

BASIC YEARLY HISTORY OF USS WICHITA (ACR1)

1 February 1971 - 1 April 1972

Wichita's first Western Pacific deployment ended on 2 February 1971 when she arrived at her home port of Long Beach. After off-loading ammunition of Seal Beach and fuel products at San Pedro she began a 30 day stand-down period which permitted the crew maximum leave and liberty after the extended deployment. The remainder of the Spring was spent in an upkeep period at the Naval Shipyard at Long Beach during which routine repairs and maintenance were undertaken both by the ship's force and the Naval Shipyard.

On the 19th of May Captain Oller, Commander Service Group ONE, visited Wichita and presented the ship with the Meritorious Unit Commendation for her excellent performance during the preceding deployment with the Seventh Fleet. Shortly after the presentation Wichita was underway for special operations off the coast of Washington state. For the week's duration of these operations Wichita served as a helicopter platform and operating base for a research and observation team engaged in tests of the new Mark 48 torpedo. Two test ships were sunk during operational tests and the Wichita based helicopters were able to record the success of the new torpedo.

Included in the Washington operations was a 3 day port visit to Esquimalt, Vancouver Island, British Columbia. On the 31st of May Wichita was enroute to Long Beach and she arrived on the 2nd of June.

The next period of significance was predeployment refresher training in San Diego. This extended from the 7th of June until the 18th when Wichita again returned to her homeport of Long Beach.

For the purpose of demonstrating Wichita's at sea performance to the dependents there was a successful one day dependents cruise on the 25th of June. From 28th of June to the 1st of July Wichita acted as duty oiler for ships engaged in refresher training in San Diego. During this period she replenished the carrier Constellation for her upcoming deployment.

The following 5 weeks were spent in final work and load out for the next deployment which began on the 7th of August. From the 7th until the 24th she steamed directly to Subic Bay, R.P. for final load out and adjustment before the first Yankee Station line swing on the 31st of August. The first two ships alongside Wichita for replenishment were the USS ENTERPRISE and her escort the USS BAINBRIDGE. This was only the beginning of what was to be a very busy and successful deployment. From the 16th to the 25th of September Wichita was in port in Subic for load out and preparation for the second line swing. The next line swing was consisted of Market Time operations off the coast of South Vietnam and also periods of carrier and carrier escort replenishment in the Yankee Station area. On the 10th of October during replenishment operations on Yankee Station Admiral Clary, Commander in Chief U.S. Pacific Fleet, visited aboard to see one of the newest multi-product replenishment ships at work. The 14th, 15th, and 16th of October were spent in Market Time work and followed by a two day transit to Sattahip, Thailand the deep water port of Bangkok. Wichita moored at the U.S. Army docks in Sattahip for 6 days while the crew enjoyed liberty in Bangkok.

"ENCLOSURE (1)"

After the Thailand visit, Wichita steamed directly to Subic Bay, arriving on the 28th of October. After a load out she was underway for Yankee Station on 3 November, providing services to units on Yankee Station until the 11th of November when a Market Time line swing was started. The 23rd of November saw Wichita again enroute Yankee Station. On the 2nd of December in the midst of a busy replenishment schedule Captain Jack M. Stevens was relieved as Commanding Officer by Captain William H. McCracken.

On the 10th of December an abrupt change in the operating schedule of Wichita occurred. While consolidating products from the ammunition ship Haleakala and the oiler Ponchatoula, Wichita received orders to leave Yankee Station and steam south to a point northeast of Singapore where she would rendezvous with additional units of a newly formed Task Force 74. Upon arrival at the assigned rendezvous Wichita commended replenishments with all units of TF 74 which included the USS ENTERPRISE, the USS TRIPOLI, and seven escorts. Upon completion of the UNREPS the task force steamed through the Singapore and Malacca Straits enroute to the Indian Ocean. After exiting the Straits Wichita again replenished the task force and then began a continued Westward movement into an area in the Indian which was to be the holding point for the task force for the duration of the operation.

While on station in the Indian Ocean with TF 74 Wichita was able to fulfill the complete replenishment operation for the task force. Only infrequent consolidations from other fleet units were needed to keep Wichita abreast of the demand for petroleum and stores. On the 31st of December, Wichita and an assigned escort, the destroyer Richard B. Anderson began a transit northwest into the Arabian Sea where Wichita was to consolidate fuel oil from the British Royal Fleet Auxiliary Pearlleaf. This consol with Pearlleaf (A-77) was undertaken on the 2nd of January and in the very successful operation over 1.7 million gallons of Navy Standard Fuel Oil were transferred to Wichita. This type of operation, a consolidation of products between ships of the British fleet and the U.S. Fleet was a first for Wichita and she again proved herself more than able to handle the job at hand.

The Indian Ocean operations continued until the 9th of January at which time the task group was ordered to return to the usual operating area on Yankee Station.

Wichita, having been continuously at sea for 45 days and being over-due for an upkeep period in Subic Bay, left the Straits of Malacca and after a short line swing in Market Time areas headed for Subic Bay, R.P. From the 17th to the 28th of January Wichita was inport Subic for upkeep.

On the first of February she was enroute Yankee Station for what was supposed to be her last line for the deployment. A last minute extension changed this schedule and from the 11th to the 23rd she was again involved in Yankee Station operations. On the 23rd she began a transit to Hong Kong for a 5 day port visit there. After the Hong Kong visit Wichita returned to Subic for a quick load-out and a transit back to Yankee Station where the originally scheduled line swing was cut short and Wichita returned to Subic Bay for a load adjustment for return to Long Beach.

The Subic to Long Beach transit began on the 14th of March and Wichita arrived in Long Beach on the 31st of March.

In conclusion, during the eight month deployment to WestPac Wichita alongside replenished various ships 328 times, sending them over 53 million gallons of Naval Distillate, Navy Special Fuel Oil, and JP-5 fuel, 13,000 tons of ammunition, and over 1,100 tons of provisions and fleet freight. The ship steamed 60,000 miles in the eight months away from the home port. In all categories where records were kept Wichita exceeded the levels achieved in the previous deployment by a wide margin. Wichita had again proven the worth of the AOR class of ship.