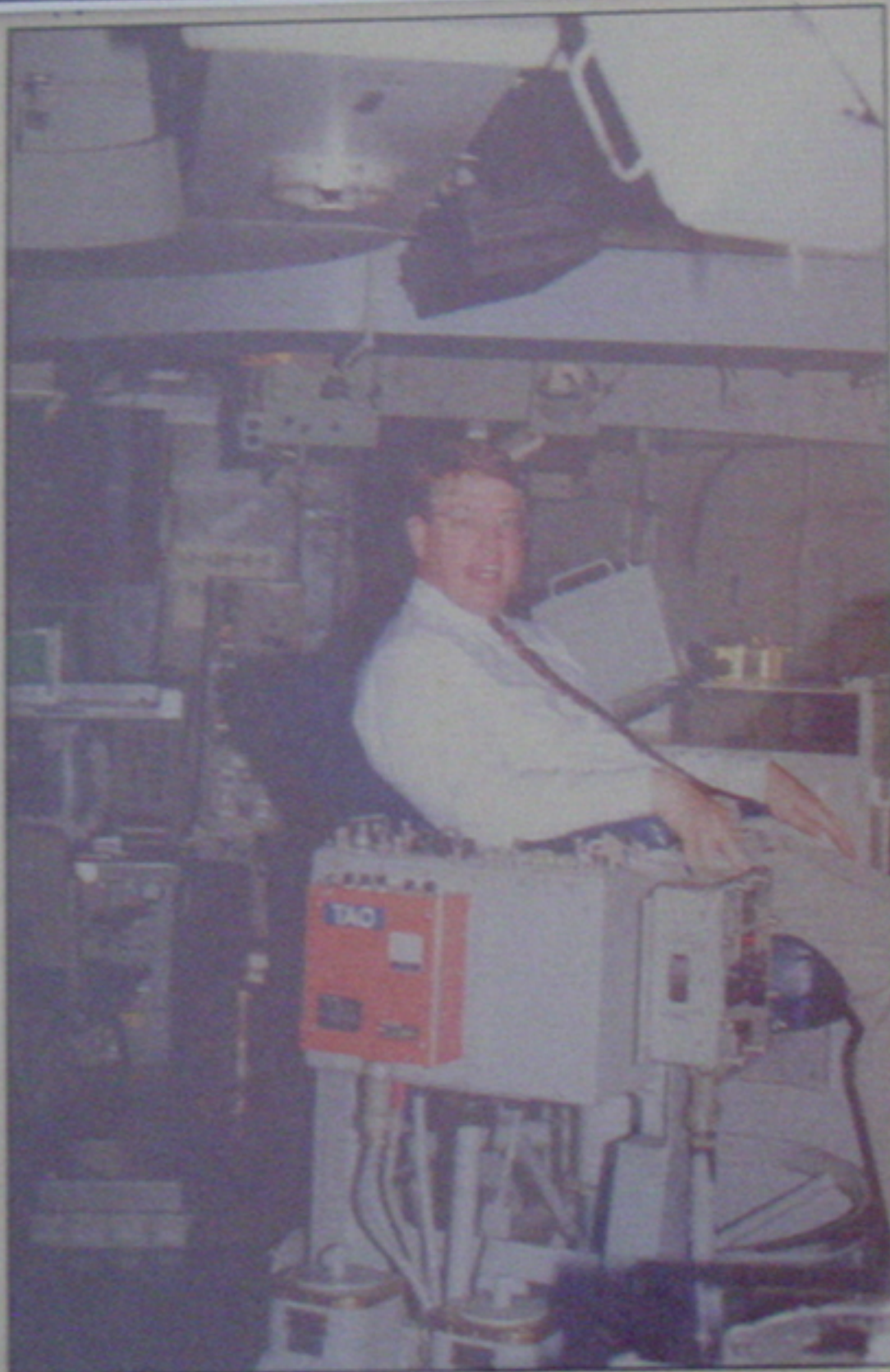


Lifestyle

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• Advice /2D



Photos special to the Marietta Daily Journal

USS John Rodgers

Built: In Pascagoula, Miss.

Christened: March 18, 1978

Commissioned: July 14, 1979

Named for: Three people in U.S. Naval history named John Rodgers

Nickname: Sea Eagle Triumphant

Length: 563 feet, 4 inches

Beam: 55 feet

Displacement: 7,800 tons

Number of first crew members: 19 officers; 249 enlisted men

Decommissioned: Sept. 4, 1998

Above, is the decommissioning ceremony of the USS John Rodgers DD 983 in Mayport, Fla. At left, Matt Flournoy sits in the ship's combat information center, where he stood watch as the officer in charge. He watched for submarines and airplanes from the center from which the ship's weapons were fired, including guns, torpedoes and missiles.

Saying good-bye to an old friend

• Story by Staff Writer Jenny J. Wagner •

Matt Flournoy recently strolled down memory lane, recalling his days in the U.S. Navy as Lt. jg. M.C. Flournoy, a communications officer.

hours at a time with eight hours to eat, sleep, or work as a communications officer. Officer of the deck was responsible for verbally commanding and driving the ship.

"In heavy seas, I would get seasick, which was very common among the men, but I still stood my watch," Flournoy said.

High School up to the next grade, and then transferred to The Westminster schools, where he graduated in 1972.

In 1976 he received a bachelor's degree in American history from Princeton University, where he was a varsity cheerleader and was vice president of Dial Lodge, which was similar to a fraternity.

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Saying good-bye to an old friend



● Story by Staff Writer Jenny J. Wagner ●

Matt Flournoy recently strolled down memory lane, recalling his days in the U.S. Navy as Lt. j.g. M.C. Flournoy, a communications officer. On Sept. 4, the native Mariettan attended the decommissioning ceremony of the USS John Rodgers DD 983 at Naval Station Mayport in Mayport, Fla.

Flournoy, now 44, was one of 19 officers on the commissioning crew for the destroyer, which was nicknamed Sea Eagle Triumphant. There were 249 enlisted men aboard when the ship first set sail.

"It was very sentimental," Flournoy said about touring the ship and reminiscing with six of the 19 officers, who took the ship out for testing when it was commissioned on July 14, 1979.

"We took it on sea trials, tested the systems and equipment and signed off that it was ready for delivery to the U.S. Navy," he said. "It was an honor to be on the commissioning crew. It was a reward for a sailor to be assigned that."

This was the second ship Flournoy served on, the first being the USS Piedmont, which was a 35-year-old World War II ship at the time.

After approving the ship for military service, the officers remained on the USS John Rodgers for two years, protecting an aircraft carrier from submarine warfare.

"We were out to sea for two weeks, and then we'd come in for two days in port," said the attorney with Flournoy & Gentry, LLP.

During his four years with the Navy, he visited countries such as Spain, France, Italy, Morocco and Egypt.

As a communications officer at age 25, Flournoy was in charge of the division of radiomen and signalmen and all external communications of voice and data.

He also served as officer of the deck for four

hours at a time with eight hours to eat, sleep, or work as a communications officer. Officer of the deck was responsible for verbally commanding and driving the ship.

"In heavy seas, I would get seasick, which was very common among the men, but I still stood my watch," Flournoy said.

He also stood watch as the officer in charge in the combat information center, from which the ship could fire missiles, guns and torpedoes. From there he would watch for air planes and submarines.

Flournoy is one of two sons of Superior Court Judge Robert E. Flournoy, who was mayor of Marietta in the early 1980s, and Pam Flournoy.

He attended Marietta

High School up to the ninth grade, and then transferred to The Westminster Schools, where he graduated in 1972.

In 1976 he received a bachelor's degree in American history from Princeton University, where he was a varsity cheerleader and was vice president of Dial Lodge, which was similar to a fraternity.

He joined the Navy in 1976 and served four years. He then attended law school at University of Georgia on the GI Bill. He has been practicing law since 1985. He and his wife, Joanne, live in Marietta.

The decommissioning ceremony featured various speakers, and the local Navy band performed.

"They lowered the flags, and the [current] crew marched off, and it was officially no longer a ship of the U.S. Navy," Flournoy said.

"I spoke with some crew members about what they were going to do with the ship," he said.

Apparently, there are several considerations. According to the crew members he spoke with, the ship will be towed to Philadelphia, where it will be stripped of materials and then towed out to sea and used as a target ship, and then sunk and used as a reef.

The current captain told him the destroyer would be towed to Philadelphia, but beyond that, the use is unknown.

"Another option would be to tow it to Philly [where there is a ship graveyard] to be mothballed or preserved and saved in case we go to war and bring it back into commission," Flournoy said.

Finally, the ship could be sold or given to another country such as Argentina, Ecuador or Taiwan, where it would have a different hull number and name. Or it could even be cut up into parts for its metal.

"The reason for the decommissioning is because the Navy didn't need this one anymore. It's called the down-sizing of the military," Flournoy said. "It's premature to decommission it after only 19 years of service. It has another 10 years left in it."



Above left, Joanne Flournoy shows the state room where her husband, Matt Flournoy, lived while on the USS John Rodgers. She is standing next to the three bunks her husband and two other crew members shared. Above right, Matt Flournoy shows his desk in the stateroom he shared with two other men.



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