosuka