

28 February 2007

Captain E. L. Alexander
Commanding Officer
USCGC Midgett

Dear Captain, Alexander,

We do not know one another however we share something quite special; our love and appreciation for the USCGC Midgett. And while unlike you, I did not make the Coast Guard my career, my time in service remains an immense source of personal pride.

In November 1974 as a young, green boot, fresh from Romeo Company in Cape May, N.J., I headed to California to report aboard what was then, the newest High Endurance Cutter in the fleet.

This was no small step for a young man who had never before ventured far from his home in southwest Virginia. At that time the Midgett's home port was in Alameda, CA. but I met her in San Diego where she was engaged in REFTRA.

I'll never forget my feelings of fear, anticipation and excitement as I viewed the Midgett from the liberty launch as we approached. Even though more than 30 years have passed, I still vividly recall the scene before me.

And now, as is often the case with men my age, I've reached a point in life where I place a high value on my past. Perhaps it is because at 50+ years old, I now have more time to do so or maybe more accurately, I realize I have *less* time to do so.

Whatever the reason, over the past couple of years I've worked at reacquainting myself with that part of my past which played an integral role in shaping who I've become. And even though the Midgett wasn't my only duty station while serving, it remains my most memorable.

It was my first ship, my first experience at sea and my first time away from the safe familiarity of home. It was the place where I built personal relationships unlike any others before. And it was where I departed the world of the Pollywog and proudly became a Shellback.

And even though there were certainly times I wanted to be anywhere other than standing another 4-8 watch in the Engine Room, on the 5th day of a 10 day storm, somewhere in the Bering Sea, I wouldn't trade one second of it for all the tea in China. For these precious memories I have in my head and in my heart, are forever a part of who I am and that's something no one can ever take away.

Having recently been in contact with Jeri Garcia (Midgett Ombudsman), I only just learned of your deployment and following her suggestion, read your correspondence to

the crew's families. As a result, I felt compelled to write and express my gratitude to the Midgett, her crew and their families for the sacrifices, the dedication and pride each of you exemplifies. I've always been proud of my service with the U.S. Coast Guard and you, ladies and gentlemen, make me equally proud.

I hope someday I might have the opportunity to visit Seattle and once again enjoy the privilege of standing upon the decks of the ship I love.

Thank you and God Speed.

Semper Paratus

Tim Lawhorn

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USCGC Midgett 1974 - 1976