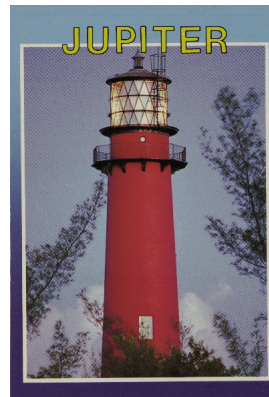
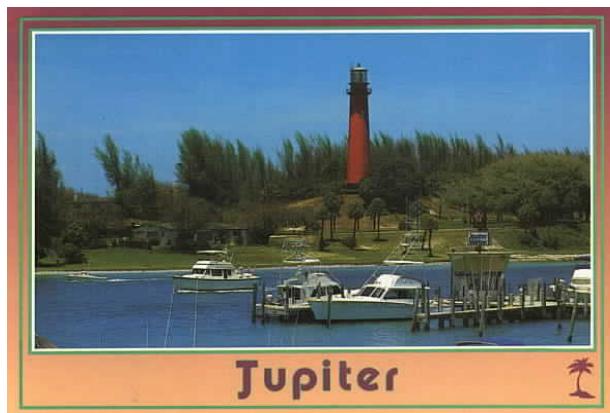
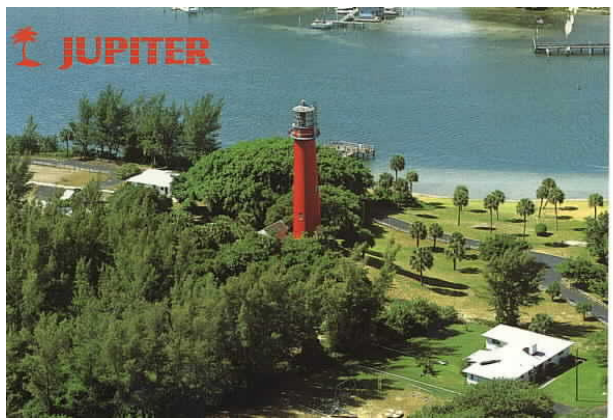


# JUPITER AND JUPITER AGAIN

USCG LorSta Jupiter, FL

Oct '65 - Jul '67  
Feb '70 - Dec '71



## JUPITER

In July 1965 my Air Force enlistment was coming to an end. In the days before the "*Bay of Tonkin Incident*", Air Force promotions were almost at a stand-still as the upper NCO ranks were pretty well filled up. I was seeing too many people retire with having only achieved E-5 or E-6 in twenty years. I had checked with the Coast Guard recruiter and found that in many cases a Coast Guardsman reached E-5 or E-6 in their first four or six years of service, while the same pay grade frequently took 12 -15 years to reach in the Air Force. I then decided that I would take my discharge from the Air Force and enlist immediately in the Coast Guard. The recruiter guaranteed me that I could enter with my Air Force pay grade (rank) and I would have my first duty station (after boot camp) in the Seventh District. I wanted to go to Florida.

So, on the July 27, 1965 I became a brand new Third Class Electronics Technician in the United States Coast Guard. I had behind me 9 years, 3 months, and 5 days of military service when I walked out of the recruiting office in Winston-Salem, NC with a set of orders assigning me to the Seventh District, with a TAD enroute at USCG Recruit TRACEN at Cape May, NJ. I was assigned to VICTOR Company and attached to Recruit Companies Charlie & Delta 59 for my six weeks of indoctrination and orientation.

I departed Cape May on Sept 19<sup>th</sup> with a reporting date of September 30 to the District Personnel Office in Miami, FL for my permanent assignment.

I knew nothing about Coast Guard duty and had no idea of what was even available; but as I drove down US 1, I passed by a sign that said **U.S. COAST GUARD LORAN TRANSMITTING STATION JUPITER, FLORIDA**. It looked like a pretty little place. Maybe I could get stationed here. "Hmmm, I wonder what LORAN is???"

I arrived in Miami, found the District Office (located in the Federal Building), parked my car and wandered into the lobby. I spotted a bank of elevators; and as I started to enter one, a young SNET pushed ahead of me and got into the elevator just as the door was closing. I caught the next up-bound car. When I arrived at the Personnel Office, the "pushy" SNET was being told by the personnel yeoman that he was just what was needed. The USCGC Androscoggin was getting underway in three hours for a North Atlantic weather patrol and was short one each junior Electronics Technician. The SNET was rather upset by this piece of information. As he walked out with a hastily handwritten set of orders in his hand I got the impression that he was not the happiest of campers!!!!!!

When I walked up to the counter, the yeoman asked me just what the blankety-blank I wanted. I handed him the envelope with all my records and orders and said I needed an assignment. He told me that he had no openings available for any junior ETs as the only vacancy he had just got filled.

I said, "*How about Jupiter Loran Station?*" He replied, "*Why not, I guess they can always use another ET there.*" So..... I was assigned to Loran Station Jupiter.

I had left my wife and young daughter with relatives in Orlando until I could find out where we would be going. I saw no need to drag them around with me to Miami. All I could think of is that I was so blessed NOT to have been five minutes earlier walking into that personnel office. I don't know how I could have told Pat over the phone that she would have to find a place to live on her own and that I would see her in about six weeks when I returned from the North Atlantic.

Instead, I drove back to Orlando, collected her and my daughter, and we went to find lodging in Jupiter.

The Commanding Officer at Jupiter was LT. CDR J. A. (Jim) Blake and the XO was CWO-4 H.H. Holman. Mr. Blake was a "Loran Legend". I somehow got the impression that he was one of the developers of Loran C.

I was assigned to be a LORAN C watchstander. We stood 8 hour watches on a three-three-three-four schedule. This meant that I worked three midnight to 8 AM watches, on the third day I got off at 8 AM and returned that afternoon for the first of three 4 PM to midnight watches. On the third day I got off at midnight and returned the next morning at 8 AM to stand the first of three 8AM to 4 Pm day watches. At the end of the third day I was off for four days but had to return at midnight of the fourth day to start my cycle over again. This was my existence for most of the next 22 months.

In those days, Loran C watchstanding was **NOT** a cinch. We had to watch our scopes closely to observe the signals of the other stations. Our typed logs had to record events to the nearest tenth of a minute. In another words, when our signal or the signal from the master station or the other slave stations were out of tolerance the watchstander had to note the exact time, and the log must reflect this time. If an event happened and a watchstander did NOT catch it, he would be subject for a charge of dereliction of duty. Our teletype monitor rolls were considered to be official logs, also, and they were read every day by the station CO and the Chain Operations Control Office. Therefore, a watchstander at one of the other stations could not pass any times across the net as this would have been considered "Falsifying Government Records".

This meant that, during your eight hour watch period, you almost never took your eyes off the monitor scopes, and you watched those three or four lines of dancing "blips" as if your life depended on it. In addition, the watchstander had to operate the Loran C teletype machine as you communicated with his counterparts at the other stations. There was also a teletype machine for the "District Net" to operate when necessary. In addition, the watchstander had to listen to the SSB radio for pertinent communications from the two Loran A stations in the Bahamas, as we were their Chain Operations Control and their communications link to the District Office.

On the eve and mid watches the Loran C watchstander was alone. There was a duty tech in the building that could be called for head breaks, chow relief and emergency situations. He had a room down the hall where he could sleep. The duty techs stood a 24 hour watch. They had the responsibility of making necessary equipment repairs, transmitter changes, Loran A operations, and assisting in the Loran C timer room for out-of- tolerance situations.

In looking back, I find I do not remember very many of my crewmates as I had so little interaction with them. I stood my 8 hour watch alone and then went home.

When operating on a teletype or radio communications net the individual operator ended each transmission with his operator's initials to identify the sender. These "oper inits" became a permanent name that one generally used throughout your career. The custom was to use the first and last letters of your last name, but when I came onto the net there was already an operator at one on the other stations named **Nelson**. This eliminated the my first choice of NN. When you could not use the first and last letters of your last name the custom was to utilize your normal initials. Again, there was another operator whose name was **Richard Lawrence Nance**. I had always answered to NICK since I had joined the service as few people could pronounce correctly Nahikian. I decided that for communications purposes I would become **NIK**. This served me well until I retired.

During this time frame, the Florida East Coast Railroad was undergoing a very vicious strike. It was so bad that trains were preceded by railcars with armed guards to look for bombs on the tracks. The mainline ran within a few dozen yards of our barracks.

One evening several members of the crew noticed some wooden boxes near the rails. They were curious and walked over to see what they were. It was quite a shock when they realized the boxes were cases of dynamite that had been capped and wired to go off when the next train came by. The explosives were close enough to the barracks that serious harm would have been done to anyone in their room in the barracks. The sheriffs department was notified and an EOD team removed the threat.

The station had a small exchange in which we sold (it seemed) only three items: beer, cigarettes, and motor oil. However, we sold these items in such a quantity that the profits filled our morale fund with so much money we really had a difficult time finding ways to spend it. I know we had a new power boat, a small sailboat, go-carts and a small race track for them in the sand hills behind the station. I also recall we had lots of nice archery equipment, a camping trailer, and other goodies.

We were investigated several times by the State of Florida. They actually calculated that each of us assigned there smoked 7 - 10 cartons of cigarettes and drank 4 – 5 cases of beer on a daily basis. If not, then we were all engaged in a bootleg scheme to sell untaxed items. They just couldn't understand how a crew of about 30 men could possibly consume so much state-tax free cigarettes and beer. What they really could not understand was that we were not the only customers. Within a fifty mile radius of the station there were over a 1,500 retired military residents who were eligible to purchase these items, also, and they did so in great numbers.

In the mid- sixties, the United States and the Soviet Union were engaged in what we now refer to as the "Cold War". There were a lot of nuclear testing bans in place, but there was a problem with "on-site" inspections to investigate whether or nor the Soviets were violating the various treaties.

Then our President announced that on-site inspection verification was unnecessary. The United States now had a method of detection that someone illegally tested a nuclear device. Very few people knew this detection system was none other that Loran C!!! The "secret" was based on the fact that nuclear explosions created ionospheric disturbances very similar to those caused by solar flares and the daily sunrise/sunset cycles. A nuclear explosion (underground, underwater, surface, or airburst) would be detected and recorded on all Loran C transmitting and monitor station charts. With a comparison of all the charts the time, location, magnitude, and type of test could be determined. We were already monitoring solar activity as a program to attempt to predict the weather on the sun in regards to solar flares and sunspots.

In each Loran Chain a pair of slaves was designated to monitor the chart activity. In our case, it was Jupiter and Nantucket. On the other stations the watchstanders were not generally aware of this "verification" process. When our ionosphere activity monitors showed any abnormal activity the watchstanders at the "solar observation" stations would "chat" back and forth on the teletype at to what they were observing. If an "event" was large enough proper authorities would be notified. On a daily basis the watchstanders at Jupiter and Nantucket would notify each other when the ionospheric sunrise or sunset shift was noted at their respective stations, and the comments that seemed to mystify the other Chain watchstanders were sent out on the teletype to the effect of:

***NA de JU: Do you confirm sunrise?? NIK***

***JU de NA: Affirmative, I verify sunrise onset at 0628.5R. BB***

**NA de JU: Roger, I confirm the same here, I officially declare sunrise at 0628.5R. NIK**

As the TTY monitor rolls were official logs, this entry was a legal notation.

Another by-product of the cold War was an unmarked "off-on" toggle switch on the side of one of our timers. When it was noticed by a watchstander, the duty techs were puzzled as to the purpose of this switch. There were no notations in any of the tech manuals or schematics. They were constantly switching it to the ON position to see if "anything happened" but nothing was ever noticed as changing. This went on for months on end.

**MEANWHILE.....** All over Southeast Florida, the Civil Defense authorities were going out of their minds as the AIR RAID/EMERGENCY WARNING sirens were briefly going off on a very erratic and unpredictable schedule. Finally, someone there called the station to ask us to "check" our activation circuit. "What activation circuit??" "Activation Circuit for WHAT??" "We have an activation circuit for CD Warning sirens??"

It turned out that in the past someone had realized that our powerful transmitted signal could have an override signal piggy-backed to turn on all the South Florida Civil Defense Sirens. This would be handy in case an attack took out the Civil Defense Centers and they were unable to sound the alarms. I do not understand how we were to be told to activate the alarm system if the Civil defense Centers were destroyed.

However, as since this activation circuit was classified, no entries could be made in our records. The knowledge was kept in a classified document in a sealed envelope filed in the CO's safe. This knowledge was supposed to be passed on verbally to the senior techs as they assumed their positions when relieving outgoing techs when transferred; but human nature prevailed and the chain of knowledge was broken

On a periodic schedule the entire East Coast Loran C Chain went off air for the purpose of equipment overhaul, new equipment installation, major upgrades, antenna repair, etc. This shutdown was always advertised well in advance in the NOTAMS (Notices to Mariners) as well as to the FAA for aviation interest's distribution. At the proper moment, we shut down and started to carry out our hectic maintenance schedule. However, within minutes of going off air, the phone in the CO's office rang. It was NASA at Cape Canaveral wanting to know why we were off air. Mr. Blake explained the situation and was told that the off air status was unacceptable. They needed us back on air immediately. They were in a launch countdown mode and our signal was critical for timing purposes. Mr. Blake said that he could not override our off air status. Authority to go back on air would have to come from higher authorities. He also pointed out that a single slave station's transmitted signal was totally worthless for navigational purposes. NASA replied that they knew where they were and did not need us for navigation. Our signal was the basis for their timing clock. In about ten minutes, we received a FLASH message on the teletype from Washington to resume transmitting for the duration of the space launch.

Our station did not have any means for the crewmembers to qualify for the annual pistol marksmanship training. For this we had to go down to the firing range located at the life boat station on Peanut Island in the bay at Lake Worth (West Palm Beach).

There was always a friendly rivalry among shooters in regards to the shooting score, and it was customary for the lowest scorer to clean the weapons for the high scorers. Plus, the after range drinks were paid for by the lower scoring participants. We generally went down in groups of 5 to 8 people. When I went, I was in the group that included the CO, XO, and the department leading petty officers. I was by far the lowest ranking man in the party, but I was determined that I would **NOT** clean any pistols and most definitely would **NOT** be buying drinks for anyone. After the firing was over and scores added up, I was the top scorer. Mr. Blake was

the runner-up, and he had always been the winner in the past. We developed an on-going rivalry, but he never outscored me. I did rather enjoy it when he had to clean my pistol for me.

One result of this interaction was that he signed out to me the station morale pistol to keep and use when I wanted to. This was an "ACE" conversion of the standard M1911A1 service pistol to shoot .22 cal ammo in lieu of the standard .45 cal rounds. The pistol had the Coast Guard seal as well as "UNITED STATES COAST GUARD" neatly engraved on the slide. It was a beautiful weapon and had seen very little use. I kept this gun at home until I was checking out when I was transferred in July, 1967. By that time LT CDR Blake had been relieved by LT Gullixson.

I could have kicked myself when I walked in to turn in the pistol and heard Mr. Gullixson exclaim, *"Where did you get this? When I relieved Mr. Blake, he said it had been lost and we had written it off the station property list. It is no longer on the inventory. I am so glad we can restore it to the inventory."* Darn. I had myself a beautiful souvenir and let it slip through my fingers!!!!

On another range qualification exercise at Peanut Island, our hosts broke out one of their .45 caliber Thompson "Tommy" guns and let some of us fire it for familiarization. Most of our shooters had never fired a full automatic weapon before, so they allowed the barrel to "climb" with the recoil. Some of the rounds went flying over the earthen berm backstop into the air. Soon after this, the station OOD had a phone call from the Singer Island Police Department requesting that the Coast Guard send a patrol boat over to check out reports that someone was shooting at the beach and that bullets were landing in the sand!!!!!! **OOOOOPPPPS!!!!**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> day of December, 1966, my gamble in leaving the Air Force and joining the Coast Guard paid off. I was number 33 on a list of 80 brand new 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Electronics Technicians. As a second class I stood fewer Loran watches and started training to be a Duty Tech, but found I was putting in more time in various forms of department administration.

As I briefly mentioned above, while Jupiter was a primarily a Loran C slave station, we were also a double Loran A slave station; paired with Folly Beach, SC and the two stations in the Bahamas (San Salvador and South Caicos). The Loran A equipment was relatively a labor-free operation, but we did have to furnish communications relay for the Bahaman stations. These two units seemed to operate with a minimum of manning and often the technical experience on the part of the assigned techs was woefully lacking. I once overheard a radio exchange between the two stations that went somewhat along these lines:

*"Jerry, has your timer ever done 'such and such'?"*

*"No, Dave, it hasn't. What causes it to do that?"*

*"I dunno, Jerry, but it seems to have stopped doing it!"*

*"That's good, Dave, if you find out what caused the problem, let me know, so I can fix mine if it ever does that."*

On another occasion a District inspector walked in to the timer room at South Caicos. The watchstander/duty tech had both of his timers dismantled and strung out on the deck, drawer by drawer side by side with its counterpart. There was a problem with the standby timer and the tech could not find the cause. He rationalized that by having them side by side he could make a visual comparison, and also readily compare voltage readings until he found a discrepancy. . The inspector asked where the senior tech was, and this very junior 3<sup>rd</sup> class ET replied that he was the senior tech.

The inspector said, *"Son, I have one question for you. Are you on air and in tolerance?"*

*"Yes, sir." was the reply.*

*"In that case, carry on."*

The inspector's next visit was to San Salvador. He looked around; the equipment was cleaned and operating normally. Everything was ship-shape and definitely ready for inspection. The inspector pulled out one of the timer's drawers to check the interior for appearance and immediately spotted a heavy duty 9 volt lantern battery wired in series with the drawer's voltage input.

*"What is that?"* he asked.

*"A battery."* replied the tech on duty. This tech was also the station's senior Electronics Technician.

*"I can see it is a battery. Just why is it there?"*

*"The timer won't operate without it, sir."*

The real problem was that somewhere in this drawer there was a voltage loss of 9 volts. The tech just had not had time to locate the defective component and had jury-rigged the unit to keep it in operation until he could resolve the problem. The inspector shook his head and said, *"Carry on, petty officer."*

The District Office realized that there was a critical shortage of experience out in the islands and told Mr. Blake to send me down there to assist. He told them I was needed where I was and that he would send someone else. I guess I was truly forgiven for being disrespectful to his wife. Later, he told me that he had also been given orders for me to go the 14<sup>th</sup> District, but had the orders cancelled.

In Jan, 1967, I did get a set of transfer orders to go to The Loran A Transmitting Station at Folly Beach, SC. Then these orders were cancelled also as I was on an alert for orders to go to ACTEUR (MedSec) in June or July, 1967.

When I learned of these orders, Pat and I realized that it would be to our advantage to buy a house that just came onto the market. This house required a very low down payment. We would need a place for her and Lisa to live while I was gone. Also, as since Pat was in her 3<sup>rd</sup> month of pregnancy with our second child we would need a larger house to live in. The small duplex we were renting would be inadequate. As our house payments would be less than our rent, it made sense to purchase. In Feb., 1967, we became home owners.

As I said above, because of my work schedule, I had very little inter-action with the crew, so I can not recall very many of the names of the people I served with.. There was a provisional Chief ET named Ralph Shead, but he left very soon after I reported aboard. He was replaced by ETC "Shakey" Schuldt. We had a yeoman named Colandro, and the leading engineer/deck dept petty officer was DC 1 William Wallace. One of my fellow watchstanders was Steve Jockers, who made 2<sup>nd</sup> class on the same list I did, but was number 78 on the list. Other than these few names, I am drawing a blank.

While we were living in Jupiter, a high school friend told me that a mutual friend, Fred Faulkner and his family had just moved to North Palm Beach. Fred had accepted a position at the Pratt & Whitney Test Center just west of Jupiter. I got in touch with Fred and found out that he had brought with him from California his sailing boat. He was active with the sailing clubs in the Palm Beach area and often participated in races and regattas. With my watch schedule, I was frequently available to crew for him. I soon developed a taste for sailing. On the several occasions that a race fell on a day when I was scheduled to work, Mr. Blake readily arranged for me to get off so I could participate in the races. I think he got a "kick" out of seeing a member of his command listed in the yacht race results in the Palm Beach society pages.

Later, when Fred was being hired by a California firm, they offered to pay for his boat to be sailed back to California. Fred thought that he would sail it back (through the Panama Canal,

etc.) and offered to pay my expenses if I wanted to go with him. Did I ever !!!!!!! A sailing trip around the tip of Florida, across the Gulf of Mexico, through the "Canal", and then up the Pacific coast to California. It would have been a dream trip. However, District would not let me take leave to sail to foreign ports!!!!!!!!!! **WHAT A TOTAL BUMMER !!!!**

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of July, 1967, my tour at Jupiter ended and I departed to report to Coast Guard Base Governor's Island, New York, for processing for further assignment.

### Jupiter Again .....

When I returned to the States after my restricted tour at Loran Station Estaca de Vares, Spain, I wanted to be assigned back to Jupiter. I had a house there and my family was residing there. But.....the Guard, in its infinite wisdom decided to send me to sea on board a buoy tender home-ported in Miami Beach. We looked over the housing situation in Miami and realized that we could never afford a house comparable to the one we had in Jupiter. We decided that I would commute to Miami, and my family would continue to reside in Jupiter. Pat was teaching, and Lisa had started school. The drive was doable (barely)...105 miles driveway to gangway, but the ship's in-port schedule made it workable.

However, I did get tired of the drive and had little quality-time with my family; and therefore started trying to get reassigned. In July of '69, I attempted to find to arrange a mutual transfer, but no one at Jupiter wanted to go to sea!!!! Then, in September of 1969, I submitted a formal request for transfer to Jupiter through the chain of command. This WORKED!!! In October I was notified that I would be reporting to LorSta Jupiter in March, 1970. Then it got better. An amended set of orders told me to report NLT 22 Feb, 1970. My CO on board the CGC Hollyhock released, me and I reported for duty at LorSta Jupiter on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January, 1970.

The Commanding officer was LTJG T.M. Drown and the XO was CWO D.R. Weitzel. He was later relieved by CWO R.G. Young. The senior tech was ETC B.V. Pahed. Later ETC R.E. White reported aboard and was then the senior tech. In turn, Chief White was relieved by ETC D.R. Allen. The main thing I remember about Chief Pahed was that he was a Filipino, and, when excited or angry, would lose his command of English and revert to speaking Tagalog. Chief Allen is a total blank to me. He must have come aboard after I had left. BM1 J.F. Springs was actually the OIC of the Light Station, but later the two commands rather "morphed" together. The housing area for the Loran Station was actually on the Light Station reservation. SN "Buddy Dekle was also a "wickie". The lighthouse had an assigned crew of 4 people, the aforementioned BM1, two seamen, and a 3<sup>rd</sup> class engineman as the XPO. I can not recall the names of the other "wickie" seaman or the engineman. They had a three unit apartment building on the grounds of the lighthouse as quarters, and there was a separate single-family dwelling for the OIC. The Loran Station CO had a nice waterfront house for his quarters, and there was a row of a ten (I think) 3 bedroom houses for other Loran Station personnel. My family occupied "F" Quarters. I do believe these to be the nicest government quarters I have ever seen.

The "lamp" at the lighthouse was actually turned on by a switch located at the TOP of the lighthouse. This meant that the eve watchstander had to climb these stairs and turn it on at sunset, while the mid watchstander had to trudge up at sunrise to turn it off.

Later, I found that the "Wickies" had a policy of "allowing" whichever dependent child from the housing area that did the most work around the lighthouse (picking up litter, sweeping out

the office, racking leaves, etc) was rewarded by being allowed to **TURN ON THE LIGHTHOUSE** by themselves !!!!!!! My oldest daughter Lisa was a frequent "winner"!!!

On the second of June, 1970, I "shipped over" for 6 years (this would take me to 20 years). (In July '69, my first enlistment was completed, and I had extended it for 11 months.)

My total bonus for this reenlistment was the magnificent sum of \$1,256.00. I also collected pay for the 2 months of leave that I "sold back" (\$903.60) plus 60 days of "comrats" (\$117.00) and (last, but not least) I was paid \$45.60 travel pay (round trip to Winston – Salem, NC which is where I had entered the Coast Guard).

Based on these figures, I was drawing a monthly salary of \$451.80 and had an additional \$1.95 per day for my commuted rations. On this approx \$510.00 per month (before taxes) I supported a wife and two small children! In Nov. 1970, I found out that my financial status was about to improve. I received unofficial notice that I was # 2 on a list of 32 new 1<sup>st</sup> class ETs. The promotion would be official as of 1 Dec '70. In 4 ½ years the Coast Guard had let me achieve a pay grade that the Air Force would not have allowed me to get to for another 8 -10 more years. My move to change branches of service had been a wise one.

I became close friends with several of the crewmembers. I remember when SNET Ken Fron reported aboard and about the same time I was transferred from Jupiter he was departing also, enroute to LorSta Lampedusa, Italy.

I first "met" Dave Frunzuto through talking to him on the radio while he was at one of the Loran A stations in the Bahamas. (I can not recall whether he was at San Salvador or South Caicos.) After he had completed his tour he was assigned to Jupiter. Later he and his wife were neighbors when my family & I occupied quarters at the lighthouse reservation. When I was sent to LorSta Sitkinak, Dave was assigned to the Loran A Station at Kodiak. He and his wife became my personal support group for me while I was on the restricted tour. On the several rare occasions that I was able to leave Sitkinak and get into Kodiak, their home was open to me. Dave was also invaluable to me as a source of "lateral support".

1971 was a very bad year for wildfires in Florida. At times it seemed the entire state was in flames. The Loran station is located on property within the Jonathan Dickinson State Park. The park was aflame and uncontained. We were assisting the park personnel, the many fire departments and the many volunteers in trying to contain this conflagration.

In our case, the Florida National Guard had loaned us two 2 ½ ton 6X6 trucks. The Air Force Reserve loaned us two 500 gallon water trailers, and the CG station at Peanut Island gave us three gasoline-powered fire pumps. By placing the pumps in the cargo beds of the trucks and pulling the water trailers behind us, we had a pair of very functional (but ugly) fire trucks. We also had a ¾ ton 4X4 M-37 weapons carrier that BM1 Springs drove. He mounted his gasoline-powered weed sprayer in the bed and used this unit to overhaul fires and to put out new fires started by sparks. Peanut Island also sent up a "40" boat to use in the InterCoastal Waterway as a fireboat. We fought this fire for almost 10 days.

We would put in an 8 hour Loran watch. (We went through this entire period with ZERO off air time and ZERO out of tolerance time!!! After getting relieved from the Loran watch the individual reported to one of the "fire trucks". or to the "fireboat", or to man one of the fire lines with a backpack water pump. After 8 hours of fighting fire, he then switched off from a fire line to a truck position or vice versa. 16 hours of firefighting and back to either a Loran watch or 8 hours of rest. .

We originally thought we could hold the fire with the parks fire lanes, but the blaze jumped these as if they did not exist. We KNEW we could hold it at US 1 which was the equivalent of 8

lanes wide (considering the side right-of-way and median). WRONG!!! The fire only slowed up for this barrier. I witnessed trees on the far side of the highway bursting into spontaneous flames as the ambient heat brought the pitch in the pine trees up to combustion temperature. We thought the InterCoastal Waterway would be an effective barrier, but the wind carried burning debris over the 1500 feet of water. This is where the fireboat was critical in putting out these fires before they could grow. I can safely state that we did stop the fire on the beach. It did not cross the Atlantic Ocean and pose a threat to Africa.

As you can see by our duty schedule, there was very little time to attend to the normal standards of military grooming. Also, the cleanliness of our attire was well below normal standards. In fact, most of it had run out of clean military clothing, and we were wearing almost anything we could get.

In the midst of this the District Office sent up a LT CDR to "assist" and serve as a liaison for us. He arrived about 3 AM. I had just pulled into the station area with my fire truck and crew to fill our water trailer, and to refuel the truck and the fire pump. We were filthy, bearded, and our clothing was full of holes from the sparks. We were sitting on the truck waiting as the water trailer was being filled when this officer walked up. He asked that the senior man on scene identify himself. I replied that I was and introduced myself. He said that I (and my crew) was a disgrace to the Coast Guard; we were all on report for being out of uniform; and our vehicle was too filthy to be seen in public. Furthermore, he was positive he had observed one of my crew drinking from what appeared to be a beer can. As the senior petty officer, I was also on report for dereliction of duty. I told him I would report my transgressions immediately to my Commanding Officer. When Mr. Drown heard what had just happened, he told staff officer that his services were not necessary and then the CO pointed south and told the District Emissary that Miami was "THAT WAY" and that it would be in the best interests of all concerned if the staff officer returned to Miami.

I would have loved to have been able to listen to the ensuing phone conversation between Mr. Drown and the District Office in Miami as to just how helpful their liaison officer was to helping us in combating the fires.

Don't think that the 8 hours of Loran watch was restful. Due to the heavy concentration of ashes, etc, the equipment air filters were being changed almost hourly instead of monthly or weekly. The filters were clogging up so fast with airborne debris they could not let sufficient air pass through. The transmitters had to be switched over from standby to operational almost every two hours so the off going transmitter could be cleaned. We also had to post a guard near the antenna tower. The many civilian volunteer firefighters did not realize that the tower was "hot" with thousands of volts on it. I daresay that if someone had sprayed it with a firehouse there would have been a disaster.

Throughout this time we operated flawlessly. A prime factor is the NO BREAK generator that had been installed. This system was unique. There were only 10 in existence and ours was the only one on a Coast Guard unit. Ours was installed due to the importance NASA placed on us for the timing signals. Normally, a backup generator system operates by having an engine/generator start when the power fails. When the commercial power is restored, the back-up system shuts off.....but the time between when the commercial power fails and the back-up power source coming on line is off air and out of tolerance time.

A power failure at a critical moment of a space launch would be costly and/ or deadly. Our system was based on a huge 10 foot diameter flywheel that turned a generator all the time. This flywheel weighed several tons. It was propelled by electric motors that were powered by the commercial power. There were "sampling" circuits that constantly monitored the commercial power. When the commercial power was unavailable or unacceptable the system disconnected, the flywheel's mass guaranteed that its momentum would continue long enough that the

standby generator would start, and then the flywheel's electric motors would be fed by the backup generator. The power output was never interrupted for a single microsecond.

The basis of our timers (the "clock" that was the heart of our system) was a cesium oscillator. Oversimplification would be to call this an ATOMIC clock. These were the same cesium oscillators that were used by the National Bureau of Standards in Boulder, Colorado. Prior to the cesium we used rubidium oscillators. (These were referred to as Rubby-Dubs). Each of our timers had three of these cesium oscillators, and they operated by the "rule of the majority". The system used the two out of three signals that agreed with one another.

One day a civilian employee of the National Bureau of Standards came to our station with a portable cesium "clock". He was engaged in a program that had taken the portable clock and set it to the National Standard Clock. Then he had traveled all over the world, to the national standard of every participating country and had set their clock to match his. This clock traveled with its own first class airline ticket, sitting beside the test conductor. Jupiter was his last stop before he returned to Boulder, CO.

However, when he set up to perform the calibration .....Tragedy!!!!!!! He UNPLUGGED his clock from its battery, and it stopped. This nullified the whole year-long project. Thinking fast, and having implicit trust in the Coast Guard oscillators, he set his clock to ours. When he returned to Boulder his portable clock was still precisely set to match the Master Clock. He later sent me a letter stating that all was well.

I had become involved in a sort of on-going "feud" with the ET detailer in Washington. It started by accident. He had called down to the station to alert me to be expecting orders to LorSta Sylt, Germany.

I was not at the station when the phone call came in. The person answering the phone told the detailer that ... "Nik won't like those orders, but if you change them to give the assignment to petty officer XXXX, he will ship over and take them in a flash....." (I would have loved to have an opportunity to take my family to Europe for a two year tour.)

The orders were changed; petty officer XXXX went to Germany (after he extended his enlistment so he had sufficient time left to complete the assignment) and my name had a little "tic" mark beside it in Washington.

The next episode in this saga occurred when the detailer called me in Dec. 1970, with a set of orders for LorSta Eniwetok. I wasn't too happy about this, but accepted the inevitable that I would sooner or later be given a set of orders for another restricted duty station. I knew the CO of LorSta Eniwetok. (Mr. Steinfeldt had been my XO on the USCGC Hollyhock.)

When he went to the South Pacific, he asked me if I wanted to go with him. My reply was something to the effect....."It will be a cold day in Hades before I go to Eniwetok.....".

Soon after the phone call from Washington I received a teletype message that started out..... "I haven't had a weather report on current conditions in Hades, but welcome to Eniwetok!"

In the process of the preliminary medical exams, it was discovered that I had a bad case of lower stomach ulcers, and was ineligible for "unlimited world-wide duty". I was sent to spend the summer in the Public Health Hospital in New Orleans for "evaluation".

When I looked at my fellow patients, all I could think is ..... what a zoo!!! I, also, had difficulty feeling at ease when I gazed out my second floor at the neighboring dike and could look up and see the passing seagoing freight ships going up and down the Mississippi River. At the end of the summer, the doctors finally decided that I was "fit for duty"; but due to the lengthy time, my Eniwetok assignment was cancelled. "Tic" number 2 beside my name!

I returned to Jupiter, and once again, was notified by Washington that I would be getting orders ....this time for LorSta Cape San Juan, Puerto Rico as the OIC. As this would be an accompanied assignment, I was happy. It would be a heck of a lot better than Eniwetok.

However, the detailer went on to say that prior to this transfer, he wanted me to go TAD to LorSta Folly Beach, SC as the acting OIC. This would give him time to get a permanent replacement. Evidently, the OIC had been seriously injured in an automobile accident and had to be released from active duty. I said okay, as I did not want to miss the Puerto Rican assignment; but when he said I would have to relocate my family at **my** expense to Folly Beach I said something to the effect of..... "I could not afford this expense".

He said that it was a four man station, and all of the assigned personnel were married; all were living with their dependents in a four unit apartment building. It was contrary to policy to send an unaccompanied man to live in the OIC's assigned quarters! When I said that it would be a financial hardship to go to Folly Beach, he said that my orders to Cape San Juan were cancelled. "Tic" mark number three! However, to date, with the exception of the Sylt misunderstanding and mix-up, technically, I had not refused any orders.

In early Sept. 1971, Washington told me that I was going to Lorsta Cape Atholl, Greenland and must be enroute (via Governor's Island) within 10 days. We were living in government quarters, so that within ten days, I had to find and purchase and close on a house for my family, pack up our possessions, vacate the government quarters, move to the new house, get them settled in and say, "See'ya in a year or so!!" I told the detailer that he could not issue restricted orders with so little lead time. I don't know if I had a legal leg to stand on, but evidently I did (or else he thought I did).

At any rate, these orders were cancelled, but now I had "tic" mark number four beside my name. It was probably made with a heavy duty red felt marker! This time I **had** directly protested and **REFUSED** a set of orders!!!

Then, in mid-September, he called back with the news that I was going to Sitkinak Island, Alaska (restricted duty) with a reporting date in Jan '72. I said that I had no problem in accepting the orders, but I was officially requesting that I be given consecutive orders to LorSta Estartit, Spain, when I completed my assignment in Alaska. The detailer said that he was not familiar with this idea. (I can understand his confusion; I had just made this up on the spot. I was hoping that he would not ask me for a reference to the Regs.) However, he accepted the premise that such a thing existed and said that he would do so and that I would be going to Spain when I was reassigned from Alaska.

**Goodbye, Florida.....Goodbye, Sunshine**  
**Hello, Alaska.....Hello, Ice, and Snow, and COLD!**

Bob "Nik" Nahikian  
ETC USCG (ret)  
Melrose, Florida Feb, 2007  
([cogardcpo@hotmail.com](mailto:cogardcpo@hotmail.com))

## **Addendum I**

Based on the 1970 and 1971 Station Christmas cards, the following is a composite crew listing.

LTJG	T.M. Drown (CO)	CWO	D.R. Weitzel (XO)
		CWO	R.G. Young (XO)
ETC	R.E. White		
ETC	B.V. Pahed	ENC	H.C. Willis
ETC	D.R. Allen	ENC	F.J. Stephens
ET1	G.M. Smith	BM1	J.F. Springs
ET1	R.L. Nahikian	CS1	C.L. Wilcox
ET2	R.T. Browning	CS1	M.A. Sarao
ET2	R.E. Currey	CS1	R.E. Lever
ET3/2	R.D. Eyestone	CS2	G.A. Sunset
ET3/2	D.F. Frunzuto	YN2	R.W. Rolfe
ET3/2	K.A. Fron	BM3	R.J. Brereton
ET3/2	G. Bowe	BM3	J.R. Knight
ET3/2	R.C. Gibson	EN3	H.R. Mower
ET3	T.F. Krula	EN3	B.R. Betzing
ET3	E.D. Quinlin	SK3	J.R. Sykes
ET3	T.D. Hutton	SK3	R.W. Davis
ET3	D.T. Floyd	DC3	J.E. Quesinberry
ET3	G.D. Washer	SN/BM3	D.J. Korthals
ET3	L.D. Arledge	SN/BM3	M.C. Hammack
ET3	H.E. Woodward	SN	F.S. Dekle
ET3	R.J. Walton	SN	J.J. Forrest
ET3	L.V. Matrone	SN	J.L. Warren
ET3	C.S. Harding	SN	P.N. Williamson
ET3	E.A. Drexel	SN	R.E. Ward
ET3	G.D. Olsen	SN	R.F. Tortola
ET3	R.A. Steinbach	SN	M.C. Hammack
ET3	S. Peron	SN	R.O. Gauthier
SNET	P.R. Bodner		

**Addendum II** Email from former ET2 Ken Fron dated Tuesday, July 17, 2007 10:16 AM  
My replies to him are in red type.

I just read this one. Once again, interesting; and the addendum with the names made me wonder what happened to all these people. I do have some comments:

1. I don't remember the 24-hour Duty Tech watch schedule when I was there. It seems to me that this position followed to the same schedule as the Loran-C watchstander. Intermittently, if manning levels allowed it, the Duty Tech would move to working straight days for a few weeks and someone from days would be rotated into the watch schedule.

You could very well be correct. The more I think about, the more correct it seems. Keep in mind that I am writing about two separate tours in the same account. The 24 hour duty Tech sked may have applied to the first tour. I just can't always differentiate which details/events belong with which tour...  
Nik

2. I never knew about the activation circuit. Bummer! It would have been fun to play with at 3 AM!

Again, this "activation circuit" may not have still been installed during our mutual tour... Nik

3. When you described your re-up bonus etc. you made it seem small. By today's standards it was small, but back in 1970 you could buy a lot with \$2K-\$3K. For example when I got back from Lampedusa I bought a brand new car for under \$3000! Of course that was about 1/2 year's pay but then there wasn't much to buy on Lampedusa.

4. This event is one that is missing. I seem to vaguely remember that ETC White, Gene Smith, you and I were working on a serious C-transmitter problem. It might have been during the fire time, but not certain. If you remember, there was a transformer that would arc internally from the windings to the outside case which was basically going to ground.

When it did this, the transmitter would overload and go down. Anyway, the one transmitter (stby now) had this problem and we had no spare transformers. Someone had the clever idea to mount the thing on those porcelain insulators so the case wouldn't be at ground potential and thus no short to ground. Only problem we had when we (started) to fix this was that when we went to shut the stby down we pulled the plug on the operational transmitter by mistake... I still remember how quiet it got in that building without the sound from those big blowers that helped cool the transmitter.

Now that you bring it up. ... This event truly gave a real meaning to the expression "Thundering dead silence". When the operating transmitter went totally silent, I felt an awful sinking feeling in my stomach as the realization sank into my mind. It may have been during the fires, because we were all a rather punch drunk with fatigue... Nik

I also recall that Chief XXXX was a real trip when the duty tech had to call him at 3 AM with a "situation". He would groggily answer the phone after many rings...

"Hulloooo"

"Chief, this is the Duty Tech, such and such has happened. What do you recommend?"

"Well...uh.....oh....uh... well....." Followed by a long, long silent period

"Chief, Chief, are you still there?".....another long, long silence.

He would have drifted back to sleep as you were talking to him!!!!