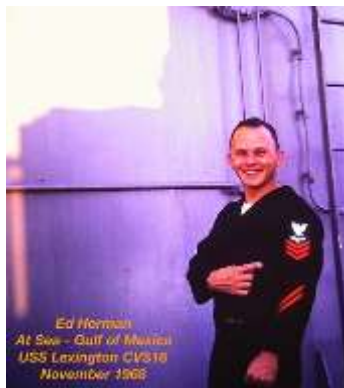


My First Duty Assignment — USS Lexington CVS16

In early January 1968, I reported for duty aboard the USS Lexington CVS16 as a non-designated AA— having graduated from RTC Great Lakes the previous month and not assigned an “A” school after RTC.

My first assignment was mess cooking— standard Lexington procedure. Upon reporting, all E3 and below were assigned mess cooking duties until relieved by a new draft of incoming sailors— your mess cooking assignment could last from three weeks to three months— length depended on when and how many new E3s reported aboard and your place in the rota.

After mess cooking non-designated sailors were assigned to the various divisions that had need of new personnel. You had the opportunity to be assigned to a specific division if you requested it and that divisional LCPO concurred; otherwise, you went where assigned. In my case, I had requested OA Division and was assigned there. While mess cooking, like all mess cooks, I had time to explore the ship and see the various rates doing their jobs and ask questions. The AG rating, to me, appeared one of the more challenging rates. The fact that I had completed algebra, geometry, and trigonometry in high school and could type 65 wpm have helped in my getting assigned to OA division as did talking to a few of the AGs— AG2 Mickey Hayes, AG1 Ed Herman.



When I started my OJT for AG the division was very short staffed. So, I had to learn fast— from plotting to tuning in radio teletypes and fax broadcasts to taking weather observations. Fortunately, I had great teachers, in particular AG1 Ed Herman. He taught me the nuts and bolts of being a shipboard AG and sailor (I believe Ed was a cross-over from the AE rating). For example, he taught me cloud identification by describing the clouds we were looking at and then pointing them out in the International Cloud Atlas for verification. Later as I learned the various clouds, he would reverse roles and have me describe and verify the clouds by way of the International Cloud Atlas. Other teachers were AGCM Oscar Freeman, one of the first AGCM's. His surface analyses were textbook works of art. Commander Kasterlein was not only the Division Officer but also one of the ship's COD pilots. Later, Lieutenant Gardner replaced the Commander. He too was a top-notch division officer. Eventually AG1 Ed Herman was replaced by AG1 Art Ulrich, another great teacher.

In those days, mid 1960's to early 1970's, extended sea deployments that often last 9 to 12 months with less than a month back in-home port and then back to sea for another extended deployment were the norm. The Vietnam War. Many, many petty officers left the navy because of these continuous extended deployments. To replace the loss of so many petty officers time in service and time in grade requirements were significantly reduced or waived for making rate. I went from AA to AG2 in 1 year and 7 months.



I view my time aboard the Lexington as time well spent because through hard work and outstanding teachers— I learned to be an AG and sailor— retiring 28 years later as an LDO Lieutenant Commander.
Submitted by Robert Josephs