



D. J. MURPHY

To the men of BENNINGTON -- Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Please extend my warmest holiday greetings to your wonderful families throughout the United States.

This Christmas finds us a little closer to peace than last. I believe each of you who sailed in Bennington during our 1968 deployment in the South China Sea helped move the world a little bit closer to real peace. Granted the fighting goes on in Vietnam, but Ho Chi Minh has felt the pressure of your presence in the Tonkin Gulf, and he is responding by his agreement to talk in Paris.

What was once considered the inevitable take-over of South Vietnam by the communist forces from the North now looks like a suc-

cessful preservation of the right of the people of South Vietnam to determine their own form of government. You made possible this about-face in the future of Southeast Asia. You did it as a man in a U.S. Navy uniform; a military man who recognized that peace in the world is not just the absence of fighting.

Subjugated people throughout history have witnessed times of no fighting, but they were not at peace. Peace includes freedom and respect for human dignity. When the guns grow silent it can mean peace, or it can mean enslavement. Your selfless contribution in 1968 as a Navyman may insure that true peace will eventually come to this troubled world.

So, during this holy Christmas season, wear your uniform proudly. You are men of peace in the truest sense of the word.

Since I will be relieved as Commanding Officer on 20 December, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of the Bennington crew for their cheerful support these past 13 months and to welcome your new Commanding Officer, Captain William B. BARROW, Jr.

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Let no man sell himself short. There are no 'no-bodies' in God's world, none in this man's Navy. When we remember the WestPac Cruise of the Bennington in 1968 we'll remember the constant emphasis on individual responsibility for skill and safety which came from the Admiral, the Captain, and for which each of us can be thoroughly thankful. This high regard for self and safety is a good way of life to continue.

The nature of the self demands that it be held in high personal regard. We are conscious selves with the capacity to direct, within limits, our life and our destiny. We are not hopelessly adrift on a vast sea of impersonal events. A high regard for oneself should follow the realization that the self is the source of actions: good, bad, right, wrong, noble, ignoble.

When a man has a truly high regard for himself, he binds himself up in the bundle of life and has a real sense of belonging in the world of which he is a part.

"Love thy neighbor as thyself" pre-supposes that your respect for self is of such a high degree that the very best treatment you could afford a fellow human is at least equal to that you wish for yourself. In effect, this is but another way of saying the Golden Rule, which is inherent in all religions.

Thus, in order to be somebody and to do something with this life we live, we should actually thank God for ourselves when we take time for Thanksgiving.