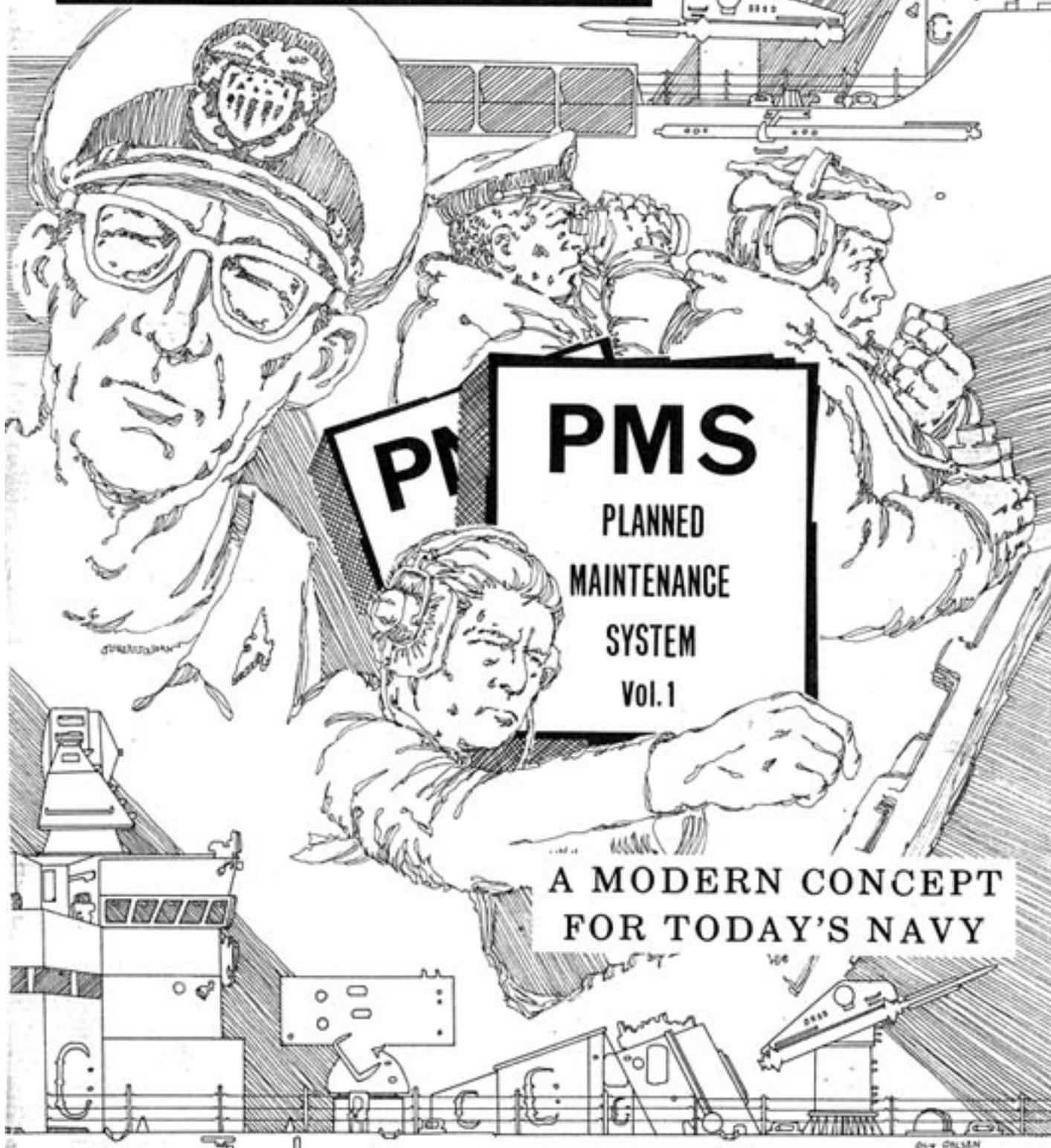


Richard W. Beach DC 2/c

# CRUISER- DESTROYERMAN

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## PI PMS

PLANNED  
MAINTENANCE  
SYSTEM  
Vol. 1

A MODERN CONCEPT  
FOR TODAY'S NAVY

044 DILLON

“...they left muddy footprints  
on my poncho!”



SHIP OF THE MONTH

## USS WALLER (DD-446)

With her launching less than seven months earlier, she was already battle tested. This was *Waller* and she was making the first of her many runs up the Solomon Islands' notorious "Slot." With Destroyer Division Commander Arleigh A. Burke embarked, she led a task force on a daring raid into enemy waters. Their target was a Japanese airfield guarded by two destroyers.

Ahead, three "Black Cat" spotter planes scouted the darkness. While they searched for the enemy destroyers, the task force entered Kula Gulf. Navigating by radar, the three cruisers and three destroyers felt their way down the New Georgia coastline on the Gulf's east side. With all guns manned, engine order telegraphs rang up 20 knots.

"Stand by to commence firing!" Radar contact with the enemy had been established. The battle was on.

With a roar, followed by a series of ominous splashes, torpedomen aboard the *Fletcher* Class destroyer *Waller* unleashed a salvo of five torpedoes at a three and one half mile range. Seconds later,

her five and three-inch guns opened fire turning the South Pacific night ablaze with shell fire.

With sporadic salvos, the Japanese destroyers fought back. Then, six minutes after the first shot, a fiery explosion lit the sky over the Kolombangra coastal waters. The blast was heard by Navy destroyermen 25 miles away!

Perishing in an orange fireball, the Japanese destroyer *Murasame* fell victim to a *Waller* torpedo. The second destroyer sank three minutes later under the barrage of the task force cruisers' big guns. Next target - the airfield at Vila! On the beach, the next morning, Japanese air equipment was still burning.

*Waller* and her sisters later received a word of commendation from Admiral Nimitz. He stated, "The Commander In Chief, Pacific Fleet, considers that Task Force 68 gave a creditable performance on the night of 5 March...the operation had all the precision of a well rehearsed exercise by veteran ships, which these were not."

Later in the Pacific Theater, *Waller* was leading a group of destroyers off Leyte through Ormoc Bay on the first wartime penetration of Philippine waters. Suddenly, radar picked up a surface contact. It was the 2,000-ton Japanese submarine *I-46* which mounted three-inch and 25mm guns plus torpedo tubes.

*Waller* engaged the submarine in a running gun battle. Closing to ram, the destroyer pumped 40mm armor-piercing shells into the I-boat's conning tower and pressure hull. Under this hail of fire, *I-46* erupted in a mass of explosions. Moments later, *Waller* saw the submarine's bow slanted against the sky, diving for the bottom...stern first.

*Waller* is named for Major General Littleton W. T. Waller, USMC, who is said to "...have taken part in more engagements than any other officer..." She has lived up to her namesake's tradition and has had many successful conflicts. Kills credited to her include a destroyer, a submarine and 14 Japanese Kamikazes destroyed during World War II. During the Korean Conflict, she bombarded Wonsan Harbor firing over 1,700 rounds of high explosives into Communist positions. Now, her latest action—Vietnam!

*Waller* proudly displays 12 World War II battlestars, two from the Korean Conflict and two from Vietnam. She has just returned to Norfolk, her homeport, from a Seventh Fleet deployment to Vietnamese waters. Having been commissioned 27 years ago, *Waller* is the oldest Atlantic Fleet destroyer. She is also the last active *Fletcher* Class greyhound in the Force.

A member of Destroyer Squadron 36, *Waller* has always excelled in her role of anti-submarine warfare. She has won the Battle Efficiency "E" and

Antisubmarine Warfare "A" awards. She also won the coveted Rhode Island Council Navy League Trophy for being "The most proficient destroyer of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet in the art of Antisubmarine warfare."

In early September of 1968, *Waller* answered the final call to battle. With her sisters of Destroyer Division 362, she got underway for Vietnamese waters. Arriving after a month of steaming through seas that she knew well, *Waller* arrived on the Gunline off Qui Nhon, South Vietnam. Firing her five-inch and three-inch guns in support of Republic of Vietnam troops, she did extensive damage to Viet Cong bunkers and ammunition storage areas.

She then moved south to a station off Phan Thiet, where her guns supported troops of the 173rd Airborne Brigade. Various Viet Cong structures and supply trails were smashed by her gunfire. One enemy encampment was so thoroughly routed by shells that the spotter radioed back, "...they left muddy footprints on my poncho!"

After firing over 2,400 rounds and completing her gunline duty, *Waller* received a message from Commander, Task Force 70.8.9 who stated, "As *Waller* departs the gunline after three weeks of consistently superior effort, I would like to extend a well done to all hands on their performance during this period. *Waller's* ability to meet all commitments is indeed noteworthy when the extra little problems inherent to older destroyers is considered."

*Waller* is a destroyerman's destroyer! Throughout her valiant history, at peace or during war, she has proven herself time and again as a vessel that her crew could be proud of, and that newer destroyers could follow.

