

The New Navy

A couple of years ago I was driving into the Monterey P.G. School and at the gate was a chief, USN. My car has plate holders that say, TIN CAN SAILOR. The chief stopped me and said, "What is a tin can sailor."

My response was "You got to be SH--- me!" He said "No, I don't know what that means." Needless to say, I kept my cool, but I did inform him that a TIN CAN SAILOR was a DESTROYER SAILOR!! You know, one of those sailors that actually went to sea and served on a man-of-war.

Another name for destroyers is, "gray hounds of the fleet."

Vietnam Gun Line

We had been on the "gun line" for a few weeks when HMS Perth and Hobart from Australia joined the Task Group. The Perth was sent to guard the carrier and the Hobart was assigned to the gun line, We ran the gun line (COMDESRON22) with 12 to 16 destroyers providing gun fire support for our troops. The commodore decided I should be high-lined to the Hobart to make sure they knew how to provide gunfire support.

I was high-lined over; went into their combat information center (CIC) to meet the captain and show him how we did gunfire support. With his permission, I took the "conn" (directing the ship to maneuver from CIC). I called the U.S. Marines, who controlled the area, and said we were ready for the first gunfire support mission. The marines gave us the target and I said, "all ahead 1/3, speed 6 KTS, course - -." When we got about 10,000 YDS from the beach, I said, "commence firing forward gun mount." At 5000 YDS I said, "left full rudder, steady up on course - - - (to parallel the beach) all mounts commence firing." After 5 minutes I said, "left full rudder, increase speed to 'standard', indicate 16 KTS, forward mount to cease firing, after mount keep firing until we get to 10,000 YDS from the beach." After we got out to about 15,000 YDS from the beach, I told the captain "that's how we do it. We shoot the forward mount to keep their heads down, the broadside at 6 KTS to hit the target, turn away from the beach, increase speed but keep the after-mount firing until we are out of range of their short fire guns." He thanked me for the instruction, but about that time we got another request from the marines for a new target. The captain said, "if I didn't mind, he would conn the ship for this target." I said, "yes sir." The captain said, "all ahead standard (16 KTS), at 3,000 YDS from the beach, left full rudder (still going at 16 KTS), all mounts full automatic, rapid-fire, (2 minutes later) left full rudder increase speed to 27 KTS", as we left the area, Then he said to me "that's how we do it in Australia." My response was "you certainly don't need me anymore." I was high-lined back to the USS DuPont.