

## bennington now outdates her crew

By JO2 D. C. Kaster

The keel for Bennington was laid in December 1943, and the ship was commissioned in August 1944, making it older than the post-war babies which now man the ship.

These post-war babies are now full grown and are among the older first-time enlistees aboard. The younger group of men manning the ship were born near the end of the Korean conflict in 1952, eight years after Bennington was commissioned.

Bennington isn't the only ship in the Navy this old. All of her sister ships are as old if not older, and, in fact, most of the U.S. Navy Fleet is hovering around the 25-year mark.

When Bennington was commissioned she had a straight flight deck and an open bow, like the LPH's have now. Then she went through a major renovation period in 1955 and became an attack carrier. In 1959 her mission was changed to anti-submarine warfare.

There have been many changes in Benn's structure since she was commissioned in 1944, both exterior and interior--such as, racks instead of hammocks, air conditioning in 50 per cent of the ship, space allotted for recreation and a lot better operational equipment. But what is Bennington? She is still a 25-year-old ship that has just cost the taxpayers more than eight million dollars in upkeep. For approximately three years the ship will be able to operate because of the extensive overhaul. After that she will be ready for the boneyard or for another expensive overhaul period.

The Navy is very conscious of the age of the United States' modern fleet, but it takes time and a lot of persuasion to convince the taxpayers of the dire need for new ships. Without new ships how will the Navy keep up with the country's adversaries?

Men aboard these old ships are the ones with first-hand knowledge of the need for modern ships. Men who serve on old ships, such as Bennington, are the best salesmen. They are the ones who can tell the taxpayers about the need for a larger naval budget; the ones who can tell what living conditions are like, and the ones who can tell how hard it is to operate like a modern Navy with ancient ships.

## benn wins m.u.c.

During the personnel inspection Friday, June 20, Rear Admiral Norman C. Gillette, Commander Anti-Submarine Group THREE, presented the ship and her crew the Meritorious Unit Commendation Ribbon.

Men serving aboard Bennington between June 21, 1966, and October 27, 1966, are eligible to wear the ribbon.

Bennington was awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation for her support of the Seventh Fleet's war efforts in the Tonkin Gulf, during the ship's 1968 Western Pacific deployment. CVSG-59's squadrons, VS-33 and VS-38, achieved a notable record in naval gunfire spotting along with search and rescue efforts by HS-8 and HC-7, Det. 20 which contributed greatly to the winning of the M.U.C.

The ship also provided Commander Task Force 77 an effective early warning against the enemy surface threat, a rapid anti-submarine warfare reaction capability and continuous, timely merchant ship intelligence.

## man takes third in talent contest

Airman William F. Roufs, 19, of V-4 Division walked off with the overall third place trophy at a joint Navy-YMCA talent contest in Long Beach May 25.

Roufs scored first in his category by singing and playing his Spanish classical guitar to a modified version of Bobby Goldsboro's "Honey."

In the finals Roufs came in third behind a combination comedian-singer-dancer, and an opera singer. At the end of the performance, he was called back on stage for an additional 15-minute encore.

Roufs took Goldsboro's hit song "Honey" and made his own changes.

"I used a summertime beat, just a little faster than 'Honey' itself, with a high point telling what happened to cause her to leave home, and then blended into the song itself," he said.

Roufs has been playing for about six years. He enjoys classical blues, folk, and rock music. He has been a member of three groups as lead singer prior to entering the Navy last year.

Roufs' home town is Oak Lawn, Ill.