

29 July 1972

Dear WARRINGTON Family and Friends,

Although the future of WARRINGTON is not known on this date, I feel that I owe you some information about the events which the ship has experienced since my last writing to you on 4 July. Before I begin, however, I want to thank those of you who took the time to write to me, commenting on my last letter and expressing concern over the safety of your WARRINGTON men. Your interest will be source of strength to me in the difficult days ahead.

For the vastly more important event of the past twenty-four days, the explosions which shook WARRINGTON on 17 July, I know that many of you have been distraught with worry about your WARRINGTON men. I regret that I could not have personally assured each of you at this time that your men were safe and adequately comfortable. The security restrictions covering the incident, together with the massive shipboard communications casualties resulting from the explosions, however, prevented personally "getting out to the world" that we were safe and heading for port. I am assured by the commander of our Destroyer Squadron TEN in Newport that many of you had received sufficient information to quiet your fears. During the past few days in port, I expect that your WARRINGTON men have telephoned or written more personal details.

As for the explosion incident itself the investigations which commenced shortly after our arrival in Subic Bay late 24 July will bring to the surface some of the facts of the cause of the explosions. At the present, such facts are not available to me for release. Whatever the cause, one thing is certain: the explosions which lifted the after end of the ship clear of the water were big ones, and caused an unbelievable amount of major damage to the hull, machinery and other interior parts of the ship. Although my shipboard investigators have reported to me their estimates of the damages, the exact amount will not be known for several days, until Navy repair experts have had an opportunity to assess all areas of damage.

Damage is an easy thing to measure, however, when compared to the difficulty in describing the incredibly heroic, infatigable, and good-natured fashion in which your men responded to the endless hours of damage investigation and control, and the seven days of roughing it with salt-water showers, little-or-no lighting, paper plates and plastic spoons, topside double-feature movies, and even shorts and sneakers, while under tow by three different ships. At times, such as late one night last week, when the tow line to the Ocean-going Tug TAWAKONI parted for the fourth time in twenty-four hours, the optimism and determination which your men displayed led me to wonder from where such stamina comes. Whatever the source, that spirit, almost to the man, saved this ship, and, God willing, will repair the ship in the next several weeks.

to your prayers and concern. Just to set the record straight, persons who reported with injuries were Seaman Stephen BURKE and Fireman Philip WHITAKER, who were treated for bruises and returned to duty, as well as Lieutenant Junior Grade Jerry OLIVER, Seaman Fredrick CRANDALL, and Fireman Kieth ROBERTS, all of whom suffered sprains and bruises in the course of damage control operations following the explosions. All persons were restored to full duty in a matter of hours following the explosions. For this I am extremely grateful and I know you share my feelings.

And now, WARRINGTON is cradled in drydock at the Ship Repair Facility, Naval Station Subic Bay, undergoing detailed examination for damage. On or about 31 July, when this planning and estimation period is concluded, repair work will commence. I anticipate remaining at Subic Bay at least until 16 August. The plans after that date have not been formulated, so I would advise you to avoid speculations. The decision for such plans rests at the highest level of the Navy. Please be assured, however, that you will be among the first to learn of such plans after I am notified. All of the factors and alternatives were discussed by me today with your men in various group meetings and on closed-circuit television. For the time being, most of your men, those who chose to do so, are living ashore in permanent quarters, and dining at dining facilities ashore until sufficient housekeeping services are restored to the ship. It is not all tea and crumpets for them, but they are far more comfortable than they were at this time a week ago.

As I stated in my previous letter to you, mail is utmost important. While WARRINGTON was involved in gunfire support operations, mail pickup and delivery was not as easily accomplished as I had hoped it would be. With so many ships involved in the operations off Vietnam, getting mail to each ship was a major task. Therefore, each mail delivery was hungrily anticipated and greatly appreciated. The hours on the Gunline were long and hard, and your men may not have written as much as they would have liked. As I said earlier, the immediate plans call for WARRINGTON's presence in Subic Bay for at least a few weeks, allowing more regular mail service. Mail from the folks at home is as welcome in port as when the ship is at sea. For those of you who have written to me that you have not heard recently from your WARRINGTON man, I personally encouraged those individuals to write or call you.

On July 11th, just after arriving off the coast of South Vietnam, I was privileged to re-enlist Chief Hospital Corpsman Robert ABRAHAMSON and Boiler Technician First Class Harry PIEPER. Moreover, I will convene advancement ceremonies for several men who will be advanced in rate during August:

Donald CAFARO	From STG3 to STG2
Robert CARD	From SKSN to SK3
Steven RUTHERFORD	From SN to BM3
Frank GULLO	From SN to BM3
Robert MCCRACKEN	From SN to VN3
Jeffrey VANICKY	From ICFN to IC3
Roy LOZOYA	From STG2 to STG1
Raymond HORSLEY	From STG2 to STG1

The courage displayed by some individuals, without regard for own safety can be described only in terms of heroism. These persons will be recommended for higher recognition for their deeds.

Late the evening of 24 July, WARRINGTON's arrival in Subic Bay marked the end of a eighteen days service in the Gulf of Tonkin, which has been a difficult period for all hands, but a period containing some high spots. On 8 July, after a two-day transit with USS **BASTONE**, our Newport sister ship, across the South China Sea and into the Gulf of Tonkin, I reported to the Gunline Commander, "Guns up, ready to fire". This moment was a thrilling and significant milestone for your men, because it marked the end of a long, grinding preparation for the test of battle, and they proudly reported ready in all respects. Moreover, in a few short hours WARRINGTON was thrown into the pitch of battle, in close support of the valiant army and marines of the Republic of Vietnam as they advanced on the city of Quang Tri. It was not long before the U.S. Marine Spotters ashore, who adjusted the fall of shells from WARRINGTON guns, were marvelling at the accuracy of those five-inch guns and the responsiveness of your men to their calls for fire at all hours of the day and night. WARRINGTON quickly earned and maintained the reputation of a "top-gun", the highest tribute which a gun-fire support ship can receive. The long days and nights of gun fire support were broken, however, by hurried trips to open-ocean rendezvous with Service Force ships which provided "bullets, beans, boiler blood and Screamin Yellow Zonkers." (In case you are not familiar with Screamin Yellow Zonkers, as I was not, they are a snack food, like Cracker Jacks). During these underway replenishments, your men again excelled by safely and rapidly loading ammunition, fuel and supplies in a minimum time, thus enabling the ship to rush back to the gun line without undue loss of gun fire services to our Vietnamese friends ashore. Although perhaps difficult for you folks at home to appreciate, this period was a real high point in the spirit and enthusiasm of your men. The teamwork involved throughout that entire Gun Line operation is a unique boon to the morale of a ship - everyone becomes involved in one way or another. I am certain that you former Navy men remember this exhilarating feeling of the entire crew pulling together on a difficult task.

The ultimate proof of prowess, however, came on 16 July, when WARRINGTON reported to the Commander, Surface Action Unit, under the **YANKEE** Station Commander, for **LINEBACKER** Operations. Only the tried and proven ships are sent to such operations in waters off the coast of North Vietnam, where they attempt to halt the waterborne transport of supplies to the North Vietnamese Army. Again, WARRINGTON reported for duty in as seaworthy and battle-ready condition as any destroyer in the **SEVENTH** Fleet. And on the afternoon of 17 July, after a night of periodic firing against enemy shore installations, WARRINGTON encountered the two severe explosions which all but stopped the ship. Of course, the blessing of that incident was the total lack of serious injury among your men. God has been very good to WARRINGTON, in answer

I only wish that the families and friends of those men could be present at the ceremonies.

Well, dear family and friends, I did not report many small pieces of information which have appeared during the past three and one half weeks, but concentrated on the main items of news in which I think you will be interested. Again, thank you for your prayers, your support and your letters. No matter is so unimportant to me that, if you will write and ask, I can't find out and respond - but write to your WARRINGTON man before you write to me. Take good care of yourselves.

With deepest concern and warmest regards,



NOEL H. PETREE, JR.
Commander, U.S. Navy
Commanding Officer
USS WARRINGTON (DD-843)



On July 11th, just after arriving off the coast of South Vietnam, I was privileged to accompany Chief Hospital Surgeon Robert BRANSON and Senior Technician First Class HARRY PIERCE. Moreover, I will continue advancement ceremonies for several men who will be advanced in rank during August.

Donald CATARO From STG to STG
Robert CARR From SKM to SKT
Steven KUTNER From SN to EMT
Frank GULLO From SA to SAs
Robert MCCracken From SN to YAs
Joseph VANICKY From TCM to TCM
Ray LOBYA From STG to STG
Raymond HOPLEY From STG to STG