

Many P2 Memories by Fred Fink, AWC, USN (Ret.)

My first crew position was a Julie Operator in VP-1 (1961-1965) flying in the SP-2H (P2V). I did my training in San Diego and got sick on my first Julie exercise as the airplane was doing all its gyrations. They had small boats go out and retrieve the sonobuoys after a training flight. The other trainees and I worked in the sonobuoy locker when we weren't flying. We rebuilt or otherwise refurbished the buoys to be used again for the training supply. To become a qualified aircrewman in a P2V at that time, besides your primary position of Julie Operator, you also had to learn the requirements of ECM, Radar, Jez and MAD and Sniffer. You were never required to operate in those positions in a training exercise but you had to be familiar with them just in case something happened to the primary operator. I did get some experience in the JEZ position monitoring LOFAR barriers and CODAR plants. We would trade out on the Radar with the Navigator and Tacco on patrols. It was all I could do to stay awake at ECM.(and sometimes I couldn't).

I was best at Julie naturally. I had good ears then and was quick with the ranges. Double echos were music to the Tacco's ears. At least it gave him two locations of probability and he just had to solve the ambiguity by bombing a buoy near one of the positions with a SUS or as we called them, PDC's (Practice Depth Charges). A single echo only gave a distance from a particular buoy. The ASA-16 wasn't much of a plotter but some Tacco's were wizards with them. Flying at 500 feet off the water doing Julie patterns and then transitioning into MAD cloverleafs (hopefully) was a challenge to everyone's stomach. I never lost my lunch but sometimes I didn't feel so great. I flew with a LT Ord as my Tacco who always had stomach problems when we went into the pattern but he never let it stop him. He would puke and plot until he was empty and keep on going. Good Man! The downside was that being at the Julie station, I was down-wind of the Tacco and the unpressurized P2V always had a breeze from bow to stern.

We often flew YB-2 1/2, Why YB-2 1/2? If I remember correctly, we had to abort several flights in a row for one reason or another. So to get the jinx off our back, the Plane Captain added the ½. Apparently it must have worked because we continued to fly.

It was also a time when you could paint "Nose Art" on the aircraft. I was drafted to paint the "Nose Art" because somebody in the crew saw me drawing on paper one day. It became our crew patch for that deployment.

I also remember flying out of Shemya, Alaska that same deployment on what I thought was a routine patrol, flying off the coast of Russia gathering ECM data.

During the flight, the pilot would drop down to "Just above the water", flying into a bay on the Russian coast, popping up, taking pictures with the huge K-20 camera in the bow, doing a 180 and hauling ass back to Shemya. Our pilot was the XO at the time so I guess it was okay to do that. I don't think the rest of our crew was so comfortable with it. Can't trust those Ruskies. We lived through it so no big deal guess.







It's October 1962, and I'm a rookie aircrewman flying in the "Skippers" crew. We just got back from our Kodiak deployment a month ago and we're scheduled to fly to Norfolk to participate in a submarine training exercise with Task Group Delta. After the training exercise we're then to fly up to Washington D.C. so the Skipper, Commander Forsberg, can visit his parents who live in the area. A Gedunk run for us. The P2V is not the fastest thing in the air so it takes us all day to fly to Norfolk and it's dark when we land. We post-flight the aircraft and hit the beach. The next day we brief on the exercises we'll be flying and get ready for our flight early the next morning. That evening at the galley we realize something is up. The PA is calling for sailors by name who are stationed at Norfolk to report to the hanger. We hear through the grapevine that some sailors who were due to get out of the Navy the next day had to surrender their orders back to the duty officer. They were told to unpack their seabag and report to the hanger in the morning.

The next morning we have a crew briefing. On our way down to the hanger for the briefing we notice there are several P2V's in a roped off area on the ramp with ominous olive drab rockets on the wings stations and a lot of red flags hanging out of the bomb bay. At the briefing we learn President Kennedy has issued an ultimatum to the soviets to get their missiles out of Cuba. We will not be flying training hops with Task Group Delta after all, we will be supporting the fleet looking for surface traffic

hauling missiles to Cuba and for submarines. Our first flight is that night. Sometime during the middle of the flight we get a surface contact. We drop low over the water on our approach. At some distance out the pilot gives the command to the bow operator to light off the searchlight. In the middle of our beam is an American Cruiser. Using words only a sailor can use, we were told that we had destroyed the night-vision of all their watches. They also conveyed to us with an economy of words to depart the area and since they would have to replace all their watches, to search some other place in the ocean and don't ever come back.

That was our last flight in support of TG Delta, we flew up to Andrews AFB in Washington D.C. the next afternoon. The Skipper briefed us on the plane that it might be a good idea to avoid the White House if we were in uniform. There were lots of TV cameras surrounding the White House with news reporters so it might be kind of embarrassing if we were interviewed explaining during this time of tension, how we were there from Whidbey Island on a Gedunk run. The rest of the stay in DC was uneventful, lots of sight-seeing and keeping our distance from the White House. We left on a Sunday and flew towards home. We had to stop at a SAC Air Force Base in Great Falls Montana to refuel. They were on high alert. When we landed, the plane was met out on the taxi-way and the Skipper had to get and show his ID card to security forces before they would let us taxi in. Once we shut down on the ramp to refuel, all crewmembers had to get out and also had to show their ID cards. After refueling, the rest of the flight to Whidbey was uneventful. When we landed Sunday night, the base was deserted. Just the opposite of the bases on the East coast and Great Falls.

An interesting Trip!

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It's early spring 1962 and we're on deployment in Kodiak Alaska. VP-1 gets a request for help from the town of Homer on the mainland. The melting ice floes have jammed up the river causing flooding in the town. I get a call at the barracks to report to the hanger. Since I'm the junior aircrew member, I'll be riding in the after-station along with the ordnanceman as part of a mini-crew. After donning our liners and "Poopy-Suits", we taxi over to the ordinance dump. We always had to wear the Poopy-Suits on any over-water flights so as to extend our "Pull Date" by a few minutes in case we had to ditch. The base ordinance people along with our crew ordnanceman loaded our bomb bay with 100 pounders and fused them. (Time has caused me to be unsure about the size of the bombs, they could have been larger.) After all the arming wires were connected, we went "Two Turning and Two Burning" off towards Homer.

When we arrived on the scene, there was a small Cessna spotter plane that dropped a dye marker on the ice to mark the spot where they wanted us to drop our bombs. I was in the bow along with Ltjg William Boyd, our crew Navigator. Since we didn't have a bombsight in our aircraft we had to improvise. Mr. Boyd drew a vertical line with a grease pencil on the bottom of the Plexiglas nose. He then drew some smaller horizontal marks crossing the vertical line. We made our first pass on the dye marker. Mr. Boyd sighted along the grease pencil mark holding his head even with the MAD recorder platform. He pickled one bomb off, noted which horizontal line he used at the drop and watched where the bomb exploded in relation to the dye marker. It was close. We came around again, Mr. Boyd made a minor adjustment to his release point and pickled the rest of the bombs off. It was interesting watching the shock waves from the explosions looking back through the Plexiglas nose. I never owned a camera then so I never got any pictures.

I guess it must have worked because we didn't have to go back and re-arm the aircraft. It's the one and only actual bombing run I was ever on.

Maybe not very interesting to most but I thought it was cool!

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Just a few more things to remind us old P-2 crewmen why it was so much fun flying in them. As you can see, I'm probably a person that has either too much time on his hands or nothing to do, or a little of both! Feel free to correct any spelling or grammatical errors as you see fit.

Takeoff and Landing: The P-2V had a removable "Astro-Hatch" located between and above the Nav and Tacco stations. When taxiing on the ramp and taxiway to the runway, one crewman, usually Julie/ECM or Radar with a headset and mic would stand with their head and shoulders extended out of the astro hatch watching to ensure the wingtips would clear any nearby objects. In Kodiak you had to cross a roadway that intersected the taxiway between the parking ramp and the runways. You were required to call the tower to get a green light to proceed through the intersection. (See the attached picture taken from the astro hatch) The P-2V had a panel that was normally stored on the floor behind the nose tunnel hatch and next to the Navigator and Tacco seats. This was held in the upright position with two cables to be used for takeoff and landing. Either the Julie or 2nd Mech would sit with his back to the panel facing aft and "Strap In". The remaining operator would then sit with his back against the chest of that operator and he would strap in. The ordanceman and electrician would sit in the radio compartment strapped in next to the radio operator with their back against the "Wing Beam".

In Flight: The wing beam separated the cockpit and sensor stations from the radio compartment and the after station. To get from the front of the aircraft to the back or vice-versa, you had to crawl on your hands and knees wiggling through the narrow passage across wing beam. On the starboard side of the wing beam was electronic equipment and on the port side was the life raft. Something you made sure to always avoid was snagging the inflation lanyard of the raft while crossing the wing beam, else wise you could be crushed like a grape against the electronic equipment. No TV dinners. All meals were either box lunches and/or "Un-prepared's" for an extended flight. Un-prepared's usually consisted of steaks, potatoes and cans of vegetables. The crew would take turns cooking meals in an electric frying pan and some crewmembers were really good cooks! And who can forget the box lunches? Always had a sandwich, a piece of chicken, a hard-boiled egg, milk and fruit, plastic utensils, salt, pepper, mayo and a "John Wayne" can opener. Flying out of Whidbey the fruit was usually an apple but in Hawaii or Midway it was usually a frozen fruit cup. In Kodiak we used to also get a can of sterilized chocolate milk. When the weather was nice, you could fly with the windows open in the after-station. A little noisy but when your sweating in a poopy-suit, putting your arm out the window and by pulling your hand back through the cuff and pulling cool air into your suit through the sleeve was a welcome relief.

Postflight: Aircraft had to be refueled after each flight naturally. Fueling was done over the wing. Each wing had three tanks; the mains, the outer tanks and the tip tanks. Great was the news when the fuel truck had two hoses, fueling could be done twice as fast. After a 10 or 12 hour flight, this was good. Fill the mains first, then the outers and finally the tip tanks. From the weight of the fuel, the wing would gradually level out so you had to go back to the mains and top-off all three tanks in order again. Topped-off meant over-flowing, which on a cold night, meant wet gas-soaked gloves and hands that felt frozen. If you weren't refueling, you were wiping down the wheel wells. I never flew in a P-2 that didn't leak oil. It was just the nature of the brute. We always had rags onboard with us. We would soak the rags with fuel from the pet cock in the wheel well and wipe oil off the inside and outside of the wheel well doors, the struts and the "Beaver tail".

Aircraft Cleanup: Aircraft cleanup meant cleaning the complete aircraft. This included pulling up and painting the floorboards and vacuuming all the bilge's. We polished all the Plexiglas and wiped down all the exterior. This was an all crew evolution, officers and enlisted alike. I remember having to help with repainting the vertical stabilizer during my first "Aircraft Cleanup". I was sent to get a little more toluene to wipe down the bare metal prior to painting with zinc chromate. I didn't know what toluene was so our 2nd Mech showed me where the barrel was. I looked for a suitable container and decided on the nearest Styrofoam cup. I filled it and started back to the

aircraft. About halfway back as you might have guessed, the cup evaporated in my hands.

Ah, those were the days.

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It's late in the year 1961 and I'm fresh out of boot camp and as green as the stripes on my sleeve. I report to the Naval Technical Training Center (NATTC) in Millington Tennessee outside Memphis to attend Electronics "A" school. Since my class doesn't start until May, I'm assigned to "Ships Company" working in the compound at "AQ" school. Duties include assembling work benches for classrooms, swabbing and polishing classroom floors and "Guard Shack" duty. Shortly after I start work there, I'm also assigned to run the Coffee Mess for a month. I have no idea in the world how to even make coffee let alone how to run a mess, but I'm shown how to do everything including how much to sell soup and hot chocolate for and all the necessary cleaning requirements needed to keep the vermin down. Quickly on I also learn that Chief's and Officer's in the "Airdale" Navy, in addition to their Blue's, Khaki's and White's also wear green uniforms but don't ever confuse them with a Marine. (Big Trouble!)

One day while working in the Coffee Mess, a Chief comes in for a cup of coffee. He motions me to come from around the counter as he wants to show me something. When I come around the counter, he motions for me to look at the coffee urn. He points to the glass coffee-level tube on the front of the urn. Floating on top of the coffee in the tube is a cockroach! I apologize and tell him that I'll clean it right away. The Chief tells me not to worry. He unscrews the cap on top of the tube, pulls a pen out of his pocket and digs the cockroach out of the tube. After screwing the cap back on the tube, he pours himself a cup of coffee from the urn and walks away. I am impressed! Chief's are cool!

Six months later I'm still a "Full-Fleet Airman" and ready to start school. It's the last free weekend before school starts and some buddies and I decide to take one last liberty weekend and go to Little Rock Arkansas. One of the guys has a beater of a car, 1952 Ford, but it looks trustworthy and by sharing the cost for gas, we can do it. The four of us, two airmen named Pete and Andy, and a marine private named Richard and I take off Saturday morning for Little Rock. Two of us check in to a hotel and take our bags up. The other two go up the stairs and meet us at the room. On the \$74 something dollars a month we make, we can't afford separate rooms so we'll share the cost of one room. By pulling the mattress off the box springs, the room will sleep four. We flip a coin to see which two get the mattress. The losers get the box springs. That decided, we hit the town.

Sunday we start back with plenty of time to spare. We have "Cinderella Liberty" and have to be back by midnight. To complicate things a little more, we have to stop by the "Locker Clubs" before returning to base. Enlisted aren't allowed civilian clothes on base at NATTC so there are locker facilities outside the base and downtown Memphis. For about \$5.00 per month you can squeeze and many clothes as you want into a 12" by 36" locker. We have to change back into uniform before we can get back on the base.

Somewhere outside Little Rock, the car breaks down. We don't have the tools or the time to fix it. We hitch hike. Nobody wants to pick up four guys walking along side the road. It's getting dark and the clock is ticking and we decide to separate. Pete and Andy walk on ahead and Rich and I lag behind. It's very late now but a good Samaritan picks Rich and I up. Further down the road we see Pete and Andy and convince the Samaritan that they are our friends and need a ride too. The guy picks up Pete and Andy and declines our offer for gas money. Good news, our good Samaritan is going all the way to Memphis. Bad news, we're going to be a little late.

LWe get dropped off in Memphis and Richard and I change into our uniforms. Pete and Andy's uniform club is in Millington and will have to change there. Sharing a cab to Millington we discuss how we are going to get back on base. Richard has a "Brown-Bagger" friend who lives off base. Brown-baggers do not have Cinderella Liberty and can go on and off base at will. We have heard that they never check the liberty card of a brown-bagger and Rich and I opt for that approach. Pete and Andy decide they would rather go over the fence. Rich and I get dropped off at his buddies place just outside Millington. Pete and Andy go on.

Rich wakes his buddy up and he agrees to drive us on base. Rich wants to ride into the base in the trunk. Seems he has two liberty cards and this is big trouble if discovered. I'll ride up front with his buddy when he confirms that they never check passes when you have an Off-Base sticker. We get to the gate. They check liberty cards and I'm busted! Security pulls me out of the car, writes me up and sends me off to the barracks. Rich's buddy passes through the gate and he lets Rich out in front of the barracks. Home Free!

Meanwhile, Pete and Andy change into their whites at the locker club and head for the base. They watch while security passes along the fence. Andy goes up and over. Pete gets to the top of the fence and Andy yells that headlights are coming. Pete hurries over, catches his jumper on the fence and rips it open. Andy is running away from the fence for cover and runs straight into a pipe or a pole of some kind and knocks himself out. Pete runs over, picks Andy up, puts him over his shoulder and hauls ass to the barracks. Home Free!

I go to mast for my dastardly offense of trying to come into the base after-hours. I get sentenced to two weekends of EMI. (Extra Military instruction) EMI consists of marching around the athletic field for a couple hours doing column and oblique left and right drills. Then laying out a complete seabag for inspection along with restriction to the base for those two weekends.

Justice was served and the rest of my tour at NATTC was relatively uneventful.

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In the 63-64 Deployment VP-1 was to deploy to Iwakuni Japan from Whidbey Island which meant "Island Hopping". This was a major undertaking for the flightcrews. The bombay had to be rigged with an extra fuel tank. All the sonobuoys and PDC's were removed from the aircraft and luggage put into the afterstation. The aircraft left in three-plane groups one or two days apart. The first leg of the hop was the flight to Alameda California. It Took somewhere between four to six hours and was the shortest flight of the bunch. The next day we flew from Alameda to Barbers Point Hawaii. This took somewhere between 10 to 12 hours. The next day it was off to Midway Island; another 10 hours. From Midway the next day it was on to Wake Island and the next day from Wake to Agana Guam. Finally we flew from Guam to Iwakuni Japan. The P-2V was like a slug in cold weather when flying loaded for the trans-pac. Every flight but the first one to Alameda was at least 10 to 12 hours. By the time we got to Iwakuni we already had over 50 hours of flight time for the month.

[Digression: When we took a new guy to Midway, after we landed and checked-into the Q, we'd tell the nugget to meet us at the front gate in 30 minutes so we could go into town. Of course, there was no front gate and no town -- the base took-up the entire small island. But it was a laugh to find the guy afterwards, realizing that he'd been had and had run-around like an idiot asking people directions to the "front gate."
-- KB Sherman]





The Deployment was like most deployments, filled with routine, everyday stuff and the occasional time off to visit the local attractions:

1. Downtown Iwakuni, The Kintai Bridge, The Kintai Castle (one picture of Iwakuni was taken from the Kintai castle with the bridge visible in the lower right and the base visible in the upper left. It may not be clear due to the reduce resolution to allow for emailing.





2. Miya Jima park & Torii



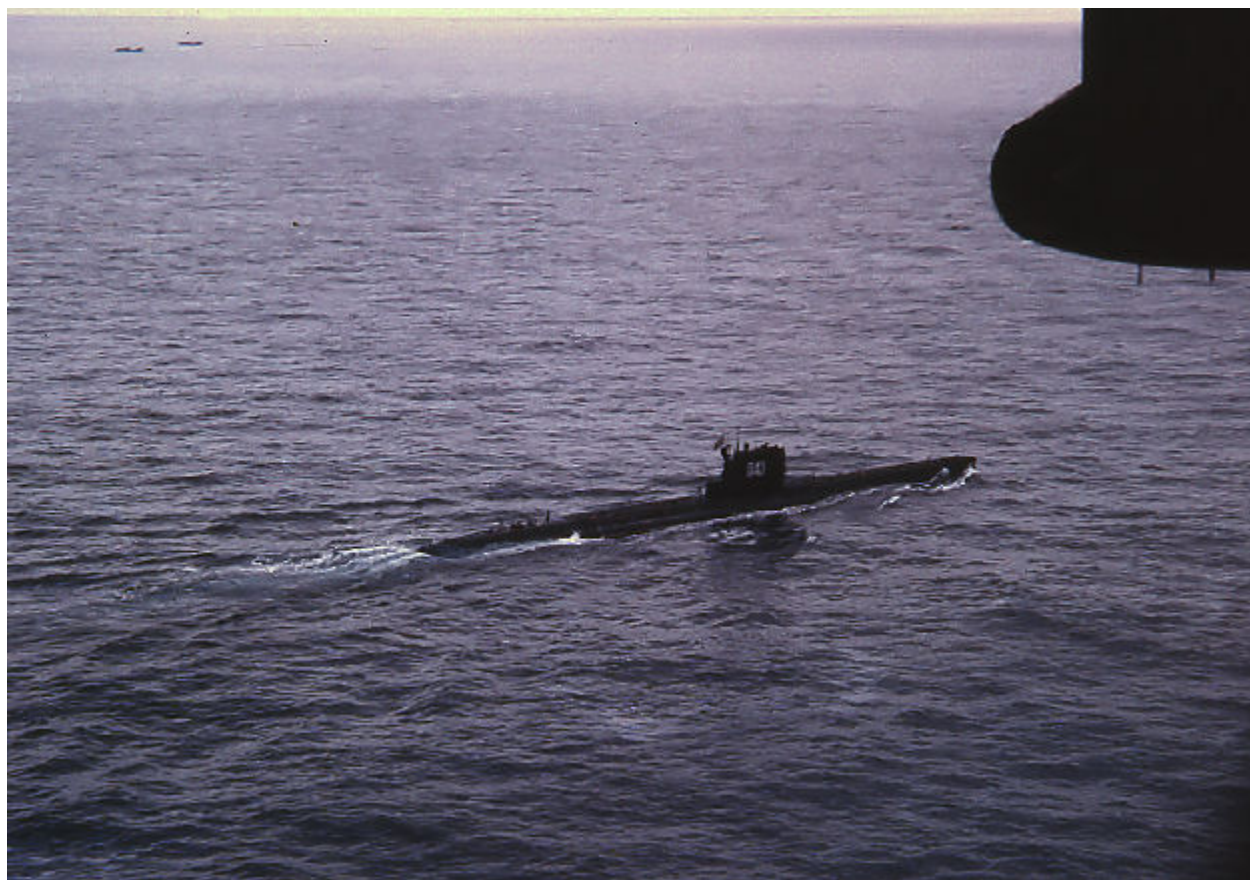


3. Hiroshima Peace Park



The daily activities were punctuated occasionally by several highlight moments.

Like finding a Whiskey class submarine on the surface or making a low pass on a Russian Man-of-War.





Like the time we were cleaning our aircraft and received word that there was smoke coming from the barracks. The duty officer designated several sailors to man fire-bottles and stand by the aircraft. We finished cleaning our plane and headed up to the barracks. By the time we got there the fire was well underway. There were so many people crowded around that we couldn't get near the barracks so we went across the street to the EM club. They had a table with a window next to the street so we watched the fire and the attempts to douse it while downing some "Cool Ones". The base fire department was having problems coordinating their efforts at controlling the fire. I remember a little Japanese guy directing some fire-fighters to grab one end of a hose and head in one direction. At the same moment another guy was directing some other fire-fighters to grab the opposite end of the hose and head in another direction. It was just like in the movies. The Three Stooges meet Laurel & Hardy. When the hose reached it's length, it sprang taught like a rubber band and both groups rebounded backwards towards each other falling down. I suppose it would have been funnier if all our belongings weren't going up in smoke. It took several hours to put out the fire but not before the barracks was consumed. We were moved to the transit barracks that night for the rest of the deployment.



The red cross came in the next day and gave us all \$10.00 for toothpaste, soap and other essentials. A transport flew down from Atsugi Japan bringing replacement flight suits and dungarees. We all stood in line and were two sets of dungarees and a couple flight suits. Luckily this happened fairly early in the deployment so not many squadron mates had bought camera's or stereo equipment yet.

Like the day Lt. Houtchens was shooting "Touch & Go's". He finished his last bounce and came around once more for a full stop landing. As he touched down the tires squealed, and continued to squeal. He had landed with the brakes locked! After the main mounts blew, he continued on down the runway grinding the wheels down. When he finally got stopped, the wheels were flat almost to the axle. I guess it didn't have much of a detrimental effect on his career as I saw Mr. Houtchens several years later wearing LCDR devices on his collar.

Like the time our crew flew up to Misawa. We spent the night there and it was very cold and snowed a little that night. The next day during preflight I had the ordnanceman take a picture of our 2nd Mech. and me next to the airplane. When I got the camera back, I decided to take one last shot of the plane before I boarded. I took the picture and as I put my camera away, a 4-door, blue pickup with "Base Security" stenciled on the door pulled up between me and the plane. This guy with a parka and

an M-15 steps out and tells me to get into the truck! I explain that I really don't have time as I have to get into the airplane and prepare for takeoff. He again commands me to "Get in the truck!" I ask why and he replies "You're taking pictures of a Secret Navy Aircraft". He levels his weapon at me just to reinforce his command. Discretion being the better part of..., I comply and get in back seat of the truck. The pilot is cranking the engines and the Plane Captain strolls over to the truck, sees armed security guards sitting on either side of me and says to me, "Our pilot wants you to quit f..king around and get your ass into the plane". I look at one of the guards and he shakes his head "NO". He tells our Plane Captain that I was captured taking pictures of a secret Navy aircraft which is against base regs.

Our plane captain walks over and crawls up into the cockpit to explain the situation to the pilot. I guess the pilot calls the tower, who calls base security who eventually contacts the security truck telling them they can release me because the guard opens the door and gets out. They let me out of the truck with a warning not to take any more pictures. Much to my chagrin, the ordanceman and electrician are in the afterstation laughing at me through the window.

Towards the end of that deployment our crew did a two-week stint at Sangley Point in the Philippines. We were flying night hops over the south China Sea in support of some little country called Viet-nam. We never heard of the place but we flew several night radar patrols over the South China Sea between Viet Nam and the Philippines. It felt especially hot and muggy in the P-2's after coming down from Japan but at least we weren't wearing Poopy Suits. We flew with the windows open and one evening we even with the afterstation belly hatch open. Partway through the flight though, we decided doing that probably wasn't the safest thing to do, especially in the dark, so we closed it. The flights were un-evenful and boring, no contacts! *

Coming back from that deployment was the reverse of the trip over except the first aircraft and succeeding aircraft arriving in Alameda, waited the several days it took for all the rest of the squadron aircraft to arrive. YB-7 wound-up with an engine change in Hawaii and never made it to Alameda for the round-up. When all the aircraft (minus one) were in Alameda, we flew in formation, eleven planes, mostly in groups of threes, all the way to Whidbey. The formation made one low pass over the field and was filmed by KIRO TV for the news that night. We landed and taxied in to the ramp. The engines were left running until all aircraft were positioned on the ramp and then all aircraft shut-down together. We disembarked the aircraft together and then marched from the aircraft in ranks. We then stood at parade-dress while a speech was made by the base commander and our Skipper; while wives, dependants and news crews waited to the side, listening and filming. Then they turned us loose.

YB-7 and Crew 7 came in several days later almost un-noticed.

A sad note: I left the squadron for "B" school in Memphis in September of 1964 before the squadron made the next deployment. VP-1 had a detachment in Da-Nang, Viet Nam during that 64-65 deployment. The detachment was rocketed one night in Da Nang and three VP-1 sailors lost their lives including a Plane Captain by the name of Vedros. They were some of the first Americans killed in the war.

