

Last Hurrah for Oldtimers Of Navy Destroyer Fleet

The Navy paid a final tribute to the destroyers USS Nicholas and USS O'Bannon January 30 morning decommissioning ceremonies at Pearl Harbor.

The Pineapple Fleet sister ships were the two oldest destroyers in service in the Navy.

The ships completed their final Western Pacific cruise December 18. It included duty off the coast of Vietnam.

Crewmembers and their families joined with Vice Admiral Walter H. Baumberger, deputy commander in chief of the Pacific Fleet, in bidding aloha to the veteran fighting ships.

Also in the gallery were several former crewmen of the retiring ships now living in Hawaii. Retired Rear Admiral Andrew J. Hill, the commanding officer of the Nicholas when she earned the Presidential Unit Citation during the Battle of Kula Gulf, flew in from San Diego to attend the ceremonies.

Admiral Hill commented, "I rode Nicholas down the ways as the executive officer when she was commissioned. I thought it was most fitting that I be here for her decommissioning."

Captain Dewitt C. Redgrave, commander, Destroyer Squadron 25 presided. He commended the two ships of his squadron for having "served with conspicuous honor in both war and peace for almost three decades. It was my pleasure to observe their performance in the Seventh Fleet over the last six months."

The retiring ships' captains took their turns at the rostrum to honor their commands.

Commander John B. Hurd, skipper of Nicholas, said, "Nicholas was the first famous Fletcher Class destroyer to be commissioned. She was the first of that class to be tested in combat during the Battle of Kula Gulf.

"Over the years Nicholas has continued to live up to her reputation established during World War II. I know I speak for all Nicholasmen when I say I leave with regret and with pride."

Captain John P. Iredale, commanding officer of the O'Bannon, reflected on her role in the Pacific. He said, "When I took over O'Bannon's command in 1967, the Pineapple Fleet was composed mainly of 2100-ton destroyers. Since World War II the 2100's have been the backbone of the mid-Pacific destroyer Navy.

"O'Bannon and her sister ships were in the thick of some of the fiercest sea battles in history. During World War II the O'Bannon was credited with sinking a Japanese battleship, three cruisers, six destroyers, numerous barges and three submarines. She also downed 13 enemy aircraft.

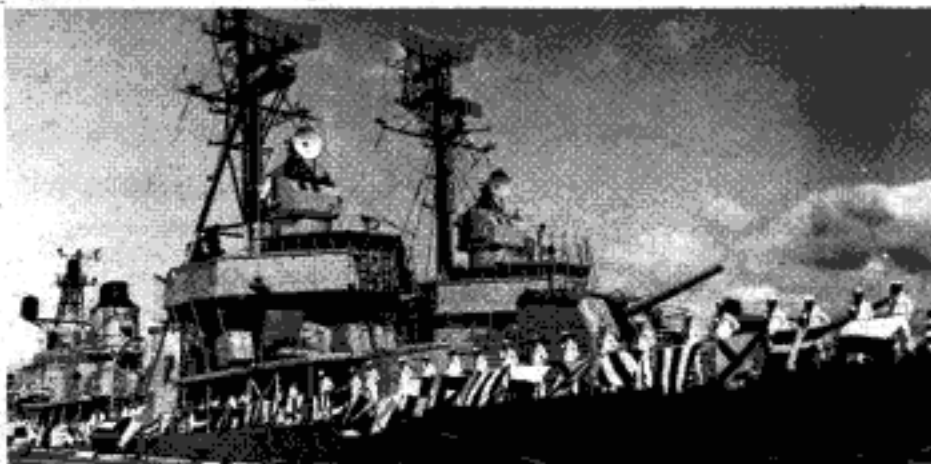
"With the retirement of O'Bannon and Nicholas and the decommissioning of Benschaw, another Fletcher Class destroyer, on February 14, the end of an era has come."

The departing com-

manding officers read their new orders as part of the proceedings. Both have been reassigned in Hawaii.

Commander Hurd will join the staff of Admiral John J. Hyland, commander in chief, Pacific Fleet. Captain Iredale has been ordered to the 14th Naval District, under Rear Admiral Donald C. Davis.

Captain Redgrave then presented the ships to Lieutenant Commander Dwight Osborne of Pearl Harbor Ship Inactivation Facility. The ships are to be towed to Vallejo, California.



END OF AN ERA--Crewmembers line the rails of Nicholas and O'Bannon as the ships await decommissioning at Pearl Harbor. The two Fletcher-class destroyers, the oldest in the active fleet, were phased out in ceremonies January 30.

--Navy Photo

Colonel's Wife Names Planned DeRussy Hotel

Ft. DeRussy's planned hotel has been named Hale Koa.

The name, submitted by Mrs. William E. Deeds, was one of 80 entries in a recent contest to name the 16-story hotel.

Hale Koa is a combination of Hawaiian words--hale, meaning house, and koa, meaning warrior. Thus, freely translated, House of the Warrior.

In submitting the win-

ning entry, Mrs. Deeds believed the name should be Hawaiian, easy to pronounce and have meaning in terms of the hotel's purpose.

A certificate of appreciation and a small memento has been presented to Mrs. Deeds by Major General Ben Sternberg, commanding general of U. S. Army, Hawaii. Mrs. Deeds is the wife of Colonel Wil-

liam E. Deeds of the U. S. Marine Corps.

The planned hotel will be constructed on the site of the Armed Forces Recreation Center at Fort DeRussy. Total cost of the hotel will be approximately \$16 million. Funds for construction will come from proceeds of exchanges, clubs, motion picture services and other nonappropriated fund activities.