

U.S.S. MONTICELLO (LSD-35)  
FLEET POST OFFICE  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

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From: Commanding Officer, USS MONTICELLO (LSD 35)  
To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP 09B9)  
Subj: Command History; submission of (OPNAV REPORT 5750.1)  
Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5150.12A

- Encl:
- (1) Chronology of events
  - (2) Command History, 1 January 1969 thru 31 December 1970
  - (3) Biography of Captain James A. HOMYAK, USN
  - (4) Picture of Captain James A. HOMYAK, USN
  - (5) Biography of Captain Francis W. BENSON, Jr., USN
  - (6) Picture of Captain Francis W. BENSON, Jr., USN
  - (7) Biography of Captain Walter SPANGENBERG, Jr., USN
  - (8) Picture of Captain Walter SPANGENBERG, Jr., USN
  - (9) Change-of-Command ceremony pamphlet, Captain HOMYAK relieved by Captain BENSON
  - (10) Change-of-Command ceremony pamphlet, Captain BENSON relieved by Captain SPANGENBERG
  - (11) Officer directory as of 31 December 1969
  - (12) Enlisted roster as of 31 December 1969
  - (13) Officer directory as of 31 December 1970
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  - (15) Picture of 2000th Helicopter Landing
  - (16) Picture of refueling USS WALLER (DD 466)
  - (17) Picture of presentation of Bronze Star to Larry and Terry TACKETT, GMG2, USN

NOT  
RETAINED

1. Command records indicate no command history submitted for 1969. Enclosures 1-17, covering the period 1 January 1969 to 31 December 1970, are submitted in accordance with reference (a).

  
W. SPANGENBERG Jr.

## Chronology of Events

- 13 JAN 1969 - participated in "Operation Bold Mariner"
- 24 JAN 1969 - landed 2000th helicopter
- 06 MAR 1969 - INSURV Inspection conducted in Yokosuka, Japan
- 27 MAR 1969 - arrived in San Diego from WESTPAC deployment
- 28 JUN 1969 - commenced regular yard overhaul period at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard (PSNS), Bremerton, Washington
- 04 OCT 1969 - departed PSNS upon completion of overhaul
- 12 OCT 1969 - change of command at San Diego, California Captain BENSON relieved Captain HOMOYAK
- 19 OCT - 22 NOV 1969 - conducted refresher training
- 31 JAN 70 - departed San Diego for ninth WESTPAC deployment
- 05 FEB 70 - collision with USS KAWISHIWI (AO 146)
- 7-9 FEB 70 - SAR mission at Laysan Island (Hawaiian Island Archipelago)
- 2-14 MAR 70 - participated in "Operation Keystone Bluejay" transporting Marine units from RVN to Pearl Harbor
- 26 JUL 1970 - rescued crew of grounded Korean freighter DAI YOUNG HO from Royal Captain Shoal (60 N.M. West of Palawan Island, R.P.)
- 23 SEP 1970 - arrived San Diego from WESTPAC deployment
- 16 NOV 1970 - Change of Command at San Diego, California Captain W. SPANGENBERG, JR. relieved Captain F.W. BENSON, JR.

## COMMAND HISTORY 1 January 1969 - 31 December 1970

The start of 1969 found MONTICELLO in Danang Harbor, RVN, back-loading elements of Marine Battalion Landing Team 3/26. MONTICELLO spent 1-3 January completing the backload, arriving in Danang each morning at sunrise and departing at sunset each evening to an operation area about ten miles distant. Throughout this deployment, MONTICELLO, commanded by Captain James A. HOMYAK, USN, of Huntington, Park, California, was part of Amphibious Ready Group BRAVO under the tactical command of Commander, Amphibious Forces, SEVENTH Fleet.

On 10 January the ECHO and FOXTROT UDT Detachments were back-loaded, while supporting Marine Battalion 2/7 ashore. On 11 January, while loading LVT's off China Beach, one LVT sank in 6 to 12 feet of water. SN Lowell D. COLVIN, B70 29 82 of MONTICELLO rescued the six-man crew of the LVT and was awarded the Navy-Marine Corps Medal for his heroic actions. MONTICELLO later joined the USS ELDORADO (LCC 11), USS TRIPOLI (LPH 10), USS DULUTH (LPD 6), USS WINSTON (LKA 96), USS SEMINOLE (LKA 104), USS OKINAWA (LPH 3), USS OGDEN (LPD 5). 13 January 1969 Operation "BOLD MARINER" commenced, in which 7,000 U. S. Marines and 13 Navy ships participated in the largest amphibious landing since Inchon, Korea. MONTICELLO played a vital role in U. S. Marine support logistics and rapid, effective repair of assault boats and associated equipment.

On 24 January MONTICELLO recorded the 2000th helicopter landing on the flight deck since her commissioning in March 1957. MONTICELLO's landing signal officer, CWO2 Donald D. SALMON, of Dallas, Oregon, brought in the Boeing CH-46 Sea Knight piloted by Major G. M. LARSON, of Atascadero, California. CWO SALMON is credited with 910 helicopter landings to that date.

On 16 February MONTICELLO departed the combat zone enroute to Subic Bay, R.P. On the same day the personnel of the #1 Fireroom celebrated the 49,000th steaming hour in a lavish cake-cutting ceremony.

While a part of ARG BRAVO, MONTICELLO, during seven months in the Western Pacific, provided support in six major operations, two of them amphibious assaults. In all, MONTICELLO spent 55% of her deployment in Vietnamese waters. Her three combat zone tours averaged 45 days each. During this time, she refueled an average of once per week and replenished supplies once every two weeks. During amphibious operations, the ship ballasted/deballasted 279 times for Well Deck operations, and landed nearly 600 helicopters.

MONTICELLO arrived in Subic Bay on 18 February and was relieved by the USS ALAMO (LSD 33) on 24 February. MONTICELLO got underway for Yokosuka, Japan, on 26 February and arrived on 2 March 1969. From 6-8 March an INSURV Inspection was conducted in MONTICELLO. Rapid preparations were then made for her upcoming overhaul in July. MONTICELLO departed Yokosuka on 11 March enroute Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, in company with the USS OGDEN (LPD 5).

Upon departure Pearl Harbor, MONTICELLO acted as Officer in Tactical Command of a formation of six ships: USS OGDEN (LPD 5), USS WALLER (DD 466), USS WILSON (DD 847), USS CORRY (DD 817), and USS HUNTINGTON (DD 781). On 24 March, MONTICELLO refueled the USS WALLER (DD 466) using a close-in fueling rig adapted to the starboard crane. Over 60,000 gallons of NSFO were transferred to WALLER in two and one half hours. This was MONTICELLO's first attempt at refueling another ship underway. The WALLER was commanded by CDR Ronald D. MORIN, USN.

The formation arrived San Diego harbor on 27 March to the sound of a great band and excited families of the crew. MONTICELLO remained in homeport San Diego until 5 May, making all necessary preparations for her upcoming overhaul. From 5-8 May MONTICELLO participated in local amphibious operations off the coast of San Diego with embarked LVT's.

During Armed Forces weekend, 17-18 May, MONTICELLO acted as host public visit ship at Broadway Pier, San Diego, representing the amphibious forces afloat. Two thousand and sixty-two visitors were hosted during the six hour tour schedule provided.

On 20 May, at the U. S. Naval Station, San Diego, MONTICELLO hosted 128 students and adult advisors from Jefferson Junior High School, located in Oceanside, California. The guests were personally given a guided tour of the ship by Captain HOMYAK.

On 23 June, MONTICELLO departed San Diego for Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, to commence an extensive three month overhaul. Sixty-five civilian dependents of the crewmembers chartered a "grey line" tour on the 3 1/2 day cruise to Bremerton, as welcomed guests of MONTICELLO.

Besides routine major maintenance work, MONTICELLO was fitted with major improvements in her communications capabilities, including a complete modernization and conversion of all communication spaces. The RPS vault was moved into a secure alarmed radio space. All secure circuits and classified equipment were moved to a new controlled access area, and a complete new air conditioning plant for the radio spaces was installed. An omnidirectional radio antenna was installed on the forecastle.

Other improvements included installation of new wood in the well deck with additional batter boards, improvements in the helicopter flight deck, including re-location of lights and removal of hazardous obstructions, and a major overhaul of the ballasting system.

After successful sea and dock trials, MONTICELLO departed Bremerton on 4 October bound for San Diego, again the dependents of the crewmembers were aboard and all had a pleasant return trip.

On 12 October, Captain Francis W. BENSON, Jr., USN assumed command of MONTICELLO from Captain HOMYAK in a colorful change of command ceremony on MONTICELLO's flight deck. Commodore A.A. BATTSON, Commander Amphibious Squadron NINE, welcomed Captain BENSON to his first command in the Amphibious Force, Pacific.

At the same ceremony, three crewmembers of MONTICELLO were honored: Terry Dean TACKETT and Larry Gene TACKETT, brothers, both Gunner's Mate Guns Second Class, USN, were awarded the Bronze Star Medal for meritorious service as boat commanders attached to River Division 532 in Vietnam from August 1967 to March 1969. Louis Blain HELSEL, Gunner's Mate Guns Second Class, USN, was awarded the Navy Achievement Medal while assigned to the armory at U.S. Naval Support Activity, Saigon, RVN.

The following week MONTICELLO commenced four weeks of refresher training under the guidance of Commander, Fleet Training Group, U.S. Pacific Fleet. Upon completion of REFTRA, MONTICELLO conducted 7 days of amphibious refresher training under guidance of Commander Amphibious Training Command, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

With her combat readiness assured, MONTICELLO then participated in Operations "Blue Lotus", a full scale amphibious landing exercise in company with the DENVER (LPD 9) off Camp Pendleton at Del Mar, California. Highlight of the operations was a high speed underway launch of four waves of LVT's from DENVER and MONTICELLO.

Upon completion of this one week operation, MONTICELLO, returned to San Diego for the well deserved Christmas holiday leave period.

During the holidays, MONTICELLO hosted a Christmas party for dependents of the USS THOMASTON (LSD 28). More than 75 wives and children of THOMASTON crewmembers were entertained.

The new year of 1970 began with MONTICELLO moored to pier 8, U.S. Naval Station, San Diego, preparing for a scheduled 31 January WESTPAC deployment.

After a month of diligent and determined preparation, MONTICELLO sailed in company with the ANCHORAGE (LSD 36) on Saturday, 31 January 1970, to begin the ninth deployment since the MONTICELLO was commissioned in 1957.

On Sunday, 1 February, MONTICELLO and ANCHORAGE joined DENVER (LPD 9) with COMPHIBRON SEVEN, Captain B.R. DODSON, embarked, and the ALAMO (LSD 33). The four ship convoy steamed westward in formation conducting daily exercises and tactical drills.

On 5 February, the convoy rendezvoused with the KAWISHIWI (AO 146) about 400 miles north of Pearl Harbor. While making the final approach the MONTICELLO collided with KAWISHIWI. No injuries and only minor damage were incurred by either ship.

On 7 February, MONTICELLO received an SOS message for assistance to rescue a Japanese fishing vessel which had run aground on Laysan Island, the northwestern most island in the Hawaiian Island chain. MONTICELLO was detached and proceeded directly to Laysan Island, arriving there about 1600 (local time), 7 February 1970.

Upon arrival, MONTICELLO found the Japanese fishing vessel, KAYO MARO, grounded on the southwestern side of the island. A high sea and surf condition was developing and the task of giving immediate assistance was impossible. MONTICELLO remained at the scene overnight and the next morning found the surf conditions worsening. Radio contact with the stranded ship was established and all attempts to keep the Japanese fishermen informed as to current developments were made.

The weather continued to work against a safe rescue. Finally, on 9 February, as a U.S. Coast Guard vessel was being dispatched from Honolulu to assist, MONTICELLO was detached by higher authority and proceeded westward enroute Okinawa. Shortly after leaving Laysan Island, MONTICELLO was directed to proceed to Subic Bay, R.P.

Transiting 7142 miles in 20 days, MONTICELLO arrived Subic Bay on Friday, 21 February for a brief 3-day stop. On 24 February, MONTICELLO loaded a YLLC and departed Subic enroute to Vung Tau, RVN, MONTICELLO arrived in Vung Tau on 26 February. After off-loading the YLLC, MONTICELLO sailed to Subic, arriving there on 28 February for a brief 5 hour stop for fuel before departing enroute to Danang, RVN.

On 2 March, MONTICELLO, arrived in Danang and commenced loading Company "B" 3rd Amtrac Bn and Company "A" 9th Eng Bn. With good coordination, an efficient load-out was completed late evening on 2 March and MONTICELLO sailed toward Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

MONTICELLO arrived in Pearl Harbor 14 March and immediately commenced off-loading U.S.M.C. equipment carried from Danang.

MONTICELLO remained in Pearl Harbor four days. During this stay, crewmembers were given maximum liberty to enjoy the warm Hawaiian sunshine and beautiful beaches. On 18 March, MONTICELLO departed Pearl Harbor heading west, for an unknown destination.

Finally on 25 March, MONTICELLO learned that an upkeep period was scheduled for Sasebo, Japan. After rapidly charting a new course, MONTICELLO steamed toward Sasebo, arriving on 28 March.

The next 18 days were busily spent working to accomplish necessary repairs and maintenance. During the upkeep, RADM A. A. BERGNER, COMSERVGRU 3, officially visited MONTICELLO to discuss current Navy management problems affecting PACFLT ships.

On the morning of 15 April, MONTICELLO departed Sasebo in company with DENVER with CTG 76.5, CAPT B.R. DODSON, embarked, enroute to Buckner Bay, Okinawa to load elements of a Marine Battlaion Landing Team.

After loading was completed, MONTICELLO again in company with DENVER and SEMINOLE (LKA 104) departed Okinawa enroute Subic Bay arriving there on 23 April.

MONTICELLO remained in Subic 2 days off-loading Marine equipment. On 25 April, MONTICELLO departed Subic to conduct wet well lifts to Viet Nam. During the 10 day trip, MONTICELLO made operational stops at Vung Tau, Cam Ranh Bay, Danang, and An Thoi.

MONTICELLO arrived in Subic on 4 May. From 5 May until 9 May, MONTICELLO conducted amphibious training. From 10-17 May an upkeep was held in Subic

On 18 May, MONTICELLO, in company with Task Group 76.5, composed of DENVER, SEMINOLE, TIOGA COUNTY (LST 1148) and WASHTENAW COUNTY (LST 1166), departed Subic Bay enroute to Hong Kong, B.C.C.. During the 5 day transit, numerous training exercises were conducted by the task group.

On Staurday, 23 May, TG 76.5 arrived Hong Kong for a 6 day R and R port visit. Departing Hong Kong 29 May, in company with DENVER and SEMINOLE, MONTICELLO arrived Subic Bay 31 May.

From 2 June - 4 June, TG 76.5 now composed of DENVER, DURHAM (LKA 114) and WESTCHESTER COUNTY (LST 1167) conducted amphibious training at Green Beach, Subic Bay.

From 5 June - 8 June, MONTICELLO remained in Subic Bay for minor repairs and maintenance. On Sunday, 7 June, 1 Officer and 9 enlisted men of the Philippine Underwater Ordnance Unit embarked to assist in up coming beach survey operations.

MONTICELLO departed Subic 8 June to conduct beach surveys on the island of Mindoro, R.P. From 8-11 June, MONTICELLO, with the help of U.S. Navy UDT and Philippine U.O.U. personnel, surveyed beaches on the northern and western sides of Mindoro Island in attempt to find suitable beaches for future amphibious exercises. After completing survey operations MONTICELLO continued South to the Philippine port of Iloilo for a people-to-people visit, arriving there on 12 June.

MONTICELLO's visit coincided with the city's Philippine Independence Day celebration. On 13 and 14 June, open house for visiting and more than 5000 Iloilo residents were hosted aboard the MONTICELLO. Among the visitors were such dignitaries as Iloilo Governor CONRADE J. NORADA and ARTURE H. DICEN, acting mayor of Iloilo.

MONTICELLO crewmembers assisted Iloilo Boy's Town by painting a school building and giving the school a ship's bell.

In addition to the people-to-people program, MONTICELLO ship's company responded to an emergency appeal from the local Red Cross and donated 31 pints of blood to a needy Filipino.

MONTICELLO departed Iloilo 15 June bound for Subic Bay, arriving 16 June. From 16-19 June, MONTICELLO and other units of TG 76.5 conducted local amphibious operations at Green Beach.

From 19-27 June, MONTICELLO remained in Subic conducting needed upkeep and maintenance.

On 27 June, TG 76.5 conducted shore bombardment exercises at Teon Creeks Naval Gunfire area north of Subic Bay. Upon completion TG 76.5, again conducted numerous amphibious exercises at Green Beach.

MONTICELLO remained in Subic until late afternoon on 3 July when in company with DENVER she sailed to Manila for a 3 day visit.

On 7 July MONTICELLO headed south to Mindoro Island to conduct amphibious training with TG 76.5. The amphibious training ended on 10 July and MONTICELLO steamed northward to Buckner Bay, Okinawa making a 6-hour stop-over in Subic Bay, enroute.

MONTICELLO arrived at Buckner Bay on Monday, 13 July and commenced off-loading U.S.M.C. equipment and personnel. The off-load was completed in less than 24 hours and MONTICELLO weighed anchor and proceeded toward Kaoshiung, Taiwan. During the 1 day transit high winds and seas were encountered and upon arrival at the entrance to Kaoshiung harbor, MONTICELLO found winds to be 40 knots and seas 15-20 feet. After waiting for 3 hours it was decided that the weather would not abate soon, so MONTICELLO headed south for Subic Bay arriving on 18 July 1970.

On 20 July, MONTICELLO embarked 44 NROTC midshipmen and steamed toward Viet Nam. From 21-24 July, MONTICELLO transferred the midshipmen to various ships of the U. S. Seventh Fleet and units of Naval Forces Viet Nam. While transferring the midshipmen MONTICELLO loaded 2 LCU's in Danang for transfer to Guam. On 24 July MONTICELLO departed Vung Tau enroute Guam.



On Saturday, 25 July, MONTICELLO received a distress signal from the Korean merchant vessel DAI YOUNG HO, stating she was aground on Royal Captain Shoals (60 miles west of Palawan Island, R.P.) MONTICELLO changed course and diverted to render assistance to the DAI YOUNG HO. MONTICELLO visually sighted the DAI YOUNG HO in the early afternoon on 26 July. Ship's boats were lowered into the water and proceeded to come alongside the grounded vessel. After discussion with the master of the vessel, it was decided that the ship was in danger of capsizing and MONTICELLO should evacuate all personnel of the DAI YOUNG HO. Twenty-five persons were transferred to MONTICELLO and late in the afternoon of 26 July, MONTICELLO continued toward GUAM. A rendezvous with a Philippine tug boat was arranged and at sunset on 27 July the 25 crewmembers of the DAI YOUNG HO were transferred to the Philippine tug ROVER near Batangas, R.P. (about 40 miles south of Manila harbor). MONTICELLO continued steaming westward at full speed and arrived in Guam on 31 July 1970.

After a 12 hour stop for fuel, supplies and the off-load of the 2 LCU's carried from Danang, MONTICELLO departed Guam enroute Vung Tau via Subic for a brief 6 hour stop arriving Vung Tau of 6 August. After off-loading boats carried from Subic, MONTICELLO departed Vung Tau enroute Singapore.

After a 36 hour transit, MONTICELLO arrived Singapore on Saturday, 8 August 1970 and moored at Her Majesty's Naval Base. The next seven days were spent in an upkeep status accomplishing needed repairs. When not working, crewmembers enjoyed tours of Singapore, golfing, boating and swimming.

The upkeep period ended too quickly and on 15 August, MONTICELLO departed Singapore enroute Subic with stops at An Thoi, Vung Tau, Qui Nhon, and Danang, RVN.

In the afternoon of 15 August, King Neptune and his court paid an expected visit to MONTICELLO and 195 pollywogs were converted to "Shellbacks".

MONTICELLO arrived Subic 21 August and departed 22 August for a fast trip to Danang to deliver a PTF to Naval Forces, Vietnam. MONTICELLO returned to Subic on 26 August and began a final upkeep period before beginning to the long transit to San Diego.

MONTICELLO departed Subic 2 September enroute Danang with a stop in Vung Tau to deliver a YLLC.

MONTICELLO arrived Danang 6 September and immediately began loading elements of Marine Embark Unit VIII as part of Operation Keystone Robin. The load out was completed by early evening and MONTICELLO departed Viet Nam for the final time of her ninth deployment.

MONTICELLO arrived in Subic for the last time during 1970 on 8 September to refuel before continuing eastward toward Pearl Harbor.

MONTICELLO arrived in Pearl Harbor on 18 September and departed the same afternoon enroute Camp Pendleton.

On the morning of 23 September, crewmembers saw California for the first time since 31 January. MONTICELLO anchored about 1000 yards from the beach near Del Mar boat basin, Camp Pendleton and began off loading U.S.M.C. equipment transported from Danang. Off-loading was completed in the late afternoon and MONTICELLO quickly steamed south toward San Diego arriving at 2200 that evening.

During the 235 day deployment to WESTPAC, MONTICELLO steamed 44,850 miles while burning 3,575,000 gallons of NSFO.

From 23 September - 26 October, MONTICELLO remained in port San Diego enjoying a well deserved leave and upkeep period.

From 27 October - 5 November, MONTICELLO conducted local operations near San Diego and amphibious training off Camp Pendleton.

On Monday, 16 November, Captain Walter SPANGENBERG, Jr., assumed command of MONTICELLO from Captain BENSON in a ceremony held on MONTICELLO's helo deck. Commodore F. W. CLIFT, Commander Amphibious Squadron NINE welcomed Captain SPANGENBERG to his first command in the Amphibious Forces.

From 18-20 November an Administrative Inspection was conducted by the staff of Amphibious Squadron NINE.

During the weeks 30 November - 4 December and 7 - 11 December MONTICELLO conducted local exercises off southern California coast.

On 22 December, MONTICELLO received word that she had been awarded the Navy Unit Commendation for participation in Operation Bold Mariner conducted in Viet Nam from 12 January - 9 February 1969.

As of 31 December, MONTICELLO carried 20 Officers and 297 Enlisted.