



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS CARDINAL (MHC-60)
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From: Commanding Officer, USS CARDINAL (MHC 60)
To: Director of Naval History (N09BH), Washington Navy Yard, Washington, DC 20309

Subj: Annual Command History

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Encl: (1) Annual Command history for CY 1997

1. In accordance with reference (a), USS CARDINAL's annual command history for calendar year 1997 is forwarded as enclosure (1).

W A Sheehan
W. A. SHEEHAN

USS CARDINAL (MHC 60)

COMMAND HISTORY

1997

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COMMAND COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION

Commanding Officer: (from 15JUL97) LCDR William A. Sheehan, USN

Executive Officer: (from 15JUL97) LT Peter H. Sorensen, USN

Operations Officer: (from 15JUL97) LT [REDACTED], USN

Engineering Officer: (from 15JUL97) LT [REDACTED], USN

Command Senior Chief: (from 15JUL97) STGCS Cary D. Kimball, USN

WARDROOM:

LT William A. Sheehan, USN

LT Peter H. Sorensen, USN

LT [REDACTED], USN

LT [REDACTED], USN

SENIOR COMMANDS:

COMINWARCOM: RADM D. R. CONLEY, USN

SHIP'S MISSION:

CARDINAL (MHC 60) is the tenth ship in the U.S. Navy's OSPREY (MHC 51) Class Coastal Minehunter Program and the fourth U.S. Navy Ship to bear the name. CARDINAL's keel was laid on 22 April 1994.

Coastal Minehunters are the first U.S. Navy ships designed with a primary mission of clearing harbor, coastal, and ocean waters of acoustic, magnetic, contact, and pressure mines. They enter suspected mine fields using precise navigation and search for mines with a variable depth sonar. Suspected mines are investigated with a remote controlled submarine which can also neutralize mines using explosives and other techniques. The ships' hulls are a solid, continuous monocoque structure laminated from special fiberglass and resin. They are easy to maintain and flex to absorb the violent shock of an underwater mine explosion. The ships are designed to have very low magnetic and acoustic signatures, giving them an added margin of safety during operation.

CHRONOLOGY OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS FOR 1997

<u>DATE</u>	<u>SIGNIFICANT EVENTS</u>	
15 JUL	Inport: Savannah, GA	Sign DD-250 USS CARDINAL MHC-60
15 JUL - 27 SEP	Inport: Savannah, GA	Post Delivery Availability
17 JUL	Inport: Savannah, GA	Magazine Inspection
21 JUL - 25 JUL	Inport: Savannah, GA	EOSS Hotchecks
22 JUL - 04 AUG	Inport: Savannah, GA	PQS Assist - RSG Norfolk
28 JUL - 01 AUG	Inport: Savannah, GA	Pre-Light off training Phase II
05 AUG - 07 AUG	Inport: Savannah, GA	Crew Cert I (Admin)
11 AUG - 15 AUG	Inport: Savannah, GA	Metcal Visit (FTSCLANT)
11 AUG - 22 AUG	Inport: Savannah, GA	SCLSI Material Verification
19 AUG - 21 AUG	Inport: Savannah, GA	LMA Assist Visit
25 AUG - 29 AUG	Inport: Savannah, GA	Pre-light off training Phase III
08 SEP - 11 SEP	Inport: Savannah, GA	Crew Cert II (Fast Cruise)
15 SEP - 19 SEP	Inport: Savannah, GA	Light Off Assessment
22 SEP - 24 SEP	Inport: Savannah, GA	Magazine Sprinkler Assist visit
27 SEP - 28 SEP	Inport: Savannah, GA	Preparing to depart builders shipyard
29 SEP		Sail away
29 SEP - 30 SEP	Enroute: Charleston, SC	
01 OCT - 06 OCT	Inport: Charleston, SC	Degaussing
07 OCT - 08 OCT	Enroute: Little Creek, VA	
09 OCT	Inport: Little Creek, VA	
10 OCT - 11 OCT	Enroute: Quantico, VA	
11 OCT - 12 OCT	Inport: Quantico, VA	
12 OCT	ENRAT: Alexandria, VA	
13 OCT - 20 OCT	Inport: Alexandria, VA	Precommissioning preps
18 OCT	Inport: Alexandria, VA	Commissioning day for USS CARDINAL
21 OCT - 22 OCT	Enroute: Little Creek, VA	
22 OCT - 24 OCT	Inport: Little Creek, VA	
24 OCT - 27 OCT	Enroute: Mayport, FL	
27 OCT	ECAL: Mayport FL	Op Area SESEF
27 OCT - 03 NOV	Inport: Mayport, FL	
03 NOV	ECAL: Mayport FL	Op Area SESEF
03 NOV - 06 NOV	Enroute: Nassau, Bahamas	
06 NOV - 10 NOV	Port Visit: Nassau, Bahamas	
10 NOV - 12 NOV	Enroute: Keywest, FL	
12 NOV - 13 NOV	Inport: Keywest, FL	
13 NOV - 17 NOV	Enroute: Ingleside, TX	
17 NOV - 07 DEC	Upkeep: Ingleside, TX	
08 DEC - 12 DEC	Inport: Ingleside, TX	ECART II
13 DEC - 19 DEC	Upkeep: Ingleside, TX	
20 DEC - 31 DEC	Holiday Upkeep: Ingleside, TX	

NARRATIVE OF EVENTS

When the builders have finished a new ship, she is still an inanimate structure. Her hull is seaworthy, her engines are sound, and her weapons systems calibrated, but she has yet to awaken. When the crew steps aboard, the ship comes to life. The captain, and each man in her crew, all loan her a piece of their souls, to keep as long as they serve in her. They accept the responsibilities of making and keeping their ship ready for any service required by our nation, whether at peace or war.

The commissioning ceremony marks the acceptance of a ship as a unit of the operating forces of the United States Navy. At the moment of breaking the commissioning pennant, USS CARDINAL, (MHC 60) became the responsibility of the Commanding Officer, who, together with the ship's officers and crew, have the duty of making and keeping her ready for any service required in peace and war.

The customs and traditions observed during the ceremony have evolved throughout the 219 year history of the United States Navy, but have remained fundamentally unchanged since USS CONSTITUTION was commissioned in 1798.

The distinctive mark of a ship of the Navy in commission, other than the national ensign, is a flag or pennant, at the masthead. The commissioning pennant is believed to have originated in the 17th century, when the Dutch were at war with the English. The Dutch Admiral Maarten Harpentszoon Tromp hoisted a broom at his masthead to indicate his intention to sweep the English from the sea. This gesture was answered by the English admiral who hoisted a horsewhip, indicating his intention to subdue the Dutch. The English were victorious, and since that day the narrow "coachwhip" pennant has been adopted by all nations as the distinctive mark of a ship of war.

The modern U.S. Navy commissioning pennant is blue at the hoist with a union of seven white stars, and has a horizontal red and white stripe at the fly. In lieu of a commissioning pennant, flagships fly the Commodore's or Admiral's personal flag, hence the name "flagship."

A BIRTH

From across the fleet sailors with various backgrounds and experiences descended upon the Intermarine USA shipyard where their ship lay berthed in the lazy Savannah river, with all manner of hose and cable tied up to her like a hospital patient with life supporting equipment attached to various limb and orifice. They arrived with wide eyed wonderment of what was in store for them. The crew soon realized that this was not going to be an easy task, for to put a new ship into service would take a group of professionals and many long hours of hard work, and they felt much pride in this.

On 15 July the Commanding Officer, LCDR William A. Sheehan, accepted delivery of the good ship CARDINAL and the crew rejoiced and boarded their ship and called it home. The next two weeks were filled with all manner of inspection and survey, the engineers conducted EOSS Hot checks 21-25 July while workcenter supervisors were busy installing a brand new 3-M program with the assistance of a PQS Assist by RSG Norfolk from 22-25 July. All the crew searched high and low to verify the DC Plates/CCOL during the DC Verification on 21-25 July. As if this wasn't enough, at the end of the month PLOT II awaited them from 28 July to 01 August.

Now that the crew was settled down in their new home, the month of August descended down upon them filled with more visits and assists by various inspectors from all over. First came Crew Cert I (Admin) which performed a thorough review of CARDINAL's programs and instructions. From 11-22 August the ship conducted the SCLSI Material Verification which kept SK1 █████ busy, at the same time FTSC LANT came onboard for a Metcal Visit from 11-15 August, followed by a LMA Assist Visit on 19-21 August. Once again, we closed out the month with PLOT III on 25-29 August.

September started out with a break for the crew for Labor Day observance, pure irony for it was sure to be a Labor month. The crew prepared for another Crew Cert with a rehearsal on 03-04 September, setting the stage for Crew Cert II (Fast Cruise) from 08-11 September. Only one more hurdle stood between the crew and sail away on 29 September - LOA! The crew rolled up their sleeves and got down and dirty for their biggest milestone to come. The Propulsion Examining Board came aboard to evaluate the CARDINAL team. Without trepidation or hesitation the crew turned to and put another examination in its wake. In the end, all the hard work and preparations paid off as the crew was now qualified to put to sea, something they were eager to do. The last week of September was spent preparing the ship for sea. While some sailors put their cars on two large car haulers, other sailors drove to Texas and got a preview of their new homeport. One sailor was reported to have said "Everything is big in Texas, EXCEPT our new homeport".

SILAWAY

29 September was a bittersweet day, for the crew had come to enjoy the friendly southern city of Savannah, but was looking forward to getting to Ingleside Texas. It was a beautiful day for sailing as the ship slipped free of her mooring and slowly slid down the Savannah River heading for open sea.

The first port of call on the schedule was a port visit 01 October in Charleston SC, to degauss the ship. Upon arrival the crew got busy with the task of removing all nonessential metallic objects from the ship to prepare for a run on the degaussing range. Unselfish, around the clock efforts by the ship's crew, ensured that every piece of metal not required to conduct Minewarfare operations were removed from the ship. If outstanding weather can have an affect on a crew, then the CARDINAL crew was off to a outstanding start, for the weather couldn't have been better and the degaussing was accomplished with ease. Charleston once a sprawling busy homeport to many ships was now just a deserted base, but the crew dispersed into the community and came back reporting that it was alive and well.

Once underway from Charleston, CARDINAL turned North again and set sights on the Chesapeake Bay. Knowing that October was still Hurricane season, the crew did not know what awaited them off the Capes of Hatteras, but were confident they could handle whatever weather rose up. As CARDINAL neared Cape Hatteras the seas rose higher and higher and tossed CARDINAL about. For every mile made good, the weather made bad, the waves heaved CARDINAL to port and starboard, bow to stern even the saltiest of sailors were looking a little green in the face and wishing to be anywhere else but there. But soon CARDINAL was around the cape and once the Chesapeake light was in sight the whole crew, to a man, let out a collective whew!!

Once inside the safety of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel CARDINAL came hard to port and entered into Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek VA, for the crew to have some well deserved rest on stable terra firma and to refuel the ship for the transit up the Potomac River to the commissioning site.

After a restful night in Little Creek, CARDINAL got underway on the morning of 10 October and transited across the Chesapeake Bay to the mouth of the Potomac River. Before sailing up the mighty Potomac to the Nation's Capital, CARDINAL set her anchor and spent the night on the calm waters of the bay. Bright and early on the 11th, CARDINAL weighed anchor and set sights on Quantico VA, where a group of dignitaries waited to board her and finish the ride into our nation's Capital. Guests from the Navy League of Northern Virginia boarded on the morning of the 12th and CARDINAL gently slipped free of the pier and carefully maneuvered around a minefield of crab-pots with ease; displaying for the first time to those outside the crew just how maneuverable this OSPREY class ship really is. As CARDINAL traveled up the historic Potomac river, a fog bank rolled in and threatened to overshadow the planned tribute to the Nation's first President at Washington's tomb on Mount Vernon. While ET1(sw) [REDACTED] stood by the IMC with computer generated renditions of Taps and the National Anthem, many worried about the fog, upon which ET1(sw) [REDACTED] made a bold prediction that the fog would clear in time for it was meant to be. As CARDINAL neared Mount Vernon the fog rose, much to the relief of ET1, with the swiftness that it arrived, and the tribute went off on time to the delight of all present.

As CARDINAL neared Alexandria, an obstacle appeared on the horizon - I-95. Slowly the Woodrow Wilson draw bridge rose and CARDINAL slipped through the uprights with the precision of a Redskin fieldgoal, three points for the crew this Sunday.

With the deftness of an seasoned bridge team CARDINAL performed a 360 degree turn in the river then made up to the pier in Alexandria Virginia on the afternoon of the 12th, for the first visit by a Navy vessel in many years, this drew a mighty crowd of onlookers wondering what kind of ship this was so far from the oceans normally plied by the U.S. Navy.

COMMISSIONING

Now that CARDINAL had finally arrived in Alexandria, the crew set about the daunting task of pulling off a commissioning of a U.S. Navy ship in the Nations Capital, no small feat given the locality. The crew knew this was going to be a high visibility opportunity to show the ship off to the many visitors who would go home and tell of the brand new warship they saw there. The week of 13 October was spent dressing CARDINAL up for a formal affair. Bunting went up around all the stanchions and the brass was given a final polish. Chairs and tents were erected on the pier to provide protection for the many visitors expected to arrive for the commissioning. All of this went on while the crew rehearsed for the ceremony and provided tours to those who approached in wonder.

Finally 18 October, commissioning day was upon the crew. They descended below to don their best uniforms and medals, and emerged beaming with pride and satisfaction that they had done their best to present the ship to the people of the nation.

As the Navy Marching band provided a variety of musical interludes, visitors, guest, and families began to fill the pier. Everybody took a seat and awaited the arrival of the commissioning party. Soon the Executive Officer called the CARDINAL crew to attention and began the program, first to arrive was the commissioning chaplain, LCDR [REDACTED], Chaplain Corps, United States Navy, followed by the commissioning chairman Suzy Williams, then the Mayor of the city of Alexandria, the Honorable Kerry Donley. Next to arrive was St Louis Cardinal's Hall-of-Famer Mr. Stan Musial, Intermarine USA General Manager Mr. Giorgio Magliulo, Resident Supervisor of Shipbuilding Conversion and Repair Savannah CDR [REDACTED], Vice Commander Naval Sea Systems Command RADM Paul Robinson, Commander Mine Warfare Command and Commissioning Officer RADM Dennis Conley, and last CARDINAL's sponsor Mrs Jane Gephardt, and the Principle speaker United States Congressman and House Democratic Leader the Honorable Richard Gephardt upon which the Navy band stuck up a rousing rendition of ruffles and flourishes; while the Presidential salute battery rendered a 19 gun salute.

When all were in place the commissioning proceeded with all the pageantry accorded an event of this nature, after several guests rose and gave speeches to the assembled visitors, RADM Dennis Conley rose and proceeded to deliver the remarks the crew had waited months to hear. " 'In accordance with Chief of Naval Operations message date time group 011343Z AUG 1997 when CARDINAL MHC 60 is in all respects ready, on or about 18 October 1997, place the ship in commission, and direct the Commanding Officer to report to Commander, Mine Warfare Command.' As authorized by the Secretary of the Navy and for the President of the United States, I hereby place United States ship CARDINAL in commission. God speed to all who sail her".

The Commanding Officer LCDR William Sheehan rose and delivered his response "I will now read my orders 'From Chief of Naval Personnel, Washington D.C. to LCDR William A. Sheehan, United States Navy. Subj: Bupers order 0956 of 10 June 1996 upon commissioning of United States ship CARDINAL MHC 60 report for duty as Commanding Officer.' RADM Conley, USS CARDINAL is in commission and I have assumed command"

The Commanding Officer then turned to the Executive Officer and ordered the first watch be set onboard CARDINAL. As the XO called out "Now set the watch throughout the ship" LT [REDACTED] approached Mrs Jane Gephardt to receive the ship's long glass, the traditional symbol of authority of the Officer Of the Deck. Upon reaching his post on CARDINAL's quarterdeck, and announcing he had assumed the first watch, Mrs Gephardt announced "Crew of USS CARDINAL man your ship" to a loud resounding response from the crew "AYE AYE MA'AM". As the ship's boatswain's mate piped the crew to quarters they smartly ran up the brow and manned CARDINAL's liferails bow to stern.

After the ceremony was over, the crew set right to work preparing CARDINAL to get underway for her new homeport in Ingleside, Texas. While some removed bunting, others gathered on the pier to take down tents and chairs and restore the pier to the cleanliness with which they found it.

On 21 October CARDINAL slipped free of her moor and began her journey back down the mighty Potomac to open sea. After a brief stop at Little Creek Naval Amphibious base for fuel and provisions, CARDINAL departed Little Creek on 24 October and turned south for Mayport Naval Station. Once again the crew didn't know what to expect off the capes, but once again high winds and heavy seas were the norm. On 27 October CARDINAL arrived off the coast of Mayport FL and conducted antenna radiation pattern testing, followed by a few days pier side at Mayport Naval Station.

CARDINAL departed Mayport Naval Station on 03 November and finished her antenna radiation pattern testing. Having becoming the newest member of the Atlantic Fleet CARDINAL set sights on her first port of call for liberty - Nassau Bahamas. During the transit, the ship conducted BECCE (Basic Engineering Casualty Control Exercise) drills. The weather was rainy and overcast but cleared as Nassau came into view on the horizon. Upon arrival, the crew hit the beach with the fervor of the typical tourist, visiting all the local sights and attractions, or just lying around on the beach and swimming in the warm waters of the Caribbean. After four days in the Bahamas, the crew was well rested and again ready for sea.

On 10 November, CARDINAL began the short transit to KeyWest, Florida. Stopping overnight for food and fuel, CARDINAL got underway on the morning of 12 November for a straight shot across the Gulf of Mexico to her new homeport of Ingleside Texas.

This time, the crew expecting some calm seas, instead found themselves in weather similar if not worse than those they experienced off the capes. After trying several different compensating courses to offset southerly winds, the ship straightened up on course to ride out the high seas.

After several days of rough seas the ship entered the Corpus Christi Operating Area on the morning of the 17th and entered the Aransas Pass channel for the final leg of her journey.

THE HOMECOMING

The ship entered stand-down upon arrival for crew members to take much deserved leave and liberty to complete their PCS moves or just plain rest.

The month of December found the crew busy with ECART II from 08-12 December, after which CARDINAL entered into Holiday upkeep to finish out the year.

1997 was a very exciting year for CARDINAL. She had been transformed from a lifeless, empty hull on a river to an underway, Commissioned vessel ready to complete any challenge.

As the year came to a close, the ship and her crew looked forward to new beginnings in 1998 and the training opportunities that would make her a fully operational unit.