USS Holland goes full speed at finish line

Readying for September deactivation, 33-year-old sub tender is deep inside PSNS.

By JOHN R. OLSON
Editor

As the USS Holland (AS-32) neared the end of her 33-year Navy career, something deeply bothered skipper Capt. J. William Winney - turbochargers on the ship's diesel engines were not running at full efficiency.

As a self-professed "gadget guy," Winney knew the turbochargers were keeping his ship from a true, high-power run.

"Ships live and die by how fast they go and whether or not you can get away from the other guy," Winney said in a July 19 interview. "If a ship should be able to do it, then we ought to go and do it."

Winney ordered his engineers back to the manuals, they tweaked the turbochargers and last, in 1985, the ship turned 157.4 revolutions (20.5 knots) on her single screw "for the first time in a decade," Winney said, exactly what it was certified at by Ingalls' Shipbuilding at commissioning in 1963.

Winney said casual Navy watchers may not think of sub tenders as warships. But Winney said the Navy does, making him even prouder of his ship's 4-hour, high-power run.

"I will do it when I don't have to do it," Winney said, "so when you have to do it, you will get it right. People die if you can't do things right."

Now the USS Holland is deep inside PSNS at Pier 5 after arriving June 27.

It was decommissioned April 13, 1996 at Apra Harbor, Guam and was relieved by the USS Frank Cable (AS-40).

Though the ship has been homeported in Spain, Scotland, and Charleston, S.C., it ended its career "out near the end of the food chain" Winney said of Guam.

The dwindling ship's crew has been busy off-loading one million gallons of fuel, specialized fuels and oils and even freon from the reefer.

The crew of 760 arriving in Bremerton is down from 1,350 in her normal complement. That will shrink to about 400 personnel Aug. 1, and to around 200 by Sept. 1. The ship is scheduled for deactivation on Sept. 30.

Winney has been penciled in by Navy detailers to return to Washington, D.C. as a special assistant to Undersecretary of Defense for Atomic Energy, Dr. Harold Smith.

In the last year of the ship's career, besides the full power run, she visited Yokosuka and Sasebo, Japan; Chin Hae, Korea; Manila, the Philippines; and Darwin, Australia.

As Winney rolls to Washington in the fall, he will put to use lessons learned in a previous billet inside the CNO's office in 1985.

"In Washington, knowledge is power and the guy that controls money has power. You have to bring those two things together," Winney said.

Winney spoke succinctly throughout the interview, a trait he learned as an Toastmaster. Perhaps another Toastmaster lesson he learned will also serve him well in Washington, D.C.

"To know when to shut up is a tool," Winney said.

The submarine tender USS Holland (AS-32) lies at anchor at sunrise in Chin Hae, Korea during one of the last under way periods of its 33-year career. Alongside is the nuclear submarine USS Olympia (SSN-717). Ironically, both ships were in Puget Sound last week. The USS Holland for deactivation at PSNS; the USS Olympia on a port visit to its namesake city.

The Hollands Opus:
A snapshot of the sub tender USS Holland:
Length: 599 feet
Beam: 83 feet
Speed: 19 knots
Armament: four, 20mm guns
Last sub tended: USS Birmingham (SSN-695)
Yearly budget: $50-$60 million
Under way in FY-95: 181.4 days (49.7 percent)
Achievements:
In summer 1992, Holland received the Navy's Humanitarian Service Medal for supporting Guamanians after Super Typhoon Omar, four other typhoons and a 7.5 Richter Scale earthquake.
Disposition: The ship is available for sale to a foreign country.

Capt. J. William Winney, the 20th and last skipper of the USS Holland, talks about the ship's 33-year history in an interview last week at PSNS.