



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS PONCE (LPD-15)
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From: Commanding Officer, USS Ponce (LPD-15)
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1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosure (1) is the 1987 Command History for USS Ponce (LPD-15).



D. J. Borchers II

USS PONCE (LPD-15) COMMAND HISTORY 1987

The USS PONCE (LPD-15) is the newest and last of a class of amphibious transport docks used by today's Navy. Her continuous service to the fleet has earned the "Proud Lion" the uncontestable reputation as "The Best LPD in the Atlantic".

Since January 1987, the PONCE has undergone a number of evolutions designed to enhance her performance and readiness in the amphibious Navy. Upon completion of Tailored Team Training in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, the ship and her 400-member crew participated in the successful FLEETEX 1-87 / SACEX in Vieques, Puerto Rico. This exercise with the 26 MAU (Marine Amphibious Unit), 2nd Marine Division from Camp Lejune, NC, further proved the versatility of the ship.

From the uneventful launching of Marines via ACU's (Assault Craft Units) from the well deck to numerous helicopter airlifts of supplies to the beach, the PONCE once again completed her mission in a safe, professional manner.

The Proud Lion, commissioned in 1971, has always taken an active role in community affairs. The most recent on-going project is being a participant in the Norfolk City School's "Adopt-A-School" program.

Several PONCE crew members voluntarily donate their time and talent as tutors at the Northside Middle School two days a week. They assist certain teachers in nearly every academic subject from reading to mathematics. The program not only enriches the students' educational curriculum, but also provides a positive image for the Navy and a good role model for the youngsters.

There comes a time in every ship's future when the rigors of being underway necessitate the need for physical refurbishment. That time came for the PONCE beginning in April 87 to August 87.

During that period, modifications were made to the ship's AFFF (Aqueous Film Forming Foam) firefighting system. Because of those changes, the PONCE can now employ increased firefighting capabilities throughout the ship with support from larger 600 gallon tanks.

A list of some other major accomplishments include:

- * CIWS (Close In Weapons System) modifications
- * Major underwater hull work
- * Reworking of major hull valves and ballast tank flooding and vent valves
- * Replaced portions of batter boards and wooden decking in well deck
- * Complete removal and renovation of all on board spare parts and total rework on all storerooms

Also during the yard period, the Navy's SNAP II computer system was installed on board helping to alleviate a lot of the physical paperwork that was being done. Now crew members who utilize the system can change or verify pertinent information at the touch of a button.

Another major completion during this period was total renovation of two berthing areas. From start to finish, select crew members from various ratings completely tore down and rebuilt from kits berthing areas that any commercial builder would envy. This renovation was made possible through the Navy's self-help program.

Dirty work wasn't the only thing accomplished during the yard period. With the combined efforts of the ship's chaplain, LT [REDACTED] and

the Supply Department, a new Jewish church pennant was flown for the first time exhibiting authentic Hebrew letters. [REDACTED], along with a fellow Jewish rabbi, LCDR [REDACTED], helped to make the new pennant a reality with hopes of getting the design into the Navy's supply system for all ship's to use in their Jewish services. The use of the new pennant also symbolizes the PONCE's awareness of its crew members of the Hebrew faith.

With the yard period over, the next stop for the Proud Lion was Interim Refresher Training in Cuba. But, prior to that the ship hosted a Midshipmen Summer Cruise, a requirement for their commission to officers.

In September, Ponce played the role of a British enemy ship in Baltimore's Defender's Day observance held in the city's harbor. The scenario marked the 173rd annual celebration of the day when Baltimore citizens victoriously defended Fort McHenry. The event also paid homage to Francis Scott Key who, witnessing the bombardment from afar, was moved to pen the immortal lines of our National Anthem - "The Star-Spangled Banner".

The ship further enhanced its and the Navy's images by participation in Dependent's and Guests of the Navy cruises. In 1987, personnel welcomed the opportunity to "show off" their ship and impart a better understanding of her mission and their ratings to their families, friends and interested supporters of the Navy.

Hard work underway on the Proud Lion is compensated by port visits to exciting places. In 1987, liberty calls were made in the Bahamas at St. Thomas and St. Croix, Virgin Islands; stateside in Miami; and as previously mentioned, Baltimore.

As well as stressing pride, professionalism and safety on and off-duty, the PONCE lends strong support to overall physical fitness. The crew's

dedication to achieving a high degree of physical fitness through sports recently earned them the honor of being chosen the Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, 1987 Captain's Cup recipients for Large Ships Afloat. Excelling in all types of sports competitions is synonymous with the Proud Lion name.

Whether it's well deck or flight deck operations, damage control training, tutoring students or competing in a friendly game of basketball, the USS PONCE and her crew have consistently met the challenge with vigor and perserverence. It's the ship's committment to pride and excellence that successfully took her through the year. And those same characteristics coupled with hard work and determination will be evident once again as the Proud Lion prepares to roar through 1988.

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