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**DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY**

USS GRAPPLE (ARS-53)

C/O FPO NEW YORK, NEW YORK 09570-3223

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From: Commanding Officer, USS GRAPPLE (ARS 53)

To: Director of Naval History (OP-098H)

Subj: **COMMAND HISTORY OF USS GRAPPLE (ARS 53)**

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12D

Encl: (1) USS GRAPPLE (ARS 53) Command History for 1991

1. Enclosure (1) is forwarded in accordance with reference (a).

*W. T. Crooks*

W. T. CROOKS

**USS GRAPPLE (ARS-53) COMMAND HISTORY  
FOR 1991**

**I. Command Composition and Organization**

a. The primary mission of USS GRAPPLE (ARS-53) is salvage and rescue of damaged vessels. To accomplish this GRAPPLE is capable of beaching stranded vessels, heavy lift from ocean depths, open ocean towing, manned diving operations to a depth of 190 feet, off ship firefighting and performing emergency repairs to damaged vessels.

b. (1) Immediate Senior in Command: Commander, Combat Support Squadron EIGHT, Commander Alan W. Nibbs, U.S. Navy.

(2) Commanding Officer: Commander Robert M. Honey, U.S. Navy.

(3) Homeport: Little Creek, Virginia.

**II. CHRONOLOGY**

HOLIDAY LEAVE AND UPKEEP	01-09 JAN
AMMO ONLOAD, YORKTOWN, VA	11 JAN
TRANSIT, NASSAU, BAHAMAS	11-14 JAN
DIVE OPERATIONS	15-19 JAN
ENROUTE LITTLE CREEK	24-25 JAN
DMAT	04-08 FEB
FIRE AT SEA TRAINING DEGAUSSING RUN	11 FEB
SAFETY SURVEY	19 FEB
DIESEL AND BOILER INSPECTION	08 MAR
UPKEEP/IMAV, SIMA LITTLE CREEK	22 FEB-15 MAR
FMT ASSIST VISIT	26-28 FEB
SMI ASSIST VISIT	01 MAR
U/W HULL CLEANING	11 MAR
U/W VACAPES FOR ISE	25-27 MAR
DIESEL LOAD TEST	25 MAR

ALONGSIDE FAS WITH USNS NEOSHO	27 MAR
DLSS INSPECTION	28-29 MAR
SEAT	01-03 APR
IPT LITTLE CREEK	03-08 APR
ENR SOUTHAMPTON UK	10-21 APR
ARR SOUTHAMPTON UK	22 APR
IPT SOUTHAMPTON, UK: PRE TOW INSP	23 APR-01 MAY
NORLANT ASTERN RAS PAWCATUCK WITH LOS ALAMOS PONTOONS IN TOW	17 MAY
LOS ALMOS PONTOON TOW, SOUTHAMPTON TO NORFOLK, VA	02-29 MAY
DROP TOW NORFOLK, VA	29 MAY
DEGAUSSING RUN/AMMO ONLOAD/BOW THRUSTER ALIGNMENT	03 JUN
SUPPLY MANAGEMENT INSPECTION	05-06 JUN
SHIPBOARD CRANE IMPROVEMENT VISIT	06 JUN
DORA LITTLE CREEK, VA	11 JUN
IPTEA SEAT; LCRK, VA	20 JUN
USS IOWA TOW, NORFOLK, VA TO PHILADELPHIA, PA	24-25 JUN
DROP TOW, PHILADELPHIA; IPT OVERNIGHT	26 JUN
READY DUTY SALVAGE	26 JUN-01 JUL
ENROUTE NEW YORK CITY	27 JUN
PVST NEW YORK CITY	28-30 JUN
ENROUTE LITTLE CREEK	01 JUL
INSURV	08-12 JUL
IPT LCRK	13-17 JUL
SELFRT, LTT ENG, LITTLE CRK	22-26 JUL

RDY DUTY SALV	22 JUL-05 AUG
SALVAGE TRAINING	29 JUL-06 AUG
IMAV/UPKEEP LITTLE CREEK NAVMACS V2 INSTALLATION	07-06 SEP
U/W HULL CLEANING	02-06 SEP
FAST CRUISE	09 SEP
U/W ISE VACAPES	10-11 SEP
IPT LCRK	12-22 SEP
TRE	16-17 SEP
EMERGENT SALVOPS, CHESBAY YC 1431, YFN 1134	20 SEP
ENROUTE NEW LONDON	23-25 SEP
IPT NEW LONDON	26 SEP
EX-USS FULTON TOW TO NORFOLK, VA	27-30 SEP
READY DUTY SALVAGE	30 SEP-07 OCT
IREFTRA	15 OCT-05 NOV
DMAT	12-15 DMAT
U/W FOR ISE	18-22 NOV
BURIAL AT SEA	19 NOV
DIVE OPS WRECK OF JOHN MORGAN	19-21 NOV
READY DUTY SALVAGE	18 NOV-02 DEC
U/W FOR BECCE SELEX'S AND UNREP SELEX WITH USS SYLVANIA VIA STAR WITH CARGO DROP REEL	02-04 DEC
HOLIDAY UPKEEP	17 DEC-06 JAN
DEPENDENT'S CRUISE	27 JAN

### III. Narrative

Following GRAPPLE's 1990 holiday leave and stand down period in Little Creek, Va., the ship transitted to Yorktown, Va. where ammunition was unloaded. The ship then sailed to Nassau, Bahamas to conduct diving operations for five days. Diving emergency drills, equipment and tool familiarity and requalification were some of the evolutions conducted during that period of training. GRAPPLE departed the Bahamas enroute Little Creek, Va. on 24-25 January. During this transit numerous engineering casualty control drills were conducted in preparation for the upcoming Diesel Mobile Assessment Team visit. The DMAT visit was held and successfully completed on 04-08 February.

On 11 February GRAPPLE rigged the ex-USS KEYWADIN alongside to be streamed astern and eventually set on fire to conduct the Rescue and Assistance Underway selected exercise. After GRAPPLE disconnected from KEYWADIN fires were set. GRAPPLE made her approach and pulled alongside enabling the salvage and rescue crew to embark and fight fires on KEYWADIN. Following the Fire at Sea, GRAPPLE successfully completed a safety survey conducted by the Naval Safety Center that was completed on 19 February.

After the safety survey, GRAPPLE entered an Intermediate Maintenance Availability with SIMA Little Creek from 22 February to 15 March, during which a Food Service Management Team Assist Visit and a Supply Management Inspection Assist Visit were completed to prepare for the upcoming Supply Management Inspection and both auxiliary boilers were inspected by Commander, Naval Surface Force Atlantic. GRAPPLE also underwent its periodic underwater hull cleaning. Following the IMA, GRAPPLE steamed independently in order to conduct engineering exercises, a diesel engine load test and make preparations for the Squadron Engineering Assist Visit. During this underway period, an alongside refueling at sea was conducted with USNS NEOSHO. The Diver's Life Support System (DLSS) was recertified by the Naval Sea Systems Command on 29 March. On 3 April the Squadron Engineering Assist Visit was completed.

On 10 April GRAPPLE set sail for Southampton, UK for the transatlantic tow of two sections of the LOS ALAMOS drydock (AFDB-7) to Norfolk, Va. Upon arrival in Southampton, on 23 April, a pre-tow inspection was conducted and the rigging of the tow bridles commenced. The final tow inspection and transit preparations were completed on 01 May. With the assistance of local tugs, the two pontoons were taken under tow as GRAPPLE transitted the English Channel enroute to Norfolk, Va. On 17 May, GRAPPLE rendezvoused with USNS PAWCATUCK for refueling using the astern method. After 28 days at sea, the drydock pontoons were disconnected at the Lynnhaven anchorage and GRAPPLE arrived in Little Creek, Va. on 29 May.

After a short one week stay in port, GRAPPLE got underway to conduct engineering exercises, recertify the degaussing system and align the bow thruster. The Supply Management Inspection was the next hurdle on the list of required inspections and was successfully completed 06 June. Divers Operational Readiness Assessment (DORA) and Inport Engineering Assist (IPTEA) were completed on 11 Jun and 20 Jun respectively.

On 24 June GRAPPLE got underway to rendezvous with Norfolk Naval Base tugs who assisted in hooking up the ex-USS IOWA in order to tow the decommissioned battleship to Philadelphia, Pa. After a fourteen hour sea detail up the Delaware River, GRAPPLE turned the battleship over to Philadelphia Naval Shipyard tugs. GRAPPLE then moored at the shipyard overnight and was enroute to New York City for a three day port visit the following day. The ship also assumed status of COMSUPPRON EIGHT Ready Duty Salvage ship in that same time period. During the transit from New York to Little Creek, Va., preparations were made for the upcoming Board of Inspection and Survey (INSURV) which was conducted from 08-12 July.

On 22-26 July GRAPPLE conducted a Limited Team Training (LTT) with engineering trainers from Fleet Training Group Atlantic in preparation for Interim Refresher Training scheduled for 15 October to 05 November. Following the LTT on 29 July, GRAPPLE completed an arduous salvage training period in the Chesapeake Bay, completing such evolutions as extraction of a stranded vessel with standard Navy beach gear, four point moor utilizing the submarine rescue gear, heavy bow lift of a sunken MK 6 boat, and numerous working dives to survey and attach recovery straps for the heavy bow lift. Upon the completion of salvage training, GRAPPLE entered into an IMAV/Upkeep period with SIMA Little Creek from 06 August to 07 September. In preparation for underway training, a Fast Cruise was conducted to test all machinery and electronic gear after the month long upkeep.

After the underway training time from 10-11 September, a Training Readiness Evaluation (TRE) was conducted on 16-17 September by Fleet Training Group Atlantic to determine GRAPPLE's readiness to conduct training for the Interim Refresher Training. After successfully completing TRE, GRAPPLE received an emergency tasking early on the morning of 20 September for the retraction of two ammunition laden barges (YC-1431 and YFN-1134) and a YTB that had run aground on Willoughby Spit in Norfolk, Va. GRAPPLE responded in less than three hours with a partially manned ship to successfully retract the barges and deliver them safely to harbor tugs.

Following the emergent salvage operations, GRAPPLE set sail for New London, Ct. to tow the ex-USS FULTON to Norfolk, Va. Liberty was enjoyed by the crew for the two days it took to complete the pre tow inspection. After delivering the tow to Norfolk based tugs, GRAPPLE headed to Little Creek to assume the duty as Ready Duty Salvage ship. Preparations were being made for the upcoming IREFTRA which took place from 15 October to 05 November. The week of 12-15 November brought another DMAT visit in which GRAPPLE successfully completed. After finishing DMAT GRAPPLE got underway from 18-22 November for a Burial at Sea ceremony and to conduct diver training over the wreck of the John Morgan. GRAPPLE assumed the status of Ready Duty Salvage from 18 November to 02 December.

To complete various selected exercises for the Battle "E" competition, GRAPPLE got underway to rendezvous with the USS SYLVANIA for an alongside replenishment using a STAR rig with a Cargo Drop Reel. The engineers were able to complete several observed selected exercises to satisfy the requirements of the Battle "E" competition and complete a full power run.

On 17 December GRAPPLE commenced its holiday stand down capping the year with a Dependent's Cruise on 27 December.