

OPNAV 5750-1

COMMAND HISTORY USS MONMOUTH COUNTY (LST 1032)

FOR THE PERIOD

1 JAN 1967 --- 31 DEC 1967

**INTRODUCTION:** This report has been divided into four areas of organization. The first of these, Chronology of Highlights, attempts to provide a brief glance at the significant events of the year. Events discussed in this section are treated in greater detail in Part III of the report: Ship's Operations. Part II, Command Organization and Relations, briefly describes the Administrative and Operational command relationships under which Monmouth County works. Part IV, Special Topics, includes Logistics, Supply, and Engineering data and brings together those statistics that are most likely to be of use.

## I. CHRONOLOGY OF HIGHLIGHTS

- 10-20 February      During these ten days, Monmouth County visited Kao Hsiung, Republic of China. A principal supply point for construction materials being used in the War Zone, Kao Hsiung also afforded the crew opportunity for liberty and rest.
- 2 March              On this day, command of the ship changed hands as Lt. H.P. SEXTON Jr., officially relieved Lt. C.W. CLARK, Jr., as commanding officer. The brief ceremony took place at Can Tho, RVN.
- 21-24 March          Enroute from Chu Lai, RVN to Naha, Okinawa the ship called at Hong Kong, B.C.C. for a brief visit and some excellent liberty.
- 19 April -  
22 May                For five weeks, Monmouth County underwent a shipyard availability period at Sasebo, Japan.
- 22 June                For five days, the ship was out of water at the Vietnamese Navy Shipyard drydock in Saigon for emergency repairs to her bottom plating.
- 9-13 August          The ship was in Bangkok, Thailand for a rest and recuperation visit.
- 28 August             Arrived in Apra, Guam for a six-week overhaul period, which lasted much longer due to unforeseen delays. Much major work was accomplished but it should be noted that several major jobs could not be accomplished due to lack of funds.
- 11-14 November      Typhoon-evasion sortie out of Apra, Guam in company with USS Park County (LST 1077) and USS San Joaquin County (LST 1122) as typhoon Gilda threatened to pass over Guam. While west of Guam on 14th the main deck crawler crane broke loose from its securing chains and damaged lifelines, the accommodation ladder and deck plating.

- 19 November Two weeks of refresher training were conducted with Fleet Training Group, Western Pacific. During the first week training was conducted while underway in company with USS Park County (LST 1077), enroute from Guam to Yokosuka, Japan. With the training group was the FD 25 unit, a radio-controlled aircraft-drone support unit. The second week of training, in Yokosuka, consisted of fleet training schools and a final battle problem.
- 5 December Enroute from Yokohama, Japan to Naha, Okinawa a main deck cargo of heavy chlorine gas cylinders broke loose and six of the 3600 lb. cylinders were lost over the side. Re-distribution of the remaining bottles was required to secure the load.
- 20 December Returned after four months to the War Zone. First port of call: Vung Tau, RVN

II. COMMAND ORGANIZATION AND RELATIONS: USS Monmouth County and the four other ships of Landing Ship Squadron Two, are under the operational control of the Military Sea Transportation Service. Administrative commander is Commander, Service Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Monmouth County and her sister ships are permanently deployed to Southeast Asia in support of Vietnam operations. Although her homeport is Norfolk, Virginia, in view of current operations, Saigon can be so considered.

At the end of 1967, the officer complement of the ship was nine and the enlisted complement was 94.

III. SHIP'S OPERATIONS DURING 1967

JANUARY

As the new year began, Monmouth County was at sea enroute from Sasebo, Japan, to Iwakuni, Japan. After beaching there for two days and taking on general cargo, she took departure on 4 February for Kao Hsiung, Taiwan, arriving in that port on 9 January. Departing with a load of cement on 11 January, the ship steamed south to Chu Lai, Republic of Vietnam (hereafter referred to as RVN) arriving there on the 20th.

Departing Chu Lai on 21 January, the ship steamed down the coast of Vietnam to Danang, an overnight trip. On the 22nd, offloading was completed and a course set for Kao Hsiung. Arriving there on the 27th, the ship was loaded once more and the next day got underway for Nha Trang, RVN.

FEBRUARY

Arriving from Kao Hsiung on the 2nd of February, the ship was underway again on the 4th to return to Formosa. A long stay, part of which was for rest and recuperation, followed from 10 to 20 February at Kao Hsiung. Loaded once more, Monmouth County steamed south to Vung Tau, RVN, arriving there on the 25th. This trip completed a series of cement hauls, and the ship was not again to visit Kao Hsiung during the year.

## FEBRUARY (CONT'D)

On the 26th, the ship stood out of Vung Tau and into the Mekong River, bound for Can Tho. This is a two-day trip that takes the ship upriver on the Mekong to Cho Moi and from there, via a connecting waterway, into the Bassac River and then downriver to Can Tho. A secure anchorage is made on the Mekong near the town of Vinh Long, about halfway along the route. Night steaming on the river is considered unwise since a curfew is in effect for river traffic and piloting is difficult in hours of darkness. Arriving on the 27th at Can Tho, the ship beached after anchoring overnight and offloaded cargo. The remainder of the month was spent on the beach at Can Tho.

## MARCH

On March 2, Lt. C.W. CLARK was officially relieved as commanding officer by Lt. H.P. SEXTON, Jr., in a brief early morning ceremony, while the ship was at Can Tho. The ship remained at Can Tho until the following day, when she got underway for Vung Tau. Passing by Vung Tau at the mouth of the Mekong River, the ship stood out to sea enroute to Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines.

Passage to Subic Bay took five days. Arriving there on the ninth the ship was underway again on the 14th after having replenished fuel and ammunition supplies. This time the port of call was Chu Lai. After two days, the 17th and 18th, in Chu Lai, Monmouth County was headed north once more for Okinawa. A rest and recuperation visit to Hong Kong had been scheduled enroute and the ship was there from the 21st until the 24th. Then, on the 28th, she arrived in Naha, Okinawa. Another cargo was loaded and on the last day of the month the ship went to sea again - destination: Qui Nhon.

## APRIL

Arriving in Qui Nhon on the 5th and departing on the 9th, the ship made Danang the following day. Then, on the 11th, began a long and somewhat arduous voyage north to Sasebo, Japan. Heavy seas were encountered in the Sea of Japan and for two days the ship made good very little distance. Finally, on the 19th, Monmouth County steamed into Sasebo shipyard for a yard-availability period. At this time, Commander, Landing Ship Squadron Two, maintained his staff and offices in Sasebo and the Commodore visited the ship on a number of occasions during the five weeks the ship was in port.

## MAY

Toward the latter part of the month, most of the anticipated repair work had been accomplished and on 22 May the ship was underway again for Naha. Arriving there on the 24th, cargo was loaded for Viet Nam and the ship was at sea on the 25th, bound for Qui Nhon.

## JUNE

Monmouth County was on the beach at Qui Nhon on 1 June, having arrived and anchored in the bay the previous afternoon. On the 5th, she steamed south to Cam Ranh Bay, arriving there early the following morning. On the 7th, the ship went to anchor in the bay. That afternoon, a large hole was discovered in a seawater ballast tank, A-415W. Later in the day, the ship got underway for Vung Tau, still further to the south. Anchoring at Vung Tau early the next evening, Monmouth County was underway the following morning, the ninth, for Saigon. On the 13th, the ship returned to Vung Tau from Saigon. Early the next morning, the 14th, she began the two-day river trip to Can Tho, arriving there the following afternoon.

## JUNE (CONT'D)

Six days later the ship was bound for Saigon for needed repairs to ballast tank A-415-W. On the 22nd, the ship anchored at Nha Be, to await drydock space at the Vietnamese Navy Shipyard in Saigon. On the 26th, arrangements were completed, space was available and the ship was drydocked. The necessary repairs were accomplished and on the 30th the ship returned to anchorage at Nha Be to await pier space at the New Port in Saigon.

## JULY

By 5 July, the ship was able to move upriver to a berth at the LST piers New Port, Saigon. A cargo was loaded and on the 9th the ship left for Can Tho, arriving there on the 11th. Due to a lack of forklift trucks and skilled operators, the offloading process took some time and the ship did not get underway for Vung Tau until the 20th. On the 14th, while beached at Can Tho, the ship suffered minor damage when a brage drifted into the stern. The anchor was dislodged and had to be placed again on the river bottom, and the anchor housing was torn away from the stern. Underway on the 20th the ship made Vung Tau the next day and was again underway for Can Tho on the 25th. After a briefer stay at Can Tho, from the 26th until the 30th, she was underway for Vung Tau. On the 31st the ship anchored in the harbor at Vung Tau.

## AUGUST

On the 1st, Monmouth County beached at the LST beach and offloaded the backhaul cargo she had carried from Can Tho. There followed a period of several days during which the next port of call was expected to be Saigon. The intended cargo was shipped by other means and Monmouth County stood out of Vung Tau on the 6th, headed for the Gulf of Siam and Bangkok. There was to be a cargo for the return trip to Vietnam. Arriving in Bangkok on the 9th, it was found that there was no cargo. A secondary purpose of the visit had been to provide a rest and recuperation period for the crew of the ship, and so the ship stayed in Bangkok and on the 13th, the ship was underway for Guam for an extended upkeep period. Enroute, the ship stopped in Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines, on the 19th to take on cargo for Guam. On the 21st, Subic was left behind and the ship steamed on eastward through San Bernardino Straits, arriving in Apra, Guam on the 28th of the month.

## 28 AUGUST to 19 NOVEMBER

During most of the upkeep period at the Ship Repair Facility in Guam, the ship was not operational. The beginning of the period was used for preparation for the overhaul work; the offloading of fuel and ammunition, conferences with the shipyard officials on work priorities, and cost estimates. From the 16th of September until the 28th, Monmouth County was on keel blocks in floating drydock AFDH-8 to have the bottom inspected and repressured. On the 3rd of November, when all major work had been completed, the ship went to sea for a day-long series of sea trials, to test systems that had been installed or repaired and otherwise exercise machinery that had been idle for some time.

Then, on the 11th, after fuel and ammunition had been loaded aboard and the ship was in the final administrative stages of the period, the ship sortied for evasion of Typhoon Gilda, which threatened to pass over the island. The sortie was made in company with two other LSTs, both of Landing Ship Squadron Three; USS Park County (IST 1077) and USS San Joaquin County (IST 1122). Commanding the Task Element was COMLANSHIPRON THREE, embarked in Park County.

28 AUGUST to 19 NOVEMBER (CONT'D)

For many of the ships' officers this was a first opportunity for formation shiphandling practice, although not an ideal one due to moderately heavy seas. The ships steamed north toward Saipan, but a change in Gilda's course to the northwest made it necessary to turn back toward Guam on the 12th. While the formation was steaming some miles west of Guam in the early morning of the 13th, the ship's crawler crane broke away from its securing chains and began to slide across the main deck with each roll of the ship. The ship broke formation for several hours to steer a down sea course while the crane was secured to the port deck edge, where it had come to rest. Damage to the ship included broken lifelines, stanchions, vents and a cracked and battered section of main deck, in addition to a twisted accommodation ladder. The crane, however, was not damaged. Regaining the formation later in the morning the ship steamed on for two more days, rounding Guam to the south and east, returning to Apra Harbor on the afternoon of the 14th. During the next several days emergency repairs were undertaken with yard assistance.

19 NOVEMBER to 30 NOVEMBER

On the 19th, the ship stood out of Apra Harbor, bound for Yokosuka, Japan and steaming in company with USS Park County. Aboard both ships were members of the Western Pacific Fleet Training Group, assisted by the KD 25 aircraft drone unit aboard the Park County. During the week-long passage to Yokosuka, the crews and organizations of both ships were inspected and exercised for battle readiness. Casualty control exercises and gunnery exercises against both surface and air targets were conducted. Combat Information Center Drills and communications drills were also a part of the training as was a light-line transfer between the ships.

DECEMBER

On 1 December the ship got underway for the morning with Training Group evaluators on board, to conduct a final battle problem. Concentration was on damage control. Refresher training had proven a worthwhile experience and both the Training Group and the ship concluded that it should have been longer than commitments allowed.

After taking on fuel and provisions, the ship steamed north on December 4th to Yokohama to take on a cargo for Naha, Okinawa. The cargo, consisting of bottled gas in considerable quantities, automobiles and general cargo was loaded by the next day and Monmouth County stood out of Tokyo Bay bound for Naha. The main deck cargo, which consisted chiefly of about fifty 3600-lb. bottles of chlorine gas, seemed to present no problem at the outset. Although the load had been stacked with the cylinders running transversely, considerable wooden shoring and wire lashing had been provided. The second day out of Yokohama a slight shifting of the load was detected and additional shoring was placed against the load as were wedges between the bottles. On the night of the 7th, near midnight, the starboard side shoring gave out under the shifting load and six bottles and several feet of lifeline were carried overboard. Some fifteen hours later the stacks of remaining bottles had been broken down, restowed, and griped securely in place. On the 10th, the ship arrived in Naha, offloaded her cargo and during two days loaded a cargo of ammunition trailers for Danang. On the 13th, Monmouth County departed Okinawa and steamed south toward Vietnam.

DECEMBER (CONT'D)

Enroute, the destination of the cargo was changed to Cat Lai, an installation near Saigon, much to the south of Danang. A course change was effected and the ship anchored at Vung Tau on the 20th. The cargo of ammunition was off-loaded on the LST ramp at Vung Tau for overland transit to Cat Lai. A new cargo was loaded and the ship departed Vung Tau for Can Tho on Christmas Day, arriving there the following afternoon. There was no backload and the stay at Can Tho was comparatively short. Underway on the 30th, the ship anchored at Vung Tau early on New Year's Eve.

IV. SPECIAL TOPICS

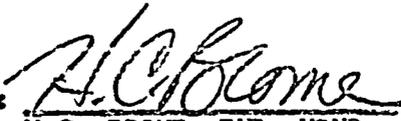
1. Operational Statistics

CARGO CARRIED	400,000 cubic feet
DISTANCE TRAVELLED	23,000 nautical miles (approx.)
TIME UNDERWAY	3,138 hours
FUEL EXPENDED WHILE UNDERWAY	307,561 gallons deisel oil
AMMUNITION EXPENDED	1,092 rounds, 40MM anti-aircraft

(To this could be added several thousand rounds of various small arms ammunitions expended both for training and anti-mine protection.)

2. Supply and Logistics During times when the ship was in the War Zone for extended periods, re-supply and provisioning was accomplished by inport replenishment from visiting stores ships at Vung Tau. Ammunition was replenished from Navy sources at such places as Subic Bay, Sasebo, and Guam.

Submitted:

  
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