

USS LYNDE MC CORMICK (DDG-8)
FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO 96601

26 November 1971

Dear Families and Friends,

It is Friday the 26th of November, the day after Thanksgiving, and the USS LYNDE MC CORMICK finds herself moored to a pier at the U. S. Naval Station in Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines. As the crew settles back to continue our period of upkeep after yesterday's Thanksgiving Day celebration, I would like to take the opportunity in this, my first Familygram to you as Commanding Officer of LYNDE MC CORMICK, to bring you up to date on the activities of the ship and her crew since our departure from San Diego nearly two months ago.

Before doing so, however, I would like to say a few words about my Navy background and mention how pleased I am to have been provided the opportunity of directing the efforts of a ship and crew with such an indisputably fine reputation for excellence as LYNDE MC CORMICK.

I came to LYNDE MC CORMICK from the Officer Distribution Division of the Bureau of Naval Personnel. Notwithstanding this distinctly "landlubberly" assignment, most of my Naval career has consisted of duty in various sea billets, including: Executive Officer of USS STONE COUNTY (LST-1141), Operations Officer of USS O'BANNON (DD-450), Executive Officer of USS COLLETT (DD-730), Commanding Officer of USS WHITFIELD COUNTY (LST-1169), and Commander Landing Ship Squadron Three.

Though LYNDE MC CORMICK shall be my first assignment to the Charles F. Adams Class of Guided Missile Destroyer, the experience of my two previous commands makes me eager to undertake all challenges and to savor the intense satisfactions which I know shall be forthcoming as a result of the fine reputation of MC CORMICK and her crew.

I officially relieved Commander Gerald M. CARTER at a change of command ceremony on board the ship on the morning of Tuesday, 28 September.

LYNDE MC CORMICK is named in honor of the late Admiral Lynde MC CORMICK, a longtime resident of Coronado and a former Vice-Chief of Naval Operations and Commander in Chief, U. S. Atlantic Fleet. One of the highlights of the change of command ceremony was the arrival of Mrs. Lynde MC CORMICK, the Admiral's widow, her two sons, Lynde MC CORMICK, Jr., and J. Jett MC CORMICK, their families, and a small group of family friends. It gave me great pleasure to be able to meet and talk with the MC CORMICK family, and I know that they thoroughly enjoyed their visit and tour of the ship.

Four days later, on the morning of 1 October, LYNDE MC CORMICK got underway from Pier Two of the Naval Station (to an accompaniment of rousing farewells from well-wishers on the pier) to begin her seventh deployment to the Western Pacific.

A formidable array of ships consisting of the aircraft carrier USS CONSTELLATION (CVA-64), the guided missile destroyer DECATUR (DDG-31) and

seven amphibious ships from Amphibious Squadron Five sailed from San Diego Harbor to transit, in company, the 2,240-odd miles to Pearl Harbor.

On the second day out of port, the ship received the following message from Rear Admiral ROBINSON, Commander Cruiser-Destroyer Flottila Eleven:

"Your extraordinary efforts to be fully ready for deployment and to sail on time are recognized and appreciated. Best wishes and every success on your deployment."

Nearly perfect weather prevailed during the task unit's transit to the island of Oahu. LYNDE MC CORMICK received mail almost daily by helicopter from the carrier and made the most of her long hours at sea by conducting extensive drills and underway training.

On the final day of the transit, the ship experienced an engineering casualty to her main plant which reduced our speed and delayed LYNDE MC CORMICK's arrival at Pearl Harbor until the evening of Wednesday, October 6.

Pearl Harbor provides ships transiting to the Western Pacific with a stopping-off point for last minute briefings and final preparations. LYNDE MC CORMICK was neither a stranger nor an exception to this pattern. The day following our arrival was filled with briefings at the Headquarters of the Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet and diligent efforts by the members of LT Billy CORNETT's Engineering Department to correct the casualty that had delayed our arrival.

On Saturday morning I held my first personnel inspection since assuming the duties of Commanding Officer. The purpose of this kind of an inspection is to enable the Commanding Officer to view the men of his command with an eye toward their uniform cleanliness, personal appearance, and military bearing. I was quite pleased with the pride that your men had taken in preparing themselves for this evolution. I was especially pleased with the members of LTJG Frank MC NAMARA's deck division who, despite the fact that the nature of their work is hard on uniforms, displayed a particularly smart and impressive manner.

Saturday morning after the inspection, many of the crew set out to explore the many scenic and recreational attractions which have made Honolulu and the surrounding areas of the island such a popular place for visitors. Skindiving, snorkeling, fishing, and surfing were just some of the many activities enjoyed by MC CORMICK's crew. One of the highlights of our stay in Pearl was a contest between the ship's and officer's softball team. Stamina seemed to know no bounds as not one but three games were played! The crew's team was victorious in the first game by the score of 9 to 2, but the officers, demonstrating an extraordinary second-wind, swept the final two games of the series by the scores of 8 to 3 and 7 to 4.

After a brief underway period to conduct short-run engineering trials on Friday, October 15, the ship departed Pearl Harbor for good on Saturday morning in company with the USS CONSTELLATION and USS DECATUR.

Only one sad note befell the ship during her stay in Pearl Harbor. ASROC Gunner's Mate First Class Bill HEISTERHAGEN was forced to depart the ship on

emergency leave and return to the States upon receiving word of the death of his mother. The sympathy, prayers and best wishes of everyone on board accompanied him.

The ships transit from Pearl Harbor to the Republic of the Philippines lasted nearly two weeks and shall undoubtedly be one of the longest uninterrupted transits LYNDE MC CORMICK will be required to make during the course of this WESTPAC Cruise. I say "uninterrupted transit," for the usual procedure is for a destroyer to make refueling stops at Midway and Guam when making the 5000 mile journey from Hawaii to the Philippines. LYNDE MC CORMICK however, was able to refuel while underway directly from the carrier CONSTELLATION, thus eliminating the need for these brief fuel stops.

During this marathon transit - roughly the equivalent of steaming continuously from Boston to San Francisco and back - the ship participated in numerous intership training exercises designed to enhance our combat readiness. The busy tempo of events, combined with the unusually fine steaming weather in the mid-Pacific, caused the time to pass swiftly for all hands.

To further aid in breaking the monotony of the prolonged period at sea, and to provide the crew with avenues for enjoyment after working hours, a number of nightly and weekly shipboard pasttimes were established that seemed to meet with a great deal of success. Movies were shown every night on the mess decks, and for those who preferred a different form of relaxation, the ship's library was opened at convenient hours for anyone who wished to browse. One of our particularly popular activities was, and continues to be, the Saturday Night Bingo Tournament, with LTJG Roy VAN HORN as Master of Ceremonies. Glittering prizes from the ship's store await the lucky winners while those less fortunate look forward to the weekly college and professional football scores which determine the winner of LT Don BERKEBILE's weekly football pool.

Subic Bay, located sixty miles northwest of Manila on the western coast of Luzon, is primarily a working port for visiting U. S. Navy ships. Accordingly, after mooring under a brilliant tropical sun on Thursday morning, October 28, the men of LYNDE MC CORMICK busied themselves re-provisioning the ship after her Pacific transit and making the final preparations necessary to insure the ship's combat readiness prior to her departure to the Gulf of Tonkin for carrier escort duties.

After four days of upkeep, LYNDE MC CORMICK departed her berth on the afternoon of Monday, 1 November, bound for the Tabones gunfire range and three days of gunnery exercises.

I felt that these exercises went very well indeed. In two days on the range, MC CORMICK's guns fired a total of 469 rounds of very accurate fire without experiencing a single casualty to either of her two 5" 54 gun mounts. Great credit must be given to Gunner's Mate Senior Chief POAGUE, Gunner's Mate First Class SHELTON, and their dedicated division of gunner's mates for their keen professionalism in keeping the guns in such excellent working order.

Buoyed by the successes of Tabones, the ship returned to Subic for ammunition loading and refueling only to be underway the following day on the morning tide, bound for the waters of Vietnam and escort duties with the aircraft carrier ORISKANY (CVA-34).

From the 7th of November to the 15th LYNDE MC CORMICK remained on "Yankee Station", a geographical position in the Gulf of Tonkin from which aircraft carriers deploy their strike missions against the infiltration routes of supplies and men known collectively as the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Operating with an aircraft carrier at high speeds through her daily schedule of aircraft launches and recoveries is a task which poses a continuing challenge to the shiphandling abilities of both officers and men of the escorting destroyer. I was pleased to note that whether maneuvering to station around the carrier, receiving helicopters for transfer of mail and personnel, or participating in underway replenishment operations, LYNDE MC CORMICK demonstrated a high degree of alertness, professionalism, and coordination among all departments.

I was especially pleased with the performance of the signalmen, under Chief Signalman Richard JOHNSON, and the members of LT Paul HUDAK's Combat Information Center team. Tactical signals from the carrier must be understood instantaneously and responded to immediately and accurately. Our "signal gang" served the ship well as the vital communications link between ourselves and ORISKANY, while the men in "CIC" - Radarmen Sam STEWARD, Jeff FELLER, Cliff STRICKLAND, Bill BALL, Ben FUERST, and company - worked to keep a constant stream of accurate recommendations flowing to the bridge to assist the Officer of the Deck.

Very early on Monday morning, 15 November, LYNDE MC CORMICK was relieved on Yankee Station by USS H. W. TUCKER (DD-875). Our next assignment was Naval Gunfire Support duty off the coast of Military Region III in the Republic of Vietnam, some 700 miles to the south.

Arriving at our destination on the morning of November 16, the crew of MC CORMICK found that activity in our region was at a very reduced level. After six days of relatively light activity, MC CORMICK was relieved on station by USS ROBISON (DDG-12) and we headed back across the South China Sea toward Subic Bay, for seven days of upkeep and a Thanksgiving Holiday.

At this point I would like to acknowledge a number of personal successes that have taken place since our last Familygram to you.

First, my congratulations to the following personnel who have advanced in rate since September 1: to Lawrence KAPELLER, Donald LEE, Gary STREET, and Roger WINN who all advanced to the rate of Third Class Petty Officer; to Thomas RAMEY, who advanced to the rate of Second Class Petty Officer; and to Donald POAGUE, who was advanced to the rate of Senior Chief Petty Officer.

Secondly, I would like to extend my sincere contratulations to Boatswain's Mate Third Class George WETHERBEE, who reenlisted in the Navy for a period of six years on November 11 in a ceremony on board MC CORMICK.

The ship's Operations Officer LT Warren BAKKEN, whose qualities of unstinting professionalism and tireless dedication have played such a critical role in LYNDE MC CORMICK's continued success during the past eighteen months, is departing the ship on November 27 for duty on the Commander Cruiser-Destroyer Force Pacific Fleet Staff. I speak for the entire crew in wishing LT BAKKEN good luck and continued success in his new assignment. At the same time, I extend a hearty "Welcome aboard" to LT Bob GRIFFIN, who shall relieve as Operations Officer.

LYNDE MC CORMICK steamed into Subic Bay on the morning of 24 November, the day before Thanksgiving. Although all on board missed being able to celebrate with our families and friends, we were well provided for in the material sense. The ship is blessed with a bountiful Supply Department, headed by LT Charlie KELLY, whose outstanding entourage of cooks, stewards, and commissarymen provided the crew of LYNDE MC CORMICK with the tantalizing array of Thanksgiving Day delicacies listed below:

Cream of Tomato Soup with Toasted Garlic Croutons

Roast Tom Turkey with Giblet Gravy
and
Virginia Baked Ham with Pineapple Sauce

with

Snowflake Potatoes and Buttered Whole Grain Corn
or
Candied Sweet Potatoes and Green Peas with Mushrooms

Chilled Cranberry Sauce
Chef's Salad with French Dressing
Waldorf Salad
Assorted Pickles and Olives
Assorted Fresh Fruit
Assorted Candies and Nuts

Pumpkin Pie
with
Dessert Topping

Hot Dinner Rolls

Apple Pie
with
Cheese Slices

Hot Coffee-Tea-Milk


Chilled Fruit Punch

As you can see from the above listing, your loved ones aboard MC CORMICK did not go hungry on Thanksgiving Day. It has been calculated that a dozen twenty five pound turkeys, eighty pounds of ham, and thirty apple and pumpkin pies were consumed by our hungry crew during Thursday's feast.

In closing, I would like to say that I hope you all had a very pleasant Thanksgiving Day; and to add that although we were separated from you, the thoughts and prayers of all of us here on board were with you during this 1971 Thanksgiving season.

With sincere best wishes to you all, I remain

Sincerely yours,


R. D. GILLHAM
Commander, U. S. Navy
Commanding Officer