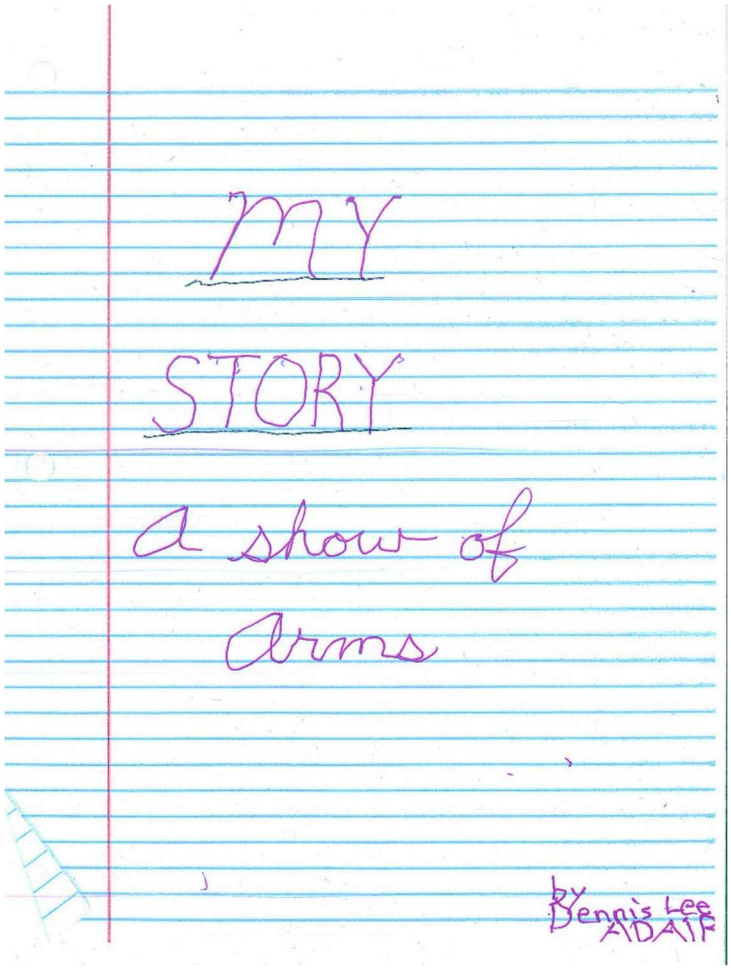
DENNIS LEE ADAIR



US NAVY 1974

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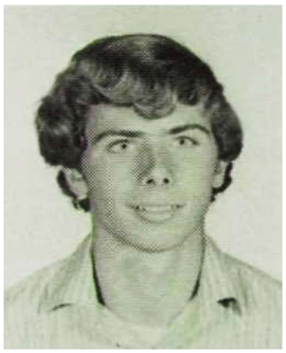

Editor' note: Dennis Lee Adair was born 30-Aug 1955.
In 2024 He wrote his memories of his service in the US Navy.
His story, in his own words, is transcribed below…

MY STORY – A Show of Arms

I met my ship at Subic Bay Navy Base, Philippines 1974 the U.S.S. Constellation (CVA-64). The aircraft carrier's nickname is "Connie." The flight deck is equal in size to four football field. The flattop is thirteen stories from the bottom of the hull to the top of the island the structure rising above the flight deck. With crew of over two thousand, she's a floating city.

There's an ice parlor, two ships stores, a barber shop, a gym, a library, and a weight room.

My name is Dennis Lee Adair. I am 100% service connected, honorably discharged, disabled veteran. I volunteered for the Navy when I was seventeen. The Vietnam War was going on. My rating is AQ3 Aviation Fiore Control Technician. My job was to test avionics equipment. I received two years of electronics school. Sea Duty for five years on the Constellation. My job on the ship was avionic equipment like the Black Boxes. A buddy and I took a walk down the hangar bay. The planes were loaded with every missile, bombs, that they could hold. Dignitaries from Iraq, Iran, Syria, and all the Middle East.

Early that same day a tragedy occurred on the flight deck. A jet was turning around when the exhaust blew a sailor right off the deck. A chopper went out to look for him but came back and reported that no one was seen out in the choppy water. Connie did not stop or even slow down but kept her speed and bearing. There was five minutes of silence to show respect to the air man and his family. A telegram was sent to his family informing them of this tragic accident and stating he was lost at sea and given a Purple Heart.

My job was to test avionics equipment, black boxes, anything electrical or electronic. I'd hook up the piece to a computer in our repair shop. I went to the Navy's Class A and Class B schools. The Constellation and all the ship's Carrier Group.

A Carrier Group is usually made up with two guided missile destroyer, one or two guided missile cruisers, and a submarine.

The Under Way replenishment was something to watch. The much smaller Fuel Transport ship pulled right up next to us. The Connie just kept the same speed and bearing. Then they sent a cable over and attached a big hose. All of the ships topped off.

The Constellation stopped on the equator to carry on an old mariner tradition. Every one who has been over the equator are called Shellbacks. Everyone who hasn't are called Poly Wogs. The initiation lasted all day. Some Poly Wogs were on the end of a heavy chain. The food was green spaghetti. They packed my ears with axle grease. At the end of the initiation they fattest Chief they could find and they dubbed him the King of Neptunis Rex. He took our heads and rubbed them in his greasy belly. I am a Shellback. I got in the shower as fast as I could. A Navy shower cold salt water.

In Boot Camp they showed us a movie of one of the arresting cables breaking. There is five arresting cables that run across the flight deck. Meant for the pilot to hook on one of the three-inch diameter cables to stop. One of the cables broke one day and the wild end cut a young man right in half and his body was never found after falling into the drink.

The USS constellation was in the path of a powerful typhoon. The captain ordered the crew to get underway ASAP. The reason being is a ship will bash up against the concrete piers, possibly causing damage to the ship in the piers. We pulled away from the pier and out to see.

The typhoon was very strong, and the Connie rolled back-and-forth and pitching forward and backward all at the same time. I was walking down the corridor, and the ship rolled on its side, and I was walking on the bulkhead.

We anchored just off the coast that Karachi Pakistan. Dignitaries from nations like Iran, Iraq, Syria, all the Middle East countries were representatives were invited on board for a guided tour of the USS Constellation. As the Constellation drew closer to Pakistan, certain precautions were being taken. No radio or TV Signals. The only lights on were small red night lights. Those were meant to be less detectable. The tour started the next day. It was a large group of people looking at all the firepower loaded on our planes.

All the sea and airspace had been controlled by Russia in the region for more than 30 years. We were the first American ships to be in those waters for over three decades.

Below our carrier group were Russian subs. On the water all around us were boats and ships that Russia made them look like fishing boats. They actually are spy boats. Russian jets would fly very close to Connie.

We didn't fire a single bullet. And neither did the other side. After liberty in Karachi and riding camels and watching the belly dancers it was time to go home. Connie sailed back across the Indian Ocean into the Subic Bay, P.I.

One night a buddy of mine woke me up and said, hey follow me. I got up and I went with him up on the flight deck back in the fantail. I was looking at the most beautiful sight. It was the full moon and its reflection on the water that had me in awe for a long time.

Alongside our ship were whales swimming with us. Porpoises also jumping up and a school of flying fish came up out of the water and using their fins like wings, they flew a good distance than going back underwater.

The voyage in Russian patrol waters and showing those on the tour of the ship what we got. It was a show of arms. And we were ready.