TARO LEAF

24TH INFANTRY DIVISION ASSOCIATION

VOLUME XXII NUMBER 4 1968-1969

Let it be known as The Arnheiter Issue. We devote one entire issue to one view of the Arnheiter story. We believe that it will conjure up memories of one or more with whom you once served.

A boyish-looking man of 44 years, Marcus Aurelius Arnheiter entered West Point in 1946. He flunked out at the end of a year and stated upon resigning that he "did not wish to devote (his) life to military service." In 1948, he entered the Naval Academy, graduating in 1952 and standing 628th in a class of 783. While there, he got into trouble for writing an article for a student publication on the sexual escapades of Horatio Nelson, the British naval hero.

Lieutenant (j.g.) Arnheiter emerged from the Navy's electronic officers' school in 1954, 39th in a class of 39. The next year, he was passed over for promotion to full lieutenant.

Navy sources say that one fitness report indicates that he received nonjudicial punishment for being absent without leave, an unusual offense for an officer. The report predicted that he "will never make a naval officer." His fitness reports over the years allegedly fluctuated from excellent to poor. Some of his superiors were highly impressed with his energy, imagination and writing and speaking skills, while others were irritated by his actions to the point of seriously questioning his judgement.

During a three-year Pentagon tour from 1960 to 1963, Arnheiter allegedly took part in an internal Navy intrigue to divert budget funds from aviation to antisubmarine warfare programs by writing a novel called "Shadow of Peril" under a pseudonym. He also openly published controversial articles in military magazines on serious weaknesses in the country's antisubmarine defenses, articles which aroused the anger of the Navy's airmen, but were praised by destroyer officers and surface-ship admirals.

Now for the story, and we hope that you enjoy it.

The 99 Days Of Captain Arnheiter

"The dispute over what happened on the U.S.S. Vance during those 99 days has grown into one of the major Navy squabbles of the decade—the Arnheiter Affair."

ON the morning of March 31, 1966, Chief Radioman Everett R. Grissom handed Lieut. Comdr. Marcus Aurelius Arnheiter a terse order from the Bureau of Naval Personnel in Washington. The four lines of coded teletype informed Arnheiter that he was relieved of command of the U.S.S. Vance, a radar picket destroyer escort on Vietnam patrol. He had been her captain only 99 days.

In the two years and four months since then, the dispute over what happened on the Vance during those 99 days has grown into one of the major Navy squabbles of the decade —the Arnheiter Affair.

Arnheiter has waged a crusade to reverse the effects of that four-line order, in Congress, the press and the law courts. He and his band of supporters, including Capt. Richard G. Alexander, once one of the Navy's most promising officers, have challenged the judgment and integrity of several admirals and questioned the Navy's sense of justice and fair play. In the process of seeking to save Arnheiter's career, Captain Alexander has destroyed his own.

The Navy hierarchy, though rebuffing Arnheiter's appeals, has been at odds with itself over the handling of the case. This high-level uncertainty has helped to create persistent doubts within Navy ranks as to the propriety of Arnheiter's abrupt relief.

The Navy's version of the 99 days on the Vance is based in large measure on an informal investigation that began on April 6, 1966, at Subic Bay in the Philippines. For six and a half days, a Navy captain took sworn testimony from Arnheiter, his subordinate officers and several members of his crew.

In the end, the Navy decided that the Vance's captain had been removed for good reason. Arnheiter had been destroying the morale of his crew and had "exercised bad judgment and lack of integrity in so many important matters" that he did not deserve command, either at sea or ashore.

Arnheiter counters that he has been the victim of a mutiny and two conspiracies. His subordinates, he says, were a sloppy "bunch of dissident malcontents . . . a Berkeley-campus type of Vietnik/beatnik." He aroused their anger by attempting "to make a man-of-war out of a roach-infested yacht" and by "lashing out relentlessly to find and engage the Vietcong" on coastal patrol off South Vietnam.

These "collegians in uniform" staged the first mutiny and conspiracy by secretly making "fallacious or frivolous allegations" against him to his superiors. His superiors panicked, he says, and summarily relieved him without warning, in violation of Navy regulations. The Navy hierarchy, he claims, has since sought to sacrifice him (the second conspiracy) to conceal its first error.

Lengthy tape-recorded interviews with a number of officers and sailors who served under Arnheiter, a reading of the sworn testimony at Subic Bay and the gathering of other evidence, aimed at reconstructing what happened on the Vance, disclose a radically different version of his 99-day reign.

As the officers and crew tell it, the script of their voyage might have been drawn from "The Caine Mutiny," "Mr. Roberts" and "The Bedford Incident." They tell of a "paranoid" captain, a real-life Queeg, who exhibited strange quirks and ran his ship with tyrannical whimsy. They say he enforced discipline with a martinet's fetish for shined belt buckles and shoes, but violated Navy regulations and the orders of his superiors whenever it suited him and tried to run a private war. He created doubts about his personal courage, but sought acclaim as a war hero by fraud and at the needless risk of the lives of his crew.

When he took over command of the Vance at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 22, 1965, they say, the 22-year-old destroyer escort lacked the spit and polish of a flagship, but it was a fine ship with good morale. It was not to remain very long in that state.

IN the six days before the Vance sailed for Guam on Dec. 28 en route to Vietnam, Arnheiter made a number of unusual demands. For example, he ordered Lieut. Ray S. Hardy, the executive officer, to get him a white toilet seat to replace the regulation black one in the private bathroom off the captain's cabin.

"You've got to be kidding, X.O.," said Lieut. (j.g.) Robert Gwynn, the supply officer, when the executive officer relayed the order. The days just before deployment for extended patrol are the most hectic for a ship's supply officer, and Gwynn, a careful, even-tempered man who now works as a production analyst at Baxter Laboratories near Chicago, recalls that he was "busy as hell" getting essential material aboard. Arnheiter also mentioned the matter to him directly, Gwynn says, and told him to obtain the white toilet seat before the ship departed in two or three days.

The only way to comply in this short a time, Gwynn recalls, was to submit the request on a special high priority, walk the paper work through the processing stages at the supply depot and personally pick up the item. He was too embarrassed to ask the depot personnel to walk the request form through; he did it himself. Even so, Gwynn says, the matter ended unhappily when the Vance's ship fitters accidentally scorched the white toilet seat with a welding torch while installing it. (The new captain also had the ship fitters raise the level of the sink so that he could wash more easily and install a ship's phone next to the commode so that he could talk while sitting on his new toilet seat.) Arnheiter now says that he ordered white toilet seats for all latrines on the ship because the black ones were "cruddy," but he does not remember if Gwynn obtained white seats for any bathroom other than that of the captain.

ABOUT 500 miles out of Hawaii, Arnheiter held the first of several "war councils" with Hardy and the other principal officers. The participants were all to wear pistols, the captain instructed, and armed sailors were to be posted at the forward and rear doors of the officers' wardroom to maintain security.

"There's no VC out there," Hardy recalls. "We're about 7,000 miles from Vietnam." He asked Arnheiter why the officers had to wear pistols. "He said, 'It's just to emphasize that this is a warlike gathering,'" Hardy remembers. "I kind of laughed at him, you know, hoping he would laugh back, that he realized that this was a humorous thing, but boy, no, it wasn't. He just scowled at me as if to say, 'You don't really understand the program, Hardy.'"

Lieut. William T. Generous, the Vance's operations officer and the man Arnheiter now accuses of master-minding the conspiracy against him, characterizes this first "war council" as a "three-to-four-hour harangue" by the captain. Succeeding sessions followed the same pattern. The officers were permitted to say very little, he says. "Monologue doesn't describe it."

ARNHEITER explained, using sketches and diagrams, how he intended to use a 16-foot Fiberglas speedboat as bait to draw fire from the Vietcong on the coast or in junks near the shore. A variation on the theme would be to send out the ship's slower motor whaleboat as a decoy to "incite the enemy."

The captain had purchased the speedboat in Hawaii with $950 from the crew's recreation fund without consulting the recreation committee. He subsequently had fierce sharks' teeth painted on the bow, a machine gun mounted in the middle and a 3-by-5-foot American flag affixed to a staff near the stern.

"He had a three-wave invasion," says Generous, describing how Arnheiter sketched the speedboat dashing close to the shore, with the larger motor whaleboat in between it and the Vance, which would be lurking just out of sight over the horizon.

The American flag streaming from the speedboat's stern "was going to fire up all the hatred and bitterness of the Vietcong," Generous recalls, "and they were going to see this poor little semi-defenseless speedboat and they were going to really chop it up." But the armed crew of the motor whaleboat would support the speedboat and radio the Vance to "come steaming to the rescue and blow whatever it was out of the water" with her twin three-inch guns, or bombard the Vietcong on the shore.

The only problem, the captain told his officers, was to find an officer and crew willing to get shot at in the speedboat. Lieut. (j.g.) Luis A. Belmonte, the ship's gunnery officer, volunteered because he was a bachelor and he felt it was his job. He then "volunteered" some of his men. Belmonte, a small, wiry man with the build of a bantamweight boxer, says the captain praised him for being "audacious" (one of Arnheiter's favorite words) and said that "there would be a Silver Star in it for me."

The Vance's operations order contained strict rules of engagement designed to discourage the ship from engaging in shore bombardment or other participation in the land war. The Vance's mission in the Navy's coastal patrol off South Vietnam (called Operation Market Time) was the dull business of inspecting junks and sampans for contraband and infiltrators. The captain told his officers, however, that he considered these rules "unfair" and "overly restrictive," Hardy says. His plan would provide means "of getting around them, circumventing them" so that "we can get a chance to

shoot the guns at the beach." The Vance was permitted to return fire in self-defense, and the captain said he interpreted this provision "to include the ship's boats, plural," Hardy reports. As he had told the crew at the change-of-command ceremony, Arnheiter intended to take them "where the action is."

THE ship docked in Guam on Jan. 7 for a week's repairs to an engine, and Arnheiter, a man of enormous energy where his enthusiasms are concerned, proceeded to impress more vividly upon the officers and crew another promise he had made at the change-of-command ceremony —that life under him would be "different."

The "audacious" Lieutenant Belmonte was set to work stealing 25 55-gallon oil drums from the pier for target practice at sea. He was also ordered to produce 200 sandbags. They were to be stacked along the deck as protection for a 30-man "special fire team" Arnheiter was mustering to shoot at VC junks. The team would also act as a landing party in the event of an opportunity to fight ashore. The captain finally settled for 60 sandbags after Hardy warned him that 200, which would weigh about 14,000 pounds, might affect the ship's stability in a heavy sea.

Gwynn, the supply officer who had been sent on the toilet seat hunt, also had a sizable shopping list. At the top was $285 worth of movie and still camera film. He had already purchased $85 worth in Pearl Harbor with Government funds, but the captain liked to have his picture taken constantly and wanted more. The rest of the list consisted of an air conditioner for Arnheiter's cabin (to supplement the ship's system) and a cigar humidor, demitasse cups and candelabras for the wardroom. Arnheiter has since said he intended to transform the wardroom into "a gentlemen's club" and wanted to expose his "rustic" young officers to "sophisticated living." But Gwynn failed to procure either the air conditioner or the appurtenances of the good life for the wardroom.

The wardroom did, however, acquire a silver coffee server on Guam. Generous, the operations officer, says he stole it from the officers' club at the captain's urging while the officers were attending a buffet dinner Arnheiter gave there for the wife of a colleague.

At the end of the same evening after considerable drinking had been done, Belmonte and Ensign Michael R. McWhirter stole two large silver candelabras from the club. Hardy says he asked them to take the candelabras because the captain eyed them repeatedly and remarked "how fine they would look in the wardroom." "He kept going on and on about how there must be some audacious officer that can bring this about," Hardy says. "It was painfully evident that he wanted this done, short of going up there himself and grabbing these things and walking out the door with them."

McWhirter was caught in the act by a waiter, but Belmonte managed to get his candelabra out of the club and it was taken back to the ship. The next morning, Hardy says, he told Arnheiter that the candelabra would have to be returned because it was obvious that a Vance officer had stolen the item.

Arnheiter has since denied urging his officers to steal either the coffee server or the candelabras. He has produced a statement signed by two Guamanian waiters at the officers' club saying that the candelabras had been swiped as a drunken prank and that the captain had apologized for his officers. A friend of Arnheiter's who obtained the signatures for him says that the captain wrote the statement himself and that the waiters do not read English well and only glanced at the statement before signing it. In any event, the statement makes no mention of the coffee server; it still graces the Vance's wardroom table.

When asked now why they were willing to steal for Arnheiter, the officers explain that their actions must be understood in the light of their being junior officers acting at the behest of their captain—a position that is still surrounded with a kind of sacred aura. Hardy grants that it involved "a compromise of integrity," but he says the thefts were committed to show the captain that they "would do what he wanted them to do and be the kind of officers he wanted them to be."

"After Arnheiter was relieved, Alexander explains, he had 'a feeling in my bones' the Vance's captain had been 'sabotaged by dissident junior officers.'"

WHEN the Vance left Guam on Jan. 14 for a refueling stop in the Philippines and the final leg of the journey to Vietnam, the captain began to give his officers further lessons in what he has termed "the highest forms of gentlemanly conduct."

A former member of Toastmasters International, Arnheiter instituted a program of extemporaneous after-dinner speaking. The topics were written on little slips of paper and put under each officer's plate until his turn came. The topics included "Etiquette in an opera box" and "The proper use of a fingerbowl."

One day at sea, the "boner box" appeared. This was a small, padlocked wooden file-card box with crossbones painted on it. The captain began levying 25-cent fines on the officers for offenses — their own or those of their subordinates — involving etiquette, dress or behavior. They were required to come to lunch each day carrying four quarters. Hardy, a polite, soft-spoken man, and an Annapolis graduate like Arnheiter, would read off the offenses while the captain stood by and watched each culprit drop his quarter or quarters into the box.

Most of the fines were for unshined belt buckles or shoes, sweat stains on shirts or what Arnheiter decided were breaches in table manners. Lieut. (j.g.) Julian R. Meisner, the assistant weapons officer, lost quarters on five occasions for laying his knife down on the table or on his plate with the blade turned outward.

The boner box netted a total of about $30 during the cruise. Approximately a third came from Ensign Bernard O. Black III, the ship's youngest officer and "boot ensign," who could never keep his shirt tucked in to the captain's satisfaction.

Arnheiter used the money to buy cigars for the wardroom. The majority of the officers were not fond of cigars, however, and Arnheiter, who is, did most of the smoking. Hardy says the captain frequently kept the cigar supply in his cabin and smoked there as well.

The captain deemed it a "gentlemanly" characteristic to eat light lunches, and he wanted Lieut. (j.g.) James M. Merkel, an antisubmarine warfare specialist whom Arnheiter had earlier made his public relations officer, and Lieut. (j.g.) Gerald J. Prescott, the communications officer, to lose weight. So all the officers began to subsist on a steady luncheon diet of cottage cheese and fruit or peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches. Ensign John J. Hannigan 3d, 205 pounds of muscle and bone and a former University of Maryland halfback, recalls being irritable because he was always hungry.

Actually, there was good reason to economize at this time because the captain had depleted (Belmonte says "raped") the mess fund of $185 in Guam to pay for a formal dinner at the club and for the buffet there for the wife of a friend.

The captain joined the ship's mess, buying a share of the mess fund, as of Jan. 1— but he had $150 of the Guam expenses backdated to the month of December, even though the expenses had been incurred in January. This procedure reduced the size of the mess fund at the point at which Arnheiter was buying in, thereby lowering the cost of his share from $18.99 to $7.14. The captain ultimately parted with another $10 after the officers complained to Hardy that they were being cheated. He never made up the full amount, however. Arnheiter has indignantly denied trying to bilk his subordinates and claims that mess accounts should be compiled in the manner he had directed. Navy regulations state otherwise.

IN retrospect, the officers regard Arnheiter's doings up to this point as no more than a prelude to what was to come when he finally went to war off Vietnam on Jan. 20.

Instead of concentrating on his mission of inspecting junks and sampans, the officers say, the captain had his ship spend the first week of patrol cruising close to shore, poking into bays where it might be shot at. He also monitored, without authorization, radio frequencies used for gunfire missions in the hope of "getting in on the action." He constantly harangued the crew over the loudspeaker. The sailors were beginning to refer to the captain as "Mad Marcus," Radarman 3/c William Sides says. "He was always talking, talking. Everything was Vietcong-infested this and Vietcong-infested that."

On Jan. 27, Arnheiter sent the engineer officer, Lieut. (j.g.) Edward Hopkins (Hoppy) Mason, gunnery officer Belmonte and a crew of armed sailors ashore in the motor whaleboat to investigate a group of about 100 Vietnamese walking down the beach with bundles. To Mason they "just looked like people carrying bundles," but to Arnheiter they were Vietcong porters carrying off supplies landed by a submarine. He decided some pole-type markers visible on the beach had been placed there to guide the submarine to the spot. Radioing for air support, he reported seeing "porters running wildly under heavy loads and dispersing over sand dunes."

Mason remembers that, as he was moving toward shore, Arnheiter was talking to him on the radio, "trying to needle me into shooting" the whaleboat's machine gun over the heads of the people on the beach to make them stop running. "He was all up and excited about it. Fire. Shoot on the beach, over their heads or something." A calm Georgian, Mason recalls resisting because he could see women and children, believed that wild firing from the machine gun could not be controlled, "and I can't see shooting a bunch of civilians or even shooting at them."

The thought "also crossed my mind," Mason says, that "you don't know what's going to go through his [the captain's] head if there's a lot of shooting going on. He's liable to interpret my shooting as somebody else's shooting and start shooting himself" and "a lot of people might get killed that shouldn't be."

The Vietnamese on the beach turned out to be refugees carrying their belongings away from a bombed-out village, and the poles were markers for an American amphibious landing the previous week. Mason believes some of the villagers ran at the sight of the ship because they were afraid it was going to open fire. He recalls that Arnheiter was "very upset" by the outcome. "He wanted them to be VC porters."

In this period and subsequently, Hardy and the others say, the captain attempted to give his superiors the impression he was carrying out his mission by falsifying reports on the number of junks and sampans inspected. One way Arnheiter accomplished this, Hardy recalls, was to stretch the definition of an inspection to include any junks or sampans sighted on the horizon. The captain would also simply announce that Generous and his assistants in the operations department, which kept track of the inspections, had forgotten how many had been inspected. Arnheiter now contends that only he kept an accurate tally.

The Vance had a dull assignment; her captain wanted to go "where the action is."

The captain, wearing his customary baseball cap and pistol, meets with Vietnam officers.

The U.S.S. Vance's whaleboat was part of a "three-wave invasion" to "incite the enemy."

Arnheiter (right) takes salute from Williams; Hardy and Viet officer look on.

ON the morning of Jan. 28, the U.S.S. Leonard F. Mason, a full-fledged destroyer with five-inch gun batteries instead of the twin three-inchers the Vance carried, came steaming past. Arnheiter asked the Mason by flashing light where she was going, and the destroyer replied that she was heading north on an urgent mission.

The captain, Generous says, had previously learned from coded fleet radio messages that Operation Masher, a major offensive against the enemy involving the Army's First Cavalry Division (Air Mobile), was about to begin in the Bongson district at the northern end of the Vance's patrol area. Arnheiter set off after the Mason at the Vance's near-top speed of 17.5 knots.

As the ship moved north, Market Time headquarters in Saigon radioed the Vance and other patrol ships to stay out of the area off the coast where the operation was taking place so that the destroyers on gunfire missions would have full freedom of maneuver. Generous says he delineated the prohibited area on a chart and then took the message and the chart up to the captain on the bridge. Arnheiter looked at the chart, read the message and initialed it. "He just sort of grunted," Generous says, "and we kept on going right into that prohibited area." Arnheiter had a way of tuning out anything he didn't want to hear, Hardy recalls.

The Vance was required to report its position every two hours to the Navy's Coastal Surveillance Center at Quinhon. When the next reporting time came at 2 P.M., the Vance was within the prohibited zone. Generous prepared the normal message giving the ship's correct location and sent it to the bridge for routine approval before transmission. It was returned with a different position written on it, which put the ship further out to sea and "about 10 to 15 miles" from where it actually was.

Generous says that he called the captain on the ship's phone and told him that the position he wanted sent was "not correct" and repeated the ship's true position. "Well, you can send it like that, can't you, Tom?" Generous, a slim, intense man with black-rimmed glasses, recalls the captain asking rhetorically. "I immediately thought," Generous says, "if I say, 'Yes, I can,' that's my baby, and if we ever have to go to court-martial or any kind of legal proceedings, he's going to say: 'I asked him if he could send it. and he said yes; therefore it was his responsibility.' So I rejoined with: 'If that's what you want me to do, sir.'" Generous says the captain repeated the first rhetorical question, and he made the same reply; the process was repeated two or three times.

Finally, as Generous recalls, the captain said, "I desire it," words which Arnheiter had often told his officers were tantamount to an order. (The captain had a habit of ending this sentence, Generous says, with a stiff flip of the hand from the wrist to hurry the recipient on his errand.)

"Aye, aye, sir," Generous replied and sent the message. He took the precaution, however, of having the ship's correct position noted in the combat information center log, and he followed the same procedure on the many subsequent occasions when the captain ordered false positions sent. Arnheiter now argues that he did not go into the prohibited zone.

That afternoon and the next day, the captain pestered the Mason and the aerial spotter directing the Mason's fire to give him a target. He forgot his call sign on the radio, addressed the spotter as "circling aircraft" and fouled the Mason's gun range by getting between the destroyer and its target—three *gaffes* of the first order in military etiquette.

The testimony of the Vance officers in this period is largely corroborated by tape recordings of Arnheiter's radio transmissions, made by the captain of the Mason, and by his observations and those of officers on the destroyer U.S.S. Bache.

ON the afternoon of Jan. 29, apparently growing impatient, Arnheiter radioed the airborne spotter that he saw "some bunkers and trenches . . . on top of a sand dune. It looks like a good mission for me." He first told the spotter there were "no people" there and then said he saw a "machine gun in sand dune." He fired two shells from his three-inch guns without permission from the spotter.

The spotter ordered him to "cease fire" and said, "I am unable to see gun emplacement." Arnheiter replied that he could see it, and the spotter

then let him fire six rounds without air observation.

"There was nothing there but sand," Hardy says. And Belmonte christened the incident "the crab shoot." The captain of the Mason also saw nothing, but he was worried that several of the Vance's shells that missed the dune might hit American or South Vietnamese troops fighting 3,000 to 5,000 yards inland.

That night Arnheiter wrote and transmitted to his superiors a combined after-action report and press release. It was also routed to other Navy headquarters and was, along with similar reports that followed, released to news media by the Navy information office in Saigon.

The Vance, he wrote, "directly supported the major push by the U. S. Army's First Cavalry Division" by responding to an "urgent fire request by the II Corps U.S. Navy gunfire support team." He continued: "Proceeding at full speed to a position within 1,200 yards of the Vietcong-controlled coastline," the Vance delivered 17 rounds of "highly accurate bombardment against known Vietcong machine-gun bunkers and an entrenchment approximately 2.5 miles away. The very first round was observed to hit one of the bunkers."

Arnheiter ended the report with a capsule biography of himself in which he said he was "a grandson of the late Baron Louis von Arnheiter, an early pioneer in manned flight." (This writer has been unable to find any trace of the late Baron Louis von Arnheiter or of a von Arnheiter family in reference works on German nobility. Histories of manned flight also make no mention of a von Arnheiter —or even of a plain Arnheiter. The captain now says the baron was his great-grandfather.)

THE next afternoon, dressed in helmet and flak jacket, with an ever-present bone-handled .38-caliber revolver on his hip, Arnheiter renewed battle with what his subordinates and other witnesses say were imaginary Vietcong. "The gremlins," Generous calls them.

After unsuccessfully pestering the destroyer Bache to give him a target, Arnheiter said he saw suspicious movement on the rock and jungle face of a mountain about 800 yards away which plunged sharply to the sea. He fired tracer bullets at the spot with an M-1 rifle, shouted that he could see the muzzle flashes of Vietcong guns and told the .50-caliber machine gun to "neutralize" the enemy fire. When the machine gun opened up, bright flashes erupted on the rocks. "They're shooting at us," the captain yelled. He ducked behind the thin metal shield protecting the gun control equipment on the top of the ship and ordered the Vance's twin three-inch guns into action, Hardy says.

Ensign Hector Cornejo, then a chief petty officer and the ship's medic, remembers going out to the main deck to see what was happening and finding Chief Radioman Grissom looking through binoculars at the mountain.

"Hey, Chief Grissom," he asked, "what are we shooting at?"

"Two chickens," said Grissom, handing Cornejo the glasses. Cornejo says he saw a Vietnamese peasant's hovel on a ledge jutting out about 80 to 100 yards off to the right of the target. "These two chickens were in the front yard," Cornejo recalls, "running around like mad. Rat-tat-tat, blam-blam-blam, and they'd run like hell, flapping their wings—you know, like when a dog chases chickens."

Cornejo and the others believe the Vance was shooting at the ricochets of its own shells. They saw no suspicious movement, heard no return fire and saw no splashes in the water that would indicate incoming bullets. Men watching from the Bache through long-range glasses saw nothing, either.

According to Hardy, earlier in the day the captain had told him he was going to make believe the Vietcong were shooting at the ship so he could fire the guns and give the crew the feeling they were "engaging the enemy." But Arnheiter swears that he saw muzzle flashes and heard the crack of enemy bullets overhead. Hardy and Belmonte acknowledge that he might have convinced himself that he was being fired at since he—and only he—took shelter behind the metal shield.

This was one of Arnheiter's uncaptainly actions that made the two officers wonder about his personal courage. They also cite the fact that he had gone into the secure, Government-held port of Quinhon wearing a flak jacket, carrying two pistols and guarded by sailors armed with tommy guns. Mason says Arnheiter also requested the erection of a bulletproof steel shield on top of the ship, specifically to protect the captain. Mason delayed the project, and the shield was never built.

AFTER sending another stirring after-action report and press release to his superiors, Arnheiter on Feb. 1 sailed back to the prohibited zone where the Mason was firing

On Guam. Arnheiter wanted to expose his officers to "sophisticated living."

Generous receives a promotion at sea. Arnheiter and Hardy (at left) preside.

On shore, the captain is flanked by Mason (left) and Gunnery Officer T. D. Williams.

The "audacious" Belmonte (waving) did his best to make the ship's wardroom elegant.

and shot up a deserted masonry structure on the coast. Belmonte, who later spent a year ashore in Vietnam with the Marine Corps as a naval gunfire spotter, says he believes it was one of the many Buddhist or Taoist shrines that dot the Vietnamese countryside.

Hardy says that the captain became so enthralled with the shooting and with describing it to the crew over the loudspeaker from the top of the ship that he forgot where he was going and almost ran the Vance aground on the beach. The executive officer had to take command of the bridge at the last minute and order violent maneuvers to avoid a wreck.

On a number of other occasions, the officers say, the captain needlessly endangered the ship by going into very shallow water. Frequently he forgot he had the command and walked off the bridge with it.

Arnheiter now says he wrote the press releases "for chuckles" and the amusement of other captains who saw them on the fleet radio nets. The captain of the Mason was not amused. He ordered the Vance to "clear the area immediately" after Arnheiter fouled his range a second time, and then he wrote a detailed "confidential—for officers' eyes only" report on what he had seen and heard and had it hand-carried to his division commander.

"All this phony heroics sickened us," Cornejo says. "I was ashamed for the ship," Belmonte recalls. Cornejo says the crew felt Arnheiter was "making them the laughingstock of the fleet."

THERE were no more gunfire incidents after this, but the captain continued his search for action, sending the speedboat and the motor whaleboat out as bait in the vain hope of drawing fire.

In mid-February, after an officer flew out from Saigon to warn Arnheiter about his activities, the Vance had to be transferred from the central region to Vietnam's southern coast along the Gulf of Thailand. The Vietnamese navy commander in the central region had refused to assign any more liaison officers to the ship.

Arnheiter had got into squabbles with them, accused them of cowardice, and further irritated them by picking up innocent fishermen as Vietcong suspects and by making a habit of shooting in front of or over the junks and sampans with his rifle and pistols. He also stove in gunwales on some of the junks by forcing them to come alongside quick-

ly. He continually unnerved his own officers as well by shooting from the bridge at water snakes or sharks swimming alongside junks they were inspecting.

Arnheiter's explanation is that the junks and sampans were always trying to evade him and that he is such an excellent shot he hits exactly what he is aiming at and never endangers anyone.

By mid-February, life under Arnheiter was beginning to have a serious emotional effect on the 14 officers (who were physically closest to the captain) and some of the 150 men of the crew as well. Belmonte began keeping a "Marcus's Madness Log"—random notes on the captain's behavior written on slips of paper and the backs of forms. However, some officers were far more affected than others, and a few sailors—a very few—even liked Arnheiter.

Each day began at 6 A.M. with "Hellcats Reveille," 4 minutes and 10 seconds of bugle calls played at peak volume over the loudspeaker system—except in the captain's cabin, where Arnheiter had the speaker turned off. Belmonte estimates it was audible about a mile from the ship. A fife and drum march called "Roast Beef of Olde Englande," played at equal volume over the system, summoned the officers to lunch and dinner. Hardy says the captain told him it "got the digestive juices flowing."

The crew was on strict water rations in the tropical heat, but the sonarmen, whose compartment was next to the captain's cabin, logged Arnheiter's long showers — the record was one that lasted 27 minutes. The captain also had fresh water poured every hour over blankets and an awning slung around his cabin to cool it.

Arnheiter denies enjoying anything beyond the "standard comforts" accorded a ship's commanding officer. He says a report that he kept a bottle of whisky in his cabin is "a damn lie."

The officers say they were losing sleep and having trouble getting their work done because the captain consumed about four hours of each day, two at lunch and two at dinner, with his harangues. At night, when they were ready to go to sleep and he seemed to function best, he would launch the motor whaleboat in one of his schemes "to engage the enemy" or he would summon one of the officers to his cabin to work on one of his "programs."

As the officers' performance fell, his criticism of them grew. Hardy remembers frequent summonses to the captain's cabin at midnight to listen to two or three hours of complaints. The executive officer would then have to get up at 5:45 A.M. to do his morning navigation, but Arnheiter took to sleeping until noon, Hardy says. The captain would emerge at lunch looking fresh, dressed in a clean pair of shorts and wearing his customary baseball cap.

To try to preserve their sanity, the officers began composing mocking songs about the captain. One verse, written by Generous and sung to the tune of "There Is Nothing Like a Dame," was called "Ave, Ave, Marcus A.":

We got Brasso, we got guns,
We got mess nights with our funds,
We got scratches on the keel plates from the shallow water runs,
We got speeches after dinner, when the smoke gets very dense—
What ain't we got? We ain't got sense.
Ave, ave, Marcus A.,
Ave, Caesar Rex,
Ave, ave, Marcus A.,
You're so funny we don't need sex.

Electronics Technician 3/c John K. Lundy also drew cartoons of Arnheiter which were copied on a Xerox machine in the radio room and passed around among the officers and some of the crew.

There is confusion over the composition date of two prime exhibits the captain displays as evidence of mutiny—a spoof plan of the day and a bogus Familygram he received in the mail from an unknown source, many months after being relieved. Among other barbs, the Familygram pokes fun at Arnheiter's claim to noble descent with the remark that his elusive baronial ancestor "married my grandmother who was Baroness Bungus von Buttbrusher and I have their marriage license to prove it."

The officers dispute Arnheiter's mutiny charge. Lieutenant Meisner says that he remembers writing the parodies with a typewriter whose purchase slip shows he did not buy it until April 6, six days after the captain was relieved. And Meisner and the other officers claim that the fake Familygram and plan of the day were passed around only aboard ship and were not mailed to their own families or to those of the crew. They do not know how Arnheiter received his copy.

THE humor had only a passing effect, for in the isolated confines of the ship, 306 feet long and 37 feet wide at the beam, the officers and the crew could not escape the captain. "You never knew when the big bird was going to come out of his cabin and let fly on your head," Belmonte says. He, Merkel and a number of the other junior officers and Generous mocked and cursed the captain's actions in front of the enlisted men. But Generous wept one night while making a tape recording to send home to his wife.

On Feb. 28, Lieut. George W. Dando, a Presbyterian minister and the squadron chaplain, arrived for a two-week visit. Dando says he would have eventually reached the Vance in the course of his rounds, but he decided to go sooner than scheduled because he had heard that the officers and sailors had been writing to their wives and to the chaplain in Hawaii about the commanding officer's strange practices. Comdr. Donald F. Milligan, the chaplain's boss and Arnheiter's operational commander at Subic Bay, had also learned of these letters. At the same time he had been receiving disturbing reports about Arnheiter from the captains of destroyers on shore bombardment duty.

In the letters to Hawaii, the Roman Catholics in particular had complained about being forced to attend Protestant-style religious services. One such letter, from Lieutenant Generous, a practicing Roman Catholic, to the Catholic chaplain in Pearl Harbor, is another of Arnheiter's major pieces of evidence. But Navy lawyers say that the sending of such a letter does not constitute conspiracy and "mutiny via use of the mails," as Arnheiter has charged.

Arnheiter now insists that his services were merely "moral guidance sessions." He scheduled them in place of the regular weekly Protestant services, gave a sermon at the first one about there being "no atheism in a foxhole" and about the Titanic's band playing "Nearer My God to Thee" as the ship went down (a legend Arnheiter related as fact) and had the men take off their hats, pray and sing hymns normally associated with Protestant faiths. Hats are usually doffed in the military only at religious services.

Chaplain Dando found the officers and some of the crew in what he considered an alarming state of emotional depression. Boiler Tender 1/c Richard A. MacSaveny had been put on heavy doses of tranquilizers after confessing to Cornejo, the medic, that he

Mason with Vietnam children. He led the attack on peasants Arnheiter thought were VC.

Painted with sharks' teeth, flag flying, the speedboat was supposed to draw enemy fire.

Were assemblies like this "moral guidance sessions"—or were they religious services?

Rifle practice for the crew was an Arnheiter innovation. He himself practiced on sharks.

had twice pointed a 12-gauge shotgun at the captain's head. "He told me he came within a hair's breadth of blowing the s.o.b.'s head off," Cornejo says, "but when it got to the point of pulling the trigger, he thought of his own wife and kids and didn't do it."

Either at this time or shortly afterward, Boatswain's Mate 1/c Johnnie Lee Smoot, whose deck gang caught the brunt of Arnheiter's whirlwind operations with the speedboat and the motor whaleboat, was also put on tranquilizers for nervous depression. His condition continued to deteriorate, however.

CHAPLAIN DANDO listened to the officers' voluminous complaints and told them that, if they felt this strongly, "you've got to stiffen your backbone and do something about it" by making formal and official charges against the captain. He got no reaction. "Arnheiter had them completely cowed," he says. "These people had withdrawn to the point, psychologically speaking, where they were dangerous. I could not tell what they would do."

When he tried to explain to the captain one evening what he was doing to his crew, the chaplain recalls, Arnheiter treated him to a four-to-five-hour harangue designed to convince him that everything was fine.

The chaplain says he got the feeling that "no one could tell him anything." He left the ship, mulled the problem over for about a week and then reported to Commander Milligan and told him he felt that "something must be done" about the Vance.

Arnheiter contends that the chaplain, a rugged-looking man who had spent three years as a security guard in the military police and as an Army education specialist before entering a seminary, was just a "neophyte and a do-gooder."

Shortly after the chaplain departed, Hardy, who insists he tried to stay loyal to the captain, enforce his orders and hold the ship together, began taking two kinds of pills for a developing ulcer. Every time Arnheiter would summon him on the phone, he says, "my stomach would twist up into a knot."

Hardy's stomach was given one of its worst jolts in late March. Navy headquarters in Saigon received an intelligence report that a Chinese submarine was going to rendezvous with Vietcong junks off the southern coast to transfer arms. The Vance and a number of smaller patrol craft were ordered into a secret 96-hour alert to detect the submarine.

Arnheiter summoned his crew to the fantail, called for a supreme effort to find the submarine and vowed to "kill it" with underwater explosives if it did not identify itself as friendly. As a last resort, he said, the Vance would ram the submarine.

A lieutenant commanding one of the swift patrol boats attached to the Vance, Cornejo reports, protested to Arnheiter that it was against international law to sink other nations' submarines. Arnheiter retorted that he was captain of the Vance and knew what he was doing. "That kind of guy," Radarman 2/c Robert V. Cheadle says, "could start World War III."

CURIOUSLY, the Vance's officers do not recall reacting to this announcement. "We were probably too browbeaten," Generous says. "The ridiculous piled on you so often," Belmonte explains, "that you started to live in the atmosphere of the ridiculous."

For the next 48 hours the Vance enjoyed a short if enforced period of silence — at least for most of that time. Not even the prospect of a Chinese submarine persuaded Arnheiter to suspend "Hellcats Reveille" or "Roast Beef of Olde Englande," but no paint chipping, slamming of hatches or other loud noises were permitted in order to preserve quiet for the sonarmen listening for the sub.

Then at noon on the third day, Arnheiter, without a word to higher headquarters, his officers say, ordered the speedboat lowered and had the crew spend the rest of the day water-skiing and drinking beer from the motor whaleboat. Hardy, who knew he was still on a submarine alert, went to his stateroom in disbelief. When the captain began a running commentary in sportscasters' fashion over the loudspeaker system, Belmonte ripped the speaker out of the bulkhead in the junior officers' compartment.

Arnheiter now says the Vance was at anchor for six hours refueling patrol craft and that he took advantage of the lull to "improve morale." His officers say the refueling operations did not last nearly this long and that, in any case, the frolicking speedboat would not have helped the sonar operators.

Ironically, Arnheiter's final undoing appears to have been what the executive officer and Generous say was his attempt to put an official seal of distinction on his exploits. He had them propose him for the Silver Star, the Navy's third highest combat award, for "setting a resolute example of gallantry and intrepidity in action through persistent displays of boldness, audaciousness and courage in the leadership of officers and men."

Arnheiter says the two men spontaneously asked to propose him for the medal, that he merely "suggested phrases" from official examples in Navy regulations and "never saw" the proposed citation and the covering letter from them to Commander Milligan.

They say the idea was his, that he called Hardy to his cabin with a pad and pencil and dictated to him the proposed citation and the covering letter so that the clerk who typed them would think they had originated with the executive officer. While considerably more inflated and pompous, the citation does resemble Arnheiter's earlier extravagant press releases. (The sand dune in the incident on Jan. 29, which in the press release acquired machinegun bunkers and entrenchments, now bristled with "a company of Vietcong hard-core soldiery.")

When approached by Hardy, Generous told the executive officer he would sign the covering letter to Commander Milligan and obtain the third required signature from an enlisted man only if Hardy would sign a sealed affidavit that set forth the truth. The executive officer agreed, Generous typed the affidavit and they both signed it.

COMMANDER MILLIGAN later stated that he did not see the affidavit, which he received in a separate, sealed envelope with the words "to be opened only by the direction of Lieut. R. S. Hardy, U.S.N., or Lieut. W. T. Generous, U.S.N.," typed on the outside. The Navy says the envelope remains sealed in a safe in Washington. Generous, however, provided this writer with a copy of the affidavit.

The captain was proposed for the Silver Star, the affidavit states, "solely as a result of implicit direction.

"The idea for this award was generated by Commander Arnheiter himself, despite what the letter says. The words of the letter were dictated to Lieutenant Hardy by Mr. Arnheiter. The letter is anything but a spontaneous attempt to cover a deserving officer in glory. It represents, rather, a shameful farce, and a degrading of all those brave men who have earned the award.

"We further state that we, as the two most senior officers under the command, signed the letter in order to preserve peace in the ship; and that we did so in the belief that some action would take place to prevent the actual bestowing of the award."

If it did not, they pledged to ask Commander Milligan to open the sealed envelope.

Lieut. Uldis Kordons, the squadron communications officer, returned to Manila on March 26 after a stay on the Vance. He gave Milligan a report similar to that of Chaplain Dando. The chaplain prepared a sworn statement and both men urged Milligan to act. Coming on top of this and all he had heard before, the Silver Star proposal appears to have decided Milligan to move.

On March 29, he went to the cruiser-destroyer group commander, Rear Adm. D. G. Irvine, and told him and Rear Adm. Thomas S. King Jr., who was replacing Admiral Irvine at the time, what he had learned. He recommended that Arnheiter be relieved so that an investigation could be conducted. A request was made to the Bureau of Naval Personnel, and the four-line order of relief to Arnheiter followed.

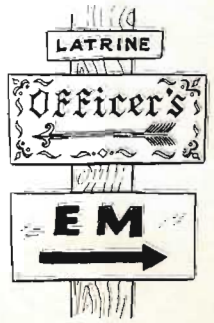
Arnheiter's last week on the Vance was marred by the disappearance of the tape bearing "Hellcats Reveille" and "Roast Beef of Olde Englande" on it. Someone took the tape off the recorder under the main loudspeaker station and apparently threw it into Manila Bay.

The day before Arnheiter was relieved, Smoot, the boatswain's mate who had been using tranquilizers, left for the psychiatric ward at the Clark Air Force Base Hospital.

THE manner of his relief, Arnheiter argues, was a violation of Navy regulations in that he should have been shown the accusations against him and been given an opportunity to answer them before being taken off the ship.

The Vance was due to return to Vietnam after the short stay in Manila at the end of March for repairs, and the Navy says that regulations permit relieving a commander under circumstances where war needs require speed. Arnheiter's rights, the Navy says, were carefully protected during the investigation and the exhaustive reviews that followed.

Some Navy officers privately concede that the regulations were bent in the initial



act of getting Arnheiter off the ship. There was time to have informed him of the allegations before removing him. The order also relieved him permanently of command of the Vance, instead of just physically removing him from the ship while the investigation was conducted. But officers say that the real error, in retrospect, was the failure to court-martial him after the investigation. Although it would not surprise some officers if Arnheiter were eventually court-martialed for his attacks on the integrity of some admirals—and he has said he would welcome a trial —the Navy seems reluctant to do so for fear of making him a martyr.

THE formal court of inquiry he is demanding, the Navy contends, would be a waste of time and money. Arnheiter wants the court to consist of elderly retired admirals, on the grounds that the present Navy hierarchy is virtually all prejudiced against him.

Admiral King, the group commander, recommended that Arnheiter be given a punitive letter of reprimand. Vice Adm. Walter H. Baumberger, Commander Cruiser-Destroyer Force Pacific at the time and the next higher echelon of command, disagreed. Baumberger contended that most of the 40 "findings of fact" that emerged from the Subic Bay hearing were either unsubstantiated or that the extent of culpability could not be proved. He recommended that Arnheiter be given another command under close supervision "to provide an opportunity for reassessment of his abilities."

Admiral Baumberger subsequently decided that he was wrong and that Arnheiter had learned nothing. The admiral said so in the last fitness report he gave Arnheiter before the Vance's captain was transferred to his present graveyard post as a communications staff officer at Treasure Island, Calif.

Adm. Roy L. Johnson, Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, disagreed with both Admiral King and Admiral Baumberger. He overruled Baumberger's opinions on the "findings of fact." He also recommended that Arnheiter not be penalized with a letter of reprimand, but that his relief be upheld "for cause," i.e., for good reason, and that he never be given a command again, either ashore or at sea. This was the position the Navy finally adopted.

ONE of the most persistent questions in the case has been just how Arnheiter became captain of the Vance in the first place. Capt. H. Lynn Matthews, the Bureau of Naval Personnel officer handling lieutenant commanders at the time, says Capt. Richard G. Alexander achieved the appointment by trickery.

Matthews says he was vigorously opposed to giving Arnheiter a command and that a five-man command clearance board, of which both he and Alexander were members, had cleared Arnheiter only in "emergency" situations where no other qualified officer was available. However, in September, 1965, Matthews says, Alexander showed him a letter to Arnheiter from Vice Adm. Benedict J. Semmes, Chief of Naval Personnel, informing Arnheiter that he would be made captain of the Vance.

Matthews says he has since discovered that this letter had not been properly routed through officers who knew of the restriction on Arnheiter's command clearance before it was signed by the admiral. Matthews claims that "Captain Alexander had done this pretty much on his own."

Alexander denies any trickery. He says he assigned Arnheiter to the Vance on instructions from the senior member of the command board. Matthews, he says, was not even a member of the board. And "contrary to all lying insinuations of someone in Washington, there was absolutely no restriction on [Arnheiter's] command clearance as being for emergency use only." (Two other officers on the board say that Matthews was a member and that there was such a restriction.)

After Arnheiter was relieved, Alexander explains, he had "a feeling in my bones" that the Vance's captain had been "sabotaged by dissident junior officers." The feeling grew into a conviction strong enough to gamble his career on Arnheiter's behalf because he believes the case has seriously endangered the authority of a warship captain and the principle of command responsibility within the Navy.

A tall, aloof man with the strikingly handsome, aristocratic features of a storybook naval officer, Captain Alexander says he had long felt the Navy's promotion policies were so conservative that they were driving out talented, if controversial, officers. He was not a personal friend of Arnheiter's but had come to admire him in the course of their professional relationship and because of Arnheiter's articles on antisubmarine defenses. Alexander also notes that Arnheiter had received outstanding fitness reports in his last major assignment before the Vance and had been recommended for a command by his superiors.

Officers friendly with Alexander find it difficult to explain why he carried the struggle to the point of committing professional suicide. He is now Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations in the Boston Naval District, a dead-end post. At one time he was designated for command of the battleship New Jersey. One officer notes that throughout his unusually fine career as a staff officer and destroyer commander, Alexander had always been outspoken on controversial subjects and had usually been proved correct. "You're dealing with an individual," he says, "who had been wrong very few times in his life, and he's not going to let go of this dying cat yet."

Arnheiter's articulate and well-publicized case has indeed won him sympathy in the Navy from officers who dislike the manner of his relief and who fear the possibility of being undermined by clandestine complaints from juniors. "To the subalterns of many a ship, the Light has been lit," Arnheiter warns, "and the Way has been paved."

ARNHEITER gave the impression in lengthy interviews with this writer that he was still unaware of the effect his actions had had on his crew, despite the six and a half days of testimony at Subic Bay. "The only mistake I made," he says, "was being too compassionate and not giving Hardy and Generous the ax while I could."

His letters to Congressmen and newspaper editors, often mailed free in franked Navy envelopes, are entitled, "The Vance Mutiny." He attributes his demise entirely to the "mutiny and conspiracy afloat" that he says were masterminded by Generous, "an atheist and conscientious objector" with "a twisted and diabolical mind." The "incompetent" Hardy was allegedly the co-conspirator and the "beatnik" Belmonte, Cornejo and others were participants to varying degrees.

Generous is now on a scholarship at Stanford University, studying for a doctorate in American history. He spent 18 months on Vietnam patrol on the Vance, both before and after Arnheiter's 99 days. He says he believed in fighting the Vietnam war then and still does. A Phi Beta Kappa and honor graduate in Navy R.O.T.C. from Brown University, he says he might have made a career of the Navy if it had not been for Arnheiter.

His conscience troubles him. "I'm not proud of what I did," he says. "You were constantly—over the most minor things sometimes and sometimes over really major things—torn between having to obey him and the law. Supposing I had gone to war with him about those false position reports . . . pressed court-martial charges. Practically speaking, that's absurd. That makes a nice kind of novel, that kind of stand, but that doesn't happen in the real world.

"So what you end up doing is something sneaky, like I did, and that's send the goddamn thing and then make a log entry. That's Pontius Pilate."

The "beatnik" Belmonte now makes a business of restoring old homes in San Francisco. He enjoyed his subsequent year in Vietnam as a gunfire spotter with the Marines and says his sole reason for leaving the Navy was Arnheiter. "Suppose some friend of Arnheiter's was on one of my promotion boards five years from now?" he asks.

Belmonte and Generous are suing Arnheiter for defamation of character and invasion of privacy, and he is countersuing them.

The "incompetent" Hardy has since been promoted to lieutenant commander. He offered to make his fitness report file, containing the record of his entire performance in the Navy, available to this writer for publication. (Arnheiter has provided only some of his reports and has declined full access to his file despite repeated requests.)

Hardy is now assigned to the Key West (Florida) Test and Evaluation Detachment. His conscience troubles him, too. He worries that innocent people might have been killed or injured by stray shells in one of Arnheiter's "engagements with the enemy."

Boatswain's Mate 1/c Johnnie Smoot has now retired from the Navy and is working as a painter at an aircraft repair facility in Oklahoma City. He had wanted to stay in the Navy for 30 years, he says, but left at the end of 21 because he was afraid he might encounter another Captain Arnheiter.

During the month and a half he spent in psychiatric wards before being released, Smoot says, the psychiatrists would not believe the stories he told them about life under Arnheiter—"they said I must have talked that way about all my captains."

Then he adds: "Arnheiter should have been there instead of me." ■