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USS O'CALLAHAN (FF 1051) DECOMMISSIONING CEREMONY

20 DECEMBER 1988

(AS GIVEN)

ADMIRAL KIHUNE, ADMIRAL SMITH, ADMIRAL REASON, ADMIRAL WHITE, ADMIRAL ROTRIGE, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, MEN OF USS O'CALLAHAN. THERE ARE SEVERAL PEOPLE IN THE AUDIENCE THAT I WOULD PARTICULARLY LIKE TO RECOGNIZE. ADMIRAL WHITE THANK YOU FOR TRAVELLING FROM WASHINGTON TO BE WITH US TODAY. WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR YOUR PRESENCE, AS WELL AS THAT OF ALL OUR NAVY CHAPLAINS. FATHER DUNN WE ARE SO PLEASED THAT YOU COULD JOIN US TODAY FROM HOLY CROSS COLLEGE, AN INSTITUTION THAT PLAYED SUCH A LARGE PART IN FATHER O'CALLAHAN'S LIFE AND WHERE HE NOW RESTS. KATHLEEN CUMMINGS IT IS SO NICE TO HAVE ONE OF FATHER'S RELATIVES HERE. THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR COMING. CDR BROWN, O'CALLAHAN'S FIRST COMMANDING OFFICER, WELCOME BACK. CAPT BAILEY, THE FIFTH CO WE'RE ALL GLAD YOU COULD JOIN US.

WE WITHDRAW FROM THE DEMANDS OF OUR BUSY SCHEDULE AND GATHER

HERE THIS MORNING TO TAKE PART IN A CEREMONY THAT MOST OF US WISH WERE NOT OCCURRING. WE PAUSE TO SAY FAREWELL TO A VALUED FRIEND. TODAY, USS O'CALLAHAN, A JUSTLY PROUD SHIP, A VESSEL WITH A DISTINGUISHED CAREER OF SERVICE TO THE NATION, AND HOME AT ONE TIME TO A LARGE NUMBER OF US HERE TODAY, RETIRES FROM ACTIVE DUTY WITH THE UNITED STATES NAVY.

TO A MAN WHO HAS DEDICATED HIMSELF TO A LIFE AT SEA, A SHIP IS A LIVING THING, A RECIPIENT OF MUCH PERSONAL ATTENTION AND THE SUBJECT OF OCCASIONAL VERBAL ABUSE. SHE IS A SOURCE OF GREAT PRIDE AND SATISFACTION WHEN SHE PERFORMS WELL AND A DISAPPOINTMENT WHEN SHE DOES NOT. SHE IS THE RECIPIENT OF COUNTLESS HOURS OF CARE AND ATTENTION AND CAPTURES MORE OF OUR AFFECTION THAN WE CARE TO ADMIT.

IT IS ONLY NATURAL THEN THAT WE APPROACH THIS DECOMMISSIONING WITH A FEELING OF SADNESS AND IMPEDING LOSS AS WE TAKE LEAVE

OF A SHIP THAT HAS BEEN AN INTIMATE PART OF OUR LIVES AND BRING TO AN END A CHAPTER OF OUR NAVAL HISTORY. THIS DAY WAS INEVITABLE, BUT WE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED THAT IT NOT ARRIVE SO QUICKLY. U'CALLAHAN IS ONLY TWENTY YEARS OLD, IN REALITY STILL A YOUNG LADY. THE ONLY OBSTACLES THAT SHE COULD NOT OVERCOME IN HER BRILLIANT CAREER WERE THE SEVERE BUDGETARY CONSTRAINTS OUR NAVY NOW FACES AND THE QUICKENING PACE OF TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE WHICH LEFT HER WITH OUTMODED COMBAT SYSTEMS. THESE TWO INGREDIENTS COMBINED TO BRING US HERE TODAY.

ON THE BRIGHTER SIDE, WE SHOULD TAKE GREAT SATISFACTION FROM THE KNOWLEDGE THAT OUR SHIP WILL NOT BE A TARGET HULK, WILL NOT BECOME RAZOR BLADES AND WILL NOT BE MOTHBALLED. RATHER, SHE WILL STILL PLY THE OCEANS AND PERFORM GREAT SERVICE AS A VALUED NAVAL UNIT OF OUR GOOD FRIENDS FROM PAKISTAN. WE ARE PLEASED TO HAVE HER FUTURE COMMANDING OFFICER, CDR SALIM, WITH US THIS MORNING.

IT IS ENTIRELY FITTING THAT THOSE OF US WHO HAVE SERVED
IN THIS SHIP AND HAVE LOVED HER SO, AND THOSE WHO KNEW HER NAMESAKE,
REFLECT FOR A FEW MOMENTS ON THE LIFE OF FATHER JOSEPH TIMOTHY
O'CALLAHAN, AND THE VESSEL THAT HAS SO PROUDLY BORNE HIS NAME.
FATHER JOE WAS TRULY A HERO, REPRESENTING A CORPS WHERE WE DON'T
NORMALLY LOOK FOR HEROS, YET THERE ARE MANY THERE. OUR CHAPLAIN
CORPS RECENTLY COMPLETED 213 YEARS OF DEDICATED AND LOVING SERVICE
TO THE MEN AND WOMEN OF OUR NAVY AND THIS SHIP SHORTLY AFTER
ITS COMMISSIONING IN 1968 WAS DESIGNATED BY THE THEN CHIEF OF
CHAPLAINS AS THE HONORARY FLAGSHIP OF THE NAVY CHAPLAIN CORPS.

IN THE SUMMER OF 1940, AT THE AGE OF 35, FATHER O'CALLAHAN,
THEN A JESUIT PRIEST OF SIX YEARS AND HEAD OF THE MATH DEPARTMENT
AT HOLY CROSS COLLEGE, ENTERED THE UNITED STATES NAVY AND WAS
COMMISSIONED A LIEUTENANT JUNIOR GRADE. HE SUBSEQUENTLY HAD
A TOUR OF DUTY AT PENSACOLA AND ANOTHER ABOARD USS RANGER BEFORE
REPORTING TO THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER FRANKLIN IN MARCH 1945. LESS
THAN THREE WEEKS LATER ON 19 MARCH, THE FEAST DAY OF HIS PATRON,

SAINT JOSEPH, HE DISTINGUISHED HIMSELF BY DEMONSTRATING UNCOMMON BRAVERY AND VALOR THAT WILL LIVE ON AS ONE OF THE BRIGHTEST CHAPTERS IN THE HISTORY OF OUR NAVY.

WHILE ON PATROL IN THE JAPANESE INLAND SEA, FRANKLIN WAS ATTACKED BY ENEMY DIVE BOMBERS. TWO LARGE BOMBS HIT THE SHIP AND PENETRATED TO THE HANGER DECK WHERE THEY EXPLODED, CAUSING HUNDREDS OF CASUALTIES AND FIRES THROUGHOUT THE SHIP ON THREE DECKS. DURING THE NEXT 24 HOURS AND BEYOND, THE CREW WORKED FEVERISHLY TO SAVE FRANKLIN. IT SEEMED THAT WHEREVER THE DANGER WAS GREATEST, FATHER O'CALLAHAN WAS THERE. THE SHIP'S LOG STATED: "O'CALLAHAN WAS EVERYWHERE, LEADING MEN, OFFICIATING AT LAST RITES, MANNING HOSES AND DOING THE WORK OF TEN MEN. FROM HIS BATTLE STATION ON THE BRIDGE THE COMMANDING OFFICER OBSERVED "IT SEEMED THAT WHEREVER I LOOKED I COULD SEE A FAMILIAR BATTLE HELMET WITH A WHITE CROSS PAINTED ON IT."

BATTLING AGAINST GREAT ODDS, "THE SHIP THAT WOULDN'T DIE"

SURVIVED DESPITE A CASUALTY LIST GREATER THAN ANY SHIP IN U.S. NAVAL HISTORY. FOR HIS ACTIONS THAT DAY WHICH WERE CARRIED OUT AT THE GREATEST RISK TO HIS OWN LIFE, FATHER O'CALLAHAN WAS AWARDED THIS NATION'S HIGHEST MILITARY DECORATION, THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR. HE WAS THE FIRST CHAPLAIN IN THE HISTORY OF OUR COUNTRY SO RECOGNIZED. THE CITATION READ IN PART "WITH THE SHIP ROCKED BY INCREASED EXPLOSIONS, WITH DEBRIS AND FRAGMENTS RAINING DOWN AND FIRES RAGING IN EVER-INCREASING FURY, HE MINISTERED TO THE WOUNDED AND DYING, COMFORTING AND ENCOURAGING MEN OF ALL FAITHS; HE ORGANIZED AND LED FIRE-FIGHTING CREWS INTO THE BLAZING INFERNO ON THE FLIGHT DECK; HE DIRECTED THE JETTISONING OF LIVE AMMUNITION AND THE FLOODING OF THE MAGAZINE; HE MANNED A HOSE TO COOL HOT, ARMED BUMBS ROLLING DANGEROUSLY ON THE LISTING DECK, CONTINUING HIS EFFORTS DESPITE SEARING, SUFFOCATING SMOKE WHICH FORCED MEN TO FALL BACK AND IMPERILED OTHERS WHO REPLACED THEM. SERVING WITH COURAGE, FORTITUDE AND DEEP SPIRITUAL STRENGTH, LCDR O'CALLAHAN INSPIRED THE GALLANT OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE FRANKLIN TO FIGHT HEROICALLY AND WITH PROFOUND FAITH IN THE

FACE OF ALMOST CERTAIN DEATH AND RETURN THEIR STRICKEN SHIP TO PORT."

TWENTY-THREE YEARS LATER, AND ONLY FOUR YEARS AFTER FATHER'S DEATH, THIS SHIP WAS COMMISSIONED. CAN THERE BE ANY WONDER THAT A NAVAL UNIT BEARING THE NAME OF SUCH A SELFLESS, DEVOTED AND COURAGEOUS MAN OF GOD HAS PERFORMED SO SUPERBLY AND MET EVERY CHALLENGE THAT HAS COME ITS WAY? IN HIS BOOK ENTITLED "I WAS CHAPLAIN ON THE FRANKLIN", FATHER O'CALLAHAN WROTE: "TO WHATEVER SHIP ONE IS ASSIGNED, WHETHER IT BE CARRIER OR CRUISER, DREADNOUGHT OR DESTROYER, LOYALTY IS DUE AND PECULIAR AFFECTION IS EXPECTED. EACH SHIP DERIVES A PERSONALITY, AN INDIVIDUALITY, WHICH IS A DISTILLATION OF THE BEST TRAITS OF THE INDIVIDUAL PERSONS WHO COMPOSE HER CREW. ANY NAVY SHIP HAS THE RIGHT TO EXPECT THAT THOSE ASSIGNED TO DUTY WITH HER WILL CONTRIBUTE SOMETHING TO HER SPIRIT AND GIVE HER BOTH THEIR LOYALTY AND THEIR AFFECTION." THESE WORDS SURELY FIT THIS SHIP AND THE MEN WHO HAVE SERVED ABOARD HER TO A 'T' AS ALL HAVE

GIVEN FREELY OF THEIR SPIRIT, THEIR LOYALTY, INDEED THEIR VERY BEINGS IN CREWING AND FIGHTING THIS MAGNIFICENT MAN OF WAR.

THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT THAT DURING HER ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER USS O'CALLAHAN HAS BEEN WHERE THE ACTION WAS AND HAS PERFORMED IN A POSITIVELY SUPERB FASHION. FOLLOWING HER COMMISSIONING IN JULY OF 68 SHE DEPLOYED TO VIETNAMESE WATERS THREE TIMES. DURING THE LAST OF THESE DEPLOYMENTS SHE FIRED MORE THAN FOUR THOUSAND ROUNDS OF 5 INCH AMMUNITION IN SUPPORT OF OPERATIONS ASHORE. SHE RECEIVED COUNTER BATTERY FIRE FROM THE BEACH ON SIX OCCASIONS, AND WAS SLIGHTLY DAMAGED DURING ONE OF THESE EXCHANGES. O'CALLAHAN WAS ONE OF THE FEW SHIPS TO BE RECOGNIZED WITH THE AWARDING OF THE COMBAT ACTION RIBBON. SHE WAS ON THE GUNLINE ON THE LAST DAY OF THE WAR AND SUBSEQUENTLY TOOK PART IN MINE CLEARING OPERATIONS IN THE TONKIN GULF. FOLLOWING THE VIETNAM CONFLICT, SHE SAW DUTY WITH THE SEVENTH FLEET IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC ON FIVE ADDITIONAL OCCASIONS.

PERHAPS HER MOST ENDURING CONTRIBUTION TO THE NAVY WAS THE PIONEER WORK SHE DID WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF THE LAMPS HELU, A MOST CAPABLE ANTI-SUBMARINE WARFARE SYSTEM WHICH IS WIDELY USED TODAY. O'CALLAHAN DEVELOPED THE LAMPS SYLLABUS, WAS THE FIRST DESTROYER ESCORT IN THE PACIFIC CERTIFIED WITH THIS SYSTEM AND THE FIRST TO RECEIVE A LAMPS DETACHMENT. THE HIGH POINT OF HER ASSOCIATION WITH LAMPS AND ONE OF MY MOST SATISFYING MOMENTS IN COMMAND WAS IN 1978 WHEN SHE WAS CHOSEN AS THE NAVYWIDE RECIPIENT OF THE LAMPS SHIP SAFETY AWARD. HER LOW FREEBOARD AND SMALL DECK MADE HER SELECTION ALL THE MORE REMARKABLE. HER PARTNER THROUGHOUT MOST OF THIS LAMPS WORK WAS HSL-33, A TOTALLY PROFESSIONAL AND DEDICATED HELO SQUADRON. TO THE CURRENT CO OF HSL-33, CDR SIGLER, MAY I SAY THAT ALL O'CALLAHAN SAILORS APPRECIATE THE CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WE'VE ENJOYED OVER THE YEARS WITH YOUR SQUADRON.

ADDITIONAL HONORS AND AWARDS WERE EARNED BY THIS SHIP AND HER PROUD CREW THROUGHOUT HER YEARS OF SERVICE. TWICE SHE MERITED

THE BATTLE 'E', SYMBOLIC OF THE TOP PERFORMANCE IN HER SQUADRON. O'CALLAHAN WAS ALSO RECOMMENDED BY HER GROUP COMMANDER ON TWO OCCASIONS FOR THE PRESTIGIOUS ARLEIGH BURKE AWARD GIVEN TO THE MOST IMPROVED SHIP IN THE PACIFIC FLEET. A LARGE NUMBER OF DEPARTMENTAL EXCELLENCE AWARDS WERE WON DURING EACH COMPETITIVE CYCLE. IN EVERY RESPECT, SHE WAS ALWAYS A WINNER.

I'M SURE THAT EACH OF THE SHIP'S TWELVE COMMANDING OFFICERS RECALLS WITH GREAT FONDNESS CERTAIN ASPECTS OF HER PERFORMANCE OF WHICH HE IS ESPECIALLY PROUD. WHILE I HAVE MANY GREAT MEMORIES OF MY TWO PLUS YEARS IN COMMAND OF O'CALLAHAN, I REMEMBER WITH SPECIAL SATISFACTION HER ENGINEERING EXCELLENCE AND THE SPECIAL PRIDE AND SMARTNESS OF HER CREW. THERE WAS NO DOUBT FOLLOWING AN OPERATIONAL PROPULSION PLANT EXAMINATION IN WHICH THREE COMPLETE WATCH TEAMS WERE FOUND SATISFACTORY IN EVERY DRILL THAT SHE WAS THE TOP PRESSURE FIRED SHIP IN THE FLEET AND HER CREW WAS REGULARLY COMPLEMENTED FOR SETTING THE STANDARD FOR SMARTNESS ON THE WATERFRONT. FROM WHAT I CAN TELL THIS EXCELLENCE IN THESE TWO AREAS LIVES ON EVEN TODAY.

I ALSO RECALL WHAT I PERCEIVED TO BE THE BUREAU OF NAVAL PERSONNEL'S TENDENCY TO ORDER IRISHMEN TO SERVE ON O'CALLAHAN: DURING MY TENURE WHEN WE HAD ABOUT 18 OFFICERS ASSIGNED, THE WARDROOM HAD A FLAHERTY, GALLAGHER, MULHARE, LYNCH, MCCABE AND MURPHY. I THINK THAT MUST HAVE MADE FATHER JOE HAPPY. THE SHIP ALSO SERVED AS A CHAPEL DURING A LONG SEVEN MONTH DEPLOYMENT. AS A CATHOLIC EUCHARISTIC MINISTER, I WAS ABLE TO KEEP THE BLESSED SACRAMENT IN MY CABIN AND DISTRIBUTE HOLY COMMUNION TO MY MEN DURING SERVICES ON SUNDAY'S. I KNOW THAT MADE FATHER JOE HAPPY.

ON 13 JULY 1968 SEVERAL YEARS AFTER THE SHIP HAD BEEN CHRISTENED BY SISTER ROSE MARIE, CARDINAL CUSHING OF BOSTON SPOKE AT THE SHIP'S COMMISSIONING CEREMONY. SPEAKING ABOUT THE SHIP HE SAID "MAY IT WEAR ITS NAME PROUDLY AND BE FAITHFUL TO ALL THAT THE NAME STANDS FOR. I ASK A BLESSING ON ITS COMMANDING OFFICER AND CREW, AND PRAY THAT IN THEIR THOUGHT AND ACTIONS THE WORLD WILL SEE MIRRORED THE VALOR AND DARING, AS WELL AS THE LOVE OF HIS FELLOW MAN, THAT WERE SO MUCH A PART OF THE CHARACTER

OF FATHER O'CALLAHAN. FROM WHEREVER IN HEAVEN HE LOOKS DOWN. UPON US TODAY, WE ASK FATHER JOE TO WATCH OVER THE FORTUNES OF THIS VESSEL, PROTECT IT IN ACTION, AND GUIDE IT SAFELY HOME TO PORT."

THOSE OF US WHO HAVE BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH THIS SHIP IN AN INTIMATE AND CLOSE WAY OVER THE YEARS KNOW FIRST HAND THAT CARDINAL CUSHING'S PRAYER WAS TOTALLY ANSWERED. DURING EIGHT DEPLOYMENTS AND COUNTLESS HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF MILES OF STEAMING SHE HAS SERVED WELL, BEEN PROTECTED FROM HARM AND HAS RETURNED SAFELY TO PORT UNDER THE FLAG OF THIS GREAT COUNTRY FOR THE FINAL TIME. NEXT TO GOD, COUNTRY AND FAMILY, WE WHO HAVE SERVED ABOARD HAVE GIVEN HER PERHAPS OUR GREATEST AFFECTION. WE NOW BID HER FAREWELL.

TO THIS O'CALLAHAN CREW, I CONGRATULATE YOU FOR YOUR MAGNIFICENT PERFORMANCE RIGHT UP TO THIS CEREMONY. SHE STILL LOOKS GREAT. YOU HAVE ENDED YOUR TOUR IN FINE STYLE. CAPTAIN SCHNURRUSCH,

YOU HAVE BROUGHT HER HOME A VISIBLY PROUD AND ABLE SHIP, AND
AN EXAMPLE FOR THE REST OF THE SURFACE FORCE OF OUR NAVY. WELL
DONE.

AT TWO CHANGE OF COMMAND CEREMONIES ON THIS SHIP, I EMPLOYED
THIS PRAYER FIRST ON BEHALF OF CAPTAIN MCRIGHT AS I RELIEVED
HIM AND LATER FOR CAPTAIN BUNNELL AS HE ASSUMED COMMAND. TODAY
I USE IT TO SEEK GOD'S BLESSING ON THE SHIP WHICH HENCEFORTH
WILL FLY THE FLAG OF OUR FRIEND PAKISTAN IN THE CAUSE OF PEACE.
MAY THE ROAD RISE WITH YOU, MAY THE WIND BE ALWAYS AT YOUR BACK,
AND MAY THE GOOD LORD HOLD YOU IN THE HOLLOW OF HIS HAND.