

The USS Corry (DD-817)

by Robert Carey Steele, Sr.

Song lyrics

The blue waters running past her bow
Sailing the oceans homeward bound
The USS Corry is a fighting ship
For many long years she's done her bit.
Her sailors are feeling anxious now
To reach home port and to walk her brow.

Philadelphia is the port that she will use,
Where they send old ships after their last cruise.
They anchor them in and strip 'em down,
For a battle-weary ship, it's a bitter end.

Old sailors' ghosts on their watch they stand,
O'er the tall gray ships who fought for their land.

About the tune:

I wrote this tune in the Fall of 1980 shortly after visiting the ship. I played it for members of my Navy Reserve Unit. It was well received!

I enlisted in the U.S. Naval Reserves in June 1980. My enlistment was for six years. Due to work experience, college coursework, and advanced ROTC training as a member of the Corps of Cadets at North Georgia College, my recruiter, Master Chief Boatswain's Mate J. C. Hudson, submitted me for enlistment with an advanced paygrade as an E-5 (Petty Officer Second Class) with a rating as a Cryptologic Technician Technical (CTT2). However, the Officer reviewing my enlistment application reduced the rank to E-4 (Petty Officer Third Class), saying that background did not include specific CTT related experience. In retrospect, I would likely have qualified as E-5 as an Electronics Technician or Radioman.

I served in the Naval Security Group Command. While I couldn't tell anyone what we did, it's now ancient history. We were the Navy's spies and intercepted communications from our enemies. At that time, it was the Soviet Union. The Naval Security Group Command was discontinued in 2005 and the personnel and assets were transferred into the Navy's Network Warfare Command (NETWARCOM) Information Operations Directorate. In 2009, it became the U.S. Navy Information Warfare Command (IWC). Eventually, the IWC was absorbed into the Joint Forces

With my advanced paygrade enlistment, I did not have to attend the traditional Boot Camp at Great Lakes. Instead, I attended an abbreviated Boot Camp for men and women with prior military service in one of the other branches (Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard). It

was held at the Navy and Marine Corps Reserves Center located on the Bolling Air Force Base in Washington, DC. Although it was abbreviated, we covered and were tested on all the coursework included in traditional Boot Camp. I am proud to say that I was the honor graduate. I was called out in our graduation ceremony and congratulated by a Navy Admiral. I believe he was the Commandant of the Naval District Washington.

During Boot Camp, we road in a bus up to the Naval Base in Philadelphia and were given an in-depth tour of the USS Corry (DD-817). A *Gearing*-class destroyer, the ship was launched on 28 Jul 1945, two months after V-E Day (Victory in Europe on 8 May) and commissioned on 27 Feb 1946.

The *Corry* saw combat action during the Vietnam War. The ship was outfitted with six 5-inch/38-caliber guns, along with twelve 40 mm and eleven 20 mm antiaircraft guns, as well as ten 21-inch torpedo tubes and six depth charge projectors. It used its 5-inch guns to provide coastal bombardment of enemy sights and was credited with destroying 72 structures and bunkers with 15 known enemy kills. The round trip from its home port in Norfolk, Virginia to the coast of Vietnam was more than 49 thousand nautical miles long.

The USS Corry was decommissioned and struck from the books on 27 Feb 1981. Shortly afterwards, it was transferred to Greece's Hellenic Navy as the *Kriezis* (D217).

The first photograph was taken on the *Corry* during our visit. We were standing in front of forward twin Mk 38 5"/38 caliber gun. I am the third from the left. Petty Officers were allowed to wear beards at that time. Believe it or not, that was why I chose to join the Navy rather than the Army Reserves.



Taken aboard the USS Corry – June 1980



USS Corry (DD-817) off Orange, Texas in 1946 – Wikipedia.com



USS Corry (DD-817) underway in the 1970s – Wikipedia.com