

And the Beat Goes On: Coast Guard Reservist Retires After 41 Years

Story by PA1 Tasha Tully, PADET St. Petersburg, Fla.

Forty-one years after enlisting in the U. S. Coast Guard, Petty Officer 1st Class Frank W. Larder is retiring at age 60.

He enlisted in 1967. The Green Bay Packers had just defeated the Kansas City Chiefs at Super Bowl I. The first automated teller machine (ATM) was installed in England. The first issue of Rolling Stone magazine hit the streets, and Pink Floyd released their debut album. The Coast Guard was transferred from the Department of the Treasury to the Department of Transportation, and a distinctive racing stripe was



PS1 Frank Larder enlisted in the Coast Guard in 1967 and is scheduled to retire Sept. 30, 2008, after 41 years of active-duty and reserve service. "I will truly miss serving with the men and women of the Coast Guard," he said. (Photo by PA1 Tasha Tully)

printed on its fleet of cutters, small boats, aircraft and units. American draft cards were being burned in protest, while nearly 500,000 U.S. troops were deployed in Vietnam.

"I had just turned 19, and after two semesters of college I'd been asked not to return," Larder said, with a mischievous grin. "Rather than sitting around the house all day or working dead-end jobs in my hometown (Pen Yan, N.Y.), my dad, a former Marine, strongly suggested that I join the military."

Larder enlisted in the Coast Guard on May 15, 1967, in Rochester, N.Y., marking the beginning of Larder's Coast Guard career. After graduating boot camp in Cape May, N.J., he reported as a Seaman Apprentice aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Duane, a 327-foot high-endurance cutter homeported in Boston.



Frank Larder (center) and two shipmates stand watch aboard the Cutter Duane while deployed to Vietnam in 1967. (Photo courtesy of Frank Larder)

Larder spent the 'Summer of Love' aboard Duane in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and in October 1967, while thousands of war protesters marched in Washington, D.C., Duane deployed to Vietnam in support of Operation Market Time.

"Our mission during Operation Market Time was to board and inspect vessels suspected of carrying troops, weapons or supplies from North Vietnam to the Communist forces in South Vietnam," said Larder. "We confiscated supplies and weapons and assisted ground troops by firing the ship's 81 mm mortars and long range, five-inch-gun rounds inland from off shore."

1967-68	MY DIARY	1968	MY DIARY
Sunday	Date 31 NEW YEAR'S EVE FIRST DAY OF REAL MESS COOKING. Slightly wonder with me. Took a bad day. Took me light with ship for food.	Thursday	Date 4 NOT MUCH HAPPENING. YESTERDAY PICKED UP SMALL SMALL. WAS MESS COOKING. DIDN'T GET PICTURES. TOMORROW, WANTED FOR FUEL & SUPPLIES & MAIL. WANT MESS COOKING AT SEA. CAN'T WAIT TILL SUNDAY.
Monday	Date JAN. 1 NEW YEAR'S DAY Wish I was on deck again... WANT FRESH AIR. TO MESS COOKING AT SEA. CAN'T WAIT TILL SUNDAY.	Friday	Date 5 WHITE HOLD TO UNREP IN AROW. TOOK ABOUT 1 HOUR 15 MIN. REC. MAIL. FUEL & SUPPLIES. MESS COOKING NOT BAD. WISH I WAS ON DECK AGAIN. WANT FRESH AIR.
Tuesday	Date 2 TO DAY HAD FUEL REPLEN. ALSO RECEIVED BAG OF MAIL. GOT ONE LETTER FROM HOME. FIRE HOUSE BURNED. MESS COOKING GETTING TO BE ON BOARD. CAN'T WAIT FOR SUNDAY.	Saturday	Date 6 TO DAY NOT MUCH HAPPENED. FIRE IN A JUNK WAS IN MESS DECK. DIDN'T SEE, JUST HEARD ABOUT IT. GAINING ON SEA. GOT MOST OF PREVIOUS FACTORS DONE.
Wednesday	Date 3 MET BAD DAY. CAN'T STAND BEING DOWN IN MESS DECK ALL THE TIME. WENT TO QE THIS AFTERNOON FOR QUARTER SUPPLY. IT WAS CANCELED. HOPE TO RECEIVE MAIL. SEEN. QEE BELIEVED FOR SOME MORE I COULD		Special Events

Passages from Seaman Apprentice Larder's diary tell of daily events aboard Duane at the turn of the year in 1967-1968. He writes of his duty as mess cook, "Wish I was on deck again... want fresh air." (Courtesy of Frank Larder)

"I graduated as a QM3 in February 1969. I asked for another high-endurance cutter and was assigned to the Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton. It was homeported in Boston back then," Larder said. "On Aug. 23, 1969, we departed for Vietnam."

Commissioned in 1967, the 378-foot cutter Hamilton was the first of the Hamilton Class of Coast Guard cutters. Hamilton, now home ported in San Diego, Calif., has gas-turbine propulsion, improved maneuverability, superior gunfire control and a large flight deck. These improvements allowed Coast Guard and Navy helicopters the ability to refuel and transfer supplies, personnel and wounded troops faster and more efficiently.

In October 1969, a month after President Nixon ordered the withdrawal of 35,000 troops from Vietnam, Hamilton arrived in Subic Bay, Philippines. Larder, now a rated petty officer, was responsible for the maintenance, correction, and preparation of nautical charts, instruments and clocks. Larder also assisted in the navigational aspects of the cutter and provided training for the ship's lookouts and helmsmen.

"I liked having more responsibilities as a petty officer," said Larder. "It made me feel like my shipmates counted on me more and that I had more of a purpose aboard the cutter."

Hamilton served in Vietnam until May 25, 1970, and during its deployment the cutter's crew provided aid in many humanitarian efforts, including renovating the Save the Children Hospital at Qui Nhon, Vietnam, and delivering 2,500 pounds of donated food,

Larder kept a journal during his deployments, recording accounts of such historic events as the Tet Offensive as well as the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Sen. Robert Kennedy. The journal is also peppered with high-spirited personal narratives telling of port calls, drinking beer and meeting girls.

"What can I say? I was 19, a sailor and single," laughed Larder.

By mid-1968, U.S. troops in Vietnam reached an estimated peak of 537,000. Duane returned home in July of that year, and in November, as Richard Nixon was elected the 37th President of the United States, Larder was sent to Quarter Master (QM) "A" School in Newport, R.I.



Larder (in uniform) stands with his sisters and brother aboard the Hamilton before deploying to Vietnam in 1969. A year later his brother would join him serving in the Coast Guard aboard Hamilton. (Photo courtesy of Frank Larder)

clothing and toys to Love of the Cross Orphanage in Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam.

Meanwhile, U.S. troops invaded Cambodia, and consequently, anti-war protests broke out across America, resulting in the devastating Kent State shootings.

Hamilton arrived in Boston on June 19, 1970, and during the transit Larder was promoted to QM2.



Petty Officer 3rd Class Frank Larder (far right) enjoys a beer with his Hamilton shipmates during liberty at the Sampaguita Club in Subic Bay, Philippines, in 1968. (Photo courtesy of Frank Larder)

While the Orioles were winning the World Series in the fall of 1970, Hamilton was in dry dock in Baltimore. Larder was temporarily assigned to the Coast Guard Cutter White Heath, a buoy tender homeported in Boston.

After his temporary assignment, Larder returned to the Hamilton. Coincidentally, his brother, who had recently graduated from Coast Guard boot camp, was stationed with him aboard the cutter.

“We got along pretty well, and there were really no issues as far as rank or sibling rivalry went. Except for the one day...” Larder hinted. “My brother wasn’t adjusting well to the high seas, and he lost his lunch over the side. I was razzing him pretty good, and when we pulled into port that day one of my chiefs made me hose it down before he’d let me have liberty...but there were no hard feelings.”



Larder married Margaret Mary Doyle in 1973. “I met my wife...and that was it,” he said. “We wanted to have a more ‘normal’ life, without deployments and war.” (Photo courtesy of Frank Larder)

Larder served with his brother aboard Hamilton until his discharge in May 1971. He then went into the Individual Ready Reserves for two years.

“I met my wife, Margaret Mary Doyle, and that was it,” Larder explained. “We wanted to have a more ‘normal’ life, without deployments and war, so I started going to night school for criminal justice.”

In 1973, the same year the World Trade Center opened in New York City, the Watergate Scandal broke and the last U.S. soldier left Vietnam, Larder left the Coast Guard. In 1975, Larder became a police officer for the Arlington Police Department, a suburb of Boston. His son Brian, now a Naval officer, was born the same year.

The Coast Guard underwent several major changes during Larder’s absence. New navy-blue uniforms were adopted to better differentiate the Coast Guard from the Navy, and in 1977

modifications were made to the Hamilton Class cutters to accommodate women. By 1978, women were fully integrated into the Coast Guard.

Larder returned to the Reserves in 1981 as a port security specialist. He served as a reservist at Marine Safety Office (MSO) Boston for two years until his work schedule forced him to get out again in 1983.

In 1990, Larder went back into the Reserves and was assigned to Coast Guard Station Boston. At the same time, Port Security Unit (PSU) 303, from Milwaukee, was deployed to Saudi Arabia in support of Operation Desert Storm, the first reserve port-security unit ever deployed overseas.

Larder was transferred back to MSO Boston in 1993, after the integration of active-duty and reserve members, and served in pollution response there until 2001. He was called to active duty on Sept. 11, 2001, and worked with PSU 307, from St. Petersburg, Fla., while the unit was assigned to the Port of Boston.

“That day I was working a drill day at the MSO. I didn’t realize it until a few days later that life as I knew it had changed. I remember how quiet it was with no planes flying overhead, and Boston is one of the nation’s busiest airports...it was eerie,” Larder said somberly.

In October 2001, Larder retired as a patrolman from his full-time job with the police department. “Then, like any good retiree, I moved to Florida,” he joked. “I transferred to MSO Tampa, Fla., and worked as a facilities and container inspector.”

Larder advanced to petty officer first class in April 2002 and was called to active duty several times after transferring to Tampa, including during military out-load operations for Operation Iraqi Freedom and for the enforcement of the Maritime Transportation and Security Act of 2002.

Larder is currently serving his last active-duty stint at Sector St. Petersburg’s Prevention Department, in Tampa, as the unit’s America’s Waterways Watch and Sea Partners coordinator.

After 41 years, and the invention of pocket calculators, disposable lighters and cellular phones, Larder is finally slated to retire from the Coast Guard Reserves Sept. 30, 2008.

“As I reflect on my Coast Guard career, I find that I’ve been given more opportunities than I’d ever dreamed I would experience, and I will truly miss serving with the men and women of this service,” Larder said with a smile. Sighing, he added, “Now I just have to figure out what I’m going to do with the next 41 years.”



In 1975, Larder became a police officer with the Arlington Police Department in Arlington, Mass., a suburb of Boston. He retired as a patrolman in 2001 and moved with his wife, Margaret, to Tampa. (Photo courtesy of Frank Larder)