

Portland sailor travels the world

By Bob Hansen

Alameda, Calif. -- Navy Seaman Gregory B. Funchess doesn't lose at cribbage too often.

"I like chess and bowling, too, but there's no room for a bowling alley on board this ship."

The lack of a bowling alley on his ship, the USS Peoria, has allowed him to develop his expertise in board games. "We could sure use a dart board," he said.

Funchess, the son of Ruth Harrington, Portland, has been assigned to the tank landing ship USS Peoria since January.

Last fall he returned from a cruise aboard the USS Oklahoma City and says that he enjoyed the duty in the Western Pacific.

"I would extend my enlistment for two years or more if I could go back," said the boatswain's mate, "maybe even stay in the Navy forever."

He admitted that he so enjoyed the travel that he's considering either a career in the Navy or Merchant Marine because life at sea suits him.

Funchess' favorite country was Japan, for many reasons.

"We had a sister ship in the Japanese Navy. The Japanese guys liked to party with us but they wouldn't let us spend our own money when we went out on the town," said Funchess.

"I liked to get out of town and see things and I was able to see a great deal of the country first hand," he said. "I tried learning Japanese but wasn't too successful."

"I know Japan. I could go back today, get on a train and just take off."

Besides Japan, Funchess has been to Hong Kong,

Thailand, Taiwan, Singapore, Australia, Indonesia, and Korea.

"I'm sure I've been more places but there are just too many to remember right now."

A 1977 graduate of U.S. Grant High School in Portland, Ore., Funchess was a teacher's aide site supervisor for young teens before joining the Navy in September of that year. After recruit training in San Diego, the USS Oklahoma City was his first duty assignment. He still has fond memories of that ship.

"The Oklahoma City was a World War II Cruiser and the last active ship with 'big guns.' It didn't have a lot of the fancy equipment that some of the modern large ships have," he said. "We did a lot of things the old way -- by hand."

A boatswain's mate is the traditional backbone of the Navy. His responsibilities include general maintenance, small boat handling, damage control, line handling and whatever else he might be called on to do.

According to Funchess, "The Oklahoma City had a wooden deck which required a special tool known as a holystone for maintenance. We had to push the holystone along the length of the entire deck by hand."

However, Funchess said he doesn't mind working with his hands.

"I don't believe in using winches and things like that all the time. I like the feel of rope in my hands."

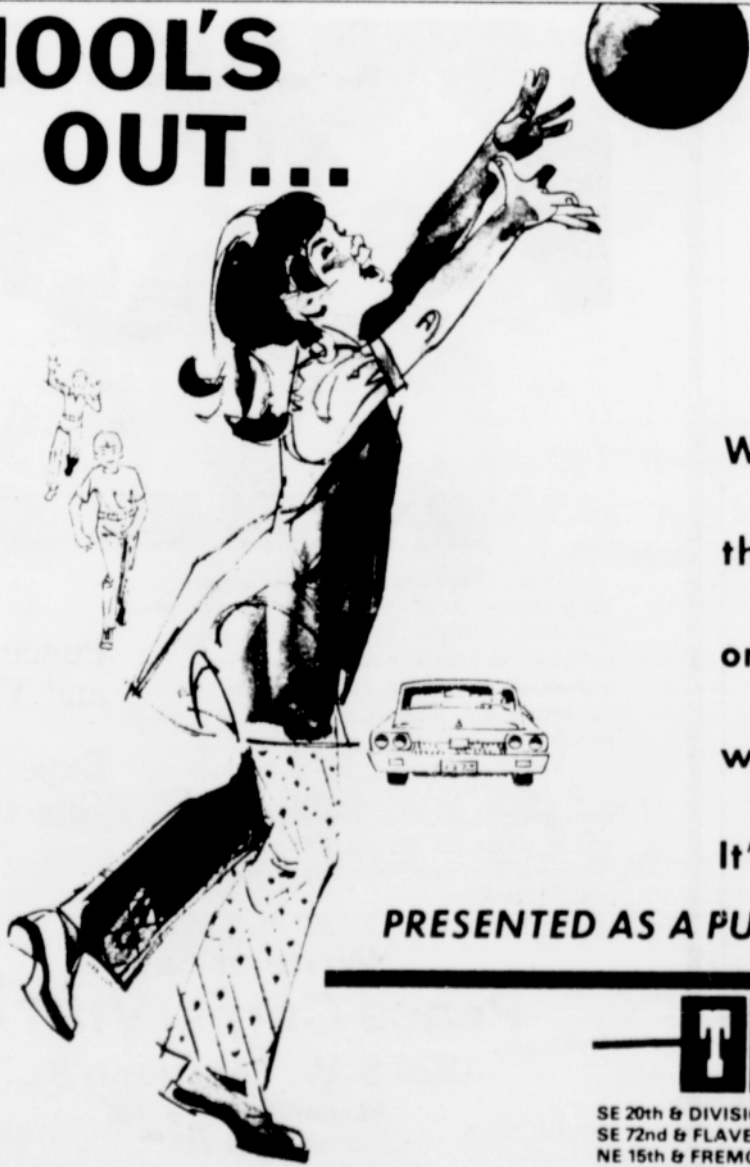
Funchess added, "I'm starting to get involved in working with lines (ropes) as a hobby too by making small decorative things and designs."

"I'm hoping to get back to Japan some day," said Funchess. "The Oklahoma City was the seventh Fleet admiral's flagship before it was decommissioned, so one of my goals is to someday get duty on its replacement."



Seaman Gregory Funchess of Portland is stationed aboard the tank landing ship USS Peoria. (U.S. Navy Photo: Tom Howser)

SCHOOLS OUT...



DRIVE CAREFULLY!

With schools closing for the summer,

there'll be a lot of children out

on the street, and they won't al-

ways be careful to watch for cars.

It's your responsibility to be alert.

PRESENTED AS A PUBLIC SERVICE BY THE FOLLOWING:

TRADEWELL

SE 20th & DIVISION
SE 72nd & FLAVEL
NE 15th & FREMONT
W BURNSIDE at 21st
SAN RAFAEL - 1910 NE 122nd

Forest Grove - 2329 PACIFIC
Oregon City - 878 MOLALLA
Candy - 1051 SW 1st
LLOYD CENTER

14410 SE DIVISION
3966 SE POWELL
NE 74th & GLISAN
HILLSBORO - 960 SE OAK