

U.S.S. POINT DEFIANCE (LSD-31)
FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

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Ser: 65
JAN 29 1965

From: Commanding Officer, USS POINT DEFIANCE (LSD 31)

To: Chief of Naval Operations (Op-291SH)

Subj: Annual ship's history: submission of

Ref: (a) OPNAV INST 5750.7

Encl: (1) Subject history

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosure (1), this ship's history revised in its' entirety, is submitted herewith.

ROBERT G. TOWER

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USS POINT DEFIANCE (LSD 31)

SHIP'S HISTORY

1 January 1954

Statistics

Builder	Ingalls Shipbuilding Pascagoula, Mississipi
Keel Laid	23 November 1953
Launched.	28 September 1954
Commissioned.	31 March 1955
Overall Length.	510 feet
Extreme beam.	84 feet
Draft	17 to 31 feet (cruis
Full load displacement.	13,250 tons

USS POINT DEFIANCE is the fourth ship in a new class of Dock Landing Ship (LSD) and is the first naval vessel to bear the name of the famous landmark in Tacoma, Washington. Point Defiance, the landmark is the site selected in 1859 on the northern tip of the Tacoma Peninsula as the location for Fort Steilacoom. This area was at that time a part of the Oregon Territory.

The Dock Landing Ship was developed to provide the Amphibious Forces with a ship of the increased size, range, and speed required by our present day fast-moving, hard-hitting and highly mobile fleet. The LSD is primarily designed to embark a large number of fully loaded landing craft or amphibious vehicles of various sizes and types in her well deck, assorted combat vehicles on the mezzanine and super decks, troop-carrying helicopters on the flight deck and combat-equipped troops in her troop living spaces. She then can transport all these elements essential to any amphibious landing at high speed to any shoreline, anywhere in the world, and land them there with a minimum of time and effort.

The LSD also performs such secondary tasks as hauling large cargo which will not fit on the decks or in the holds of regular cargo ships; serving as a haven for boats and landing craft during an amphibious operation and providing for a helicopter platform for personnel and light equipment transfer. During the time in an amphibious attack when large volumes of supplies and equipment must still be landed, the LSD serves as a hospital or evacuation for personnel and as a drydock and repair ship for landing craft, vehicles and landing ships of similar size or smaller than the LSM which is 200 feet long and displaces 1000 tons. POINT DEFIANCE has two 50 ton cranes to facilitate handling of the heavier bulk cargo and heavy equipment. Her extensive shops help to provide repair facilities for amphibious craft in remote operating areas. The ship has six 3"/50 caliber twin gun mounts for protection.

By merit of construction alone, POINT DEFIANCE is extremely versatile. In expressing this versatility, since her commissioning in 1955, POINT DEFIANCE has sailed the equivalent of 21 times around the world. The ship has had three tours of duty in the Western Pacific including operations in Japan, Korea, the Formosa Straits, the Philippines, Okinawa, Iwo Jima, Eniwetok, Hong Kong and Thailand, and is presently employed in her fourth WestPac tour.

"Versatility" has been the by-word for POINT DEFIANCE since 1954 when champagne was first splashed on her stem by the sponsor, Mrs. Arthur D. Struble, wife of Vice Admiral Arthur D. Struble. During her first trial run in the Gulf of Mexico after commissioning in Pascagola, Mississippi, Commander Oscar Blair PARKER, the first commanding officer, found that her well deck when flooded and not otherwise in use, made an excellent "swimming hole" for the crew's recreation during slack periods. On arrival to Long Beach in July 1955 POINT DEFIANCE became a unit of Amphibious Squadron SEVEN and amphibious Force, Pacific Fleet.

Although her designers never dreamed of it, POINT DEFIANCE became one of the first rocket launching surface ships. In support of the 1958 International Geophysical Year (IGY) Solar Eclipse Expedition to the South Pacific, launchers were fitted to her super deck to fire eight NIKK-ASP rockets during a solar eclipse for International Geophysical Year observations. The area of operations was Puka Puka Island of the Northern Cook Group. The firings were very successful, reaching record heights of 150 miles, and collecting valuable scientific data.

Six months after her return from the IGY expedition, POINT DEFIANCE won the Amphibious ASSAULT BOAT AWARD and was authorized to display the insignia of crossed anchors and arrowhead on the bridge to indicate outstanding performance in the off-loading of boats, debarkation of personnel and equipment, and movement to the beach. This insignia is as coveted an award by the Amphibious Force as is the traditional "EF" for Excellence.

In May of 1959 POINT DEFIANCE participated in the large scale and highly successful amphibious operation "TWIN PEAKS". She was one of sixty Navy ships which supported the landings of 25,000 combat ready marines on the beaches near Oceanside, California.

In July, with Captain W. M. SHIFFLETTE in command, the ship moved into her assigned berth at the Puget Sound Bridge and Dredging Co. in Seattle for a complete overhaul. The normal two and one half month overhaul period was extended two months by a strike of shipyard workers. As a result POINT DEFIANCE was unable to return to Long Beach until November.

January, 1960 was a busy month of concentrated training to raise the battle readiness of the crew in preparation for the third trip to WESTPAC and included a change of command when Captain John H. BOWELL relieved Captain W. M. SHIFFLETTE in January 1960. The cruise began on the 16th of February and on the 22nd a large contingent of Marine troops were embarked at Pearl Harbor and carried to Kaohsiung, Taiwan (Formosa) to participate in operation "ELM STAR", a combined amphibious operation with Chinese Nationalist Forces.

A number of Far Eastern ports were visited during this five month cruise including Okinawa, Subic Bay, Hong Kong, Iwakuni and Yokosuka, Japan. Much of the time was occupied by hard work with back loading of troops and transfer of two Marine Air Groups to new duty stations in the Far East but it was not all work and no relaxation. Ship's parties held ashore on Okinawa, swimming parties in the well deck and an occasional steak fry on the flight deck gave a welcomed diversion from the rigors of being ready ship. While in Hong Kong, crew members furthered the President's "People-to-People" Program by entertaining at a Chinese childrens hospital and by donation a large amount of bedding, obtained in the states, to two orphans homes.

In June 1960 the ship participated in Operation "SEA HAWK," another combined amphibious landing, this time, with Republic of Korea forces in the Pohang area of the East Coast of Korea. Again the ship was highly commended for her high standard of accommodations and treatment of embarked troops and for her excellence in operations with UDT personnel and handling amphibious vehicles. After a short visit to Yokosuka, Japan for some much needed voyage repairs, POINT DEFIANCE returned to her home, Long Beach in July, 1960.

An interesting deviation from the ship's normal operations occurred in September of 1960 when the ship was called upon to join 22 other ships of the United States First Fleet in visiting San Francisco to assist in celebrating that city's "Pacific Festival." During the 10 day stay, a total of 3,000 visitors enjoyed the ship's hospitality including 150 children entertained by the crew at two ship's parties. Once again POINT DEFIANCE received numerous compliments on her immaculate condition and the outstanding conduct record set by her crew ashore.

POINT DEFIANCE completed the eventful year of 1960 by continuing her training to maintain her high state of battle preparedness. These months were high-lighted by three weeks of amphibious exercises conducted at Coronado Roads, California, and live gunfiring exercises in the San Diego operating area. The Christmas leave period found the ship in Long Beach Naval Shipyard for a three week period of availability to effect needed repairs and upkeep.

In January, 1961 POINT DEFIANCE hosted about forty Marine students from the Embarkation School at Coronado, California, to assist in their amphibious training. In keeping with her tradition of making every operation commitment even on the shortest notice, POINT DEFIANCE left Long Beach for Fort Lewis, Tacoma, Washington to undertake a sister ship's mission of embarking 142 Army Engineers, their vehicles and their helicopter and transport them to San Diego.

February saw Captain R. D. HAWLEY, USN, a native of Tacoma, relieve Captain John H. BOWELL, USN as Commanding Officer in a change of command ceremony in Long Beach.

In March POINT DEFIANCE left Long Beach with three LCU embarked to assist in transferring elements of the First Marine Brigade from Hawaii to southern California. While enroute from Pearl Harbor to San Diego with other units of Amphibious Squadron SEVEN, she was called upon to execute a drill reinforcement of the Seventh Fleet. This resulted in an unexpected five day visit to Buckner Bay, Okinawa, before

returning to Pearl Harbor and finally to Long Beach in April.

Immediately upon arrival in Long Beach, the ship commenced preparing for participation in exercise "GREENLIGHT", a full-scale amphibious assault exercise on the coast of southern California. The exercise involved 42,000 Navy and Marine Corps personnel, 71 ships including four minesweepers of the Royal Canadian Navy, and 296 aircraft. For POINT DEFIANCE the operation included underway training against submarine and air opposition, loading and debarking of landing craft and Marine combat equipment, replenishment at sea, a detailed rehearsal and control of the ship-to-shore movement over an assigned beach at the final assault. The men of POINT DEFIANCE did another good job and were commended for the out-standing performance exhibited throughout the operation.

In July POINT DEFIANCE entered the Long Beach Naval Shipyard for a thorough overhaul. During this period the crew was kept busy insuring the new systems functioned properly and that older systems were repaired and preserved. The complex requirements of modernization and maintenance were effected in a timely and efficient manner.

After the three month overhaul POINT DEFIANCE underwent a condensed period of comprehensive training to bring her up to a high state of bat readiness. In the midst of this training she was called to act as prim control ship at a large amphibious demonstration for the Chief of Naval Operations and foreign dignitaries at Camp Pendleton, California. She again commended for her outstanding performance.

After completing amphibious refresher training which noted excellen POINT DEFIANCE returned to Long Beach for the December holidays. The yearend was spent preparing for the forthcoming deployment to the Western Pacific early in 1962.

POINT DEFIANCE departed Long Beach in January for WESTPAC. In a change of command ceremony in Subic Bay Captain H. H. HALSTEN relieved Captain R. D. HAWLEY as the new commanding officer.

Although still only a youngster among naval ships, POINT DEFIANCE has proven her versatility and established her firm claim to a share in the title, "Work Horse" of the Navy, by participating at a moments notice in three major operations in various parts of the globe.

One night in May 1962 the unloaded ship was quietly anchored in Subic Bay in the Philippine Islands. The next morning, loaded, fueled and fully manned, POINT DEFIANCE put out to sea with two other Pacific Amphibious Force Ships to answer a plea from the Government of Thailand for military assistance from the United States. A few days later she led the way up the Chao Phya River to Bangkok where 1800 Marines and extensive equipment from the three ships was landed.

Five months later and on the other side of the world POINT DEFIANCE participated in another emergency operation. In October 1962 with troops, equipment and supplies embarked POINT DEFIANCE sailed with other units of the Pacific Fleet through the Panama Canal to the Caribbean area ready to act if needed during the Cuban quarantine operations.

While enroute to her homeport of Long Beach, California from Seattle, Washington after a two months' yard period, POINT DEFIANCE was diverted to San Diego to embark the bathyscaph TRIESTE. TRIESTE was wanted to conduct deep search operations in the Atlantic in an effort to determine the cause of the tragic loss of the nuclear submarine THRESHER. The bathyscaph was loaded on board Easter Sunday, and by Monday morning all was secure for sea and the ship set sail for Boston via the PANAMA CANAL. In eleven days at an average speed of 19 knots, POINT DEFIANCE reached Boston. On the return trip the ship made a midnight stopover in Norfolk, Virginia to load "Project Hanclasp" material for delivery to San Diego.

In July Captain Robert G. TOWER became the new Commanding Officer when he relieved Captain H.H. HAISTEN in a change of command ceremony in Long Beach.

POINT DEFIANCE is perhaps the only Pacific Fleet ship to transit the Panama Canal five times during her peacetime career. She is also believed to be the first Pacific Fleet ship to make two round trips through the Canal within a six month period.

In July 1963 POINT DEFIANCE participated in operation "7OPS" which was the first time in many years that Amphibious Squadron SEVEN had operated together as a complete unit. This operation included a visit to San Francisco where over 6,000 visitors came aboard over the weekend.

The remainder of the summer of 1963 was spent in and around Long Beach and San Diego as the ship prepared herself for overseas employment. Much of this preparation consisted of independent ship exercises and amphibious refresher training. In August POINT DEFIANCE earned one service stripe to display beneath the coveted Amphibious Assault Award.

In keeping with her policy of good public relations, POINT DEFIANCE was host for a contingent of Cub Scouts who were being given a tour of some of the squadron ships by the squadron commander, Captain W.C. MEYER. Just prior to departure for the Western Pacific in September, a dependents cruise to Santa Catalina Island was held as a farewell gesture to those who would stay behind during the WestPac cruise.

Enroute to Subic Bay in the Philippines in September, POINT DEFIANCE participated in operation "DULL KNIFE" a squadron exercise conducted on the island of Molokai in the Hawaiian Islands, in which POINT DEFIANCE acted as Primary Control Ship. The operation, although initially hampered due to unexpected surf conditions which made beaching by landing craft hazardous, was carried out with dispatch with the intensified employment of Marine helicopters and the use of the larger landing craft.

From Pearl Harbor POINT DEFIANCE sailed to Subic Bay and assumed duty as a unit of the Ready Amphibious Force of the Seventh Fleet. Shortly after her arrival in October POINT DEFIANCE was required to actively demonstrate her reputation as a "can-do" ready ship when the ready task group was sent to the coast of Saigon, Vietnam to safeguard United States interests which might be endangered in the overthrow of the government.

A visit to Hong Kong in November gave the crew a chance to catch up on rest and recreation. After leaving Hong Kong, Taiwan (Formosa) was visited for two days to complete final plans on Operation "BIG DIPPER", a combined amphibious operation with the navy of the Government of the Republic of China. The operation took place on the southern tip of Taiwan with Chinese and U. S. Forces landing in separate beaches with POINT DEFIANCE adding her talents as primary control ship. Vice Admiral C. V. RICKETS, Deputy CNO, on hand to observe the entire operation, congratulated all units for an excellent job.

After operation "BIG DIPPER" the ship exchanged battalion landing teams in Okinawa and returned to Subic Bay, remaining there until the end of the year 1963.