

## The liberty that almost wasn't

Roe V. Karstetter (AGR-13, 1962-1964)

As you know, the picket ships were not very much for liberty ports. Typically it was 30 or 40 days out on station and maybe, if we were lucky, 12 to 15 days in port. Perhaps this was good for the married men, better than West Pac, but not very good for the young single sailors.

In early 1964, we had just been relieved from the northernmost station. Good old Station One - that was the Interdictor's home while I was aboard. Only once did we draw Station Three. Just relieved, we were heading for a few days liberty in Portland, Oregon, a rare occasion for us. Nearly everyone on board was happy and looking forward to a liberty port other than San Francisco.

We had barely started in the direction of Portland when the antenna drive motor for our surface search radar bought the farm. All of a sudden, things did not look good at all. Without navigational radar, we could not cross the bar at Astoria and navigate up the Columbia River. Unfortunately, the ship did not carry a spare and there was not enough time for an airdrop. Naturally, the crew was disappointed.

After looking the sorry situation over, and after many if's and maybe's, I figured what the hell, it just might work. I had a small bracket made that would secure to the base of the antenna pedestal with large U-bolts. Then I put out the word, "You guys want to go to Portland, fine. I need a half or three-quarter

horsepower, 120-volt AC motor with the pulley on it." Needless to say, the crew went to work. The only motor on board that would work was the one on the engineer's washing machine. In a matter of minutes, we had the motor in our hands. I had some good techs working with me and the support of the entire ship. By mounting a V-belt type pulley on the shaft of the burned out motor, we could drive the entire system. In short order, the radar system was back up and we could synchronize information and all.

With our jury-rigged motor, we crossed the bar at Astoria, went up the Columbia River to Portland, back down, and continued on to San Francisco where we got a new motor. The crew enjoyed a nice liberty that almost wasn't. I was extremely proud of my techs and the way the whole crew was pulling together for a liberty in Portland. An outstanding joint effort.

It was kind of funny in some ways. Here we were with all our modern and powerful radar and radio equipment and we were steaming with a motor off the engineer's washing machine driving our surface search radar. My crew and others got a "well done" from Capt. G. L. Henry. He used the words, "utilizing a motor of unknown origin." He didn't want to call it the engineer's washing machine motor. Doesn't sound too military does it. However, back in those days, we were running on short money, and sometimes short-handed; and jury rigging was not uncommon.

