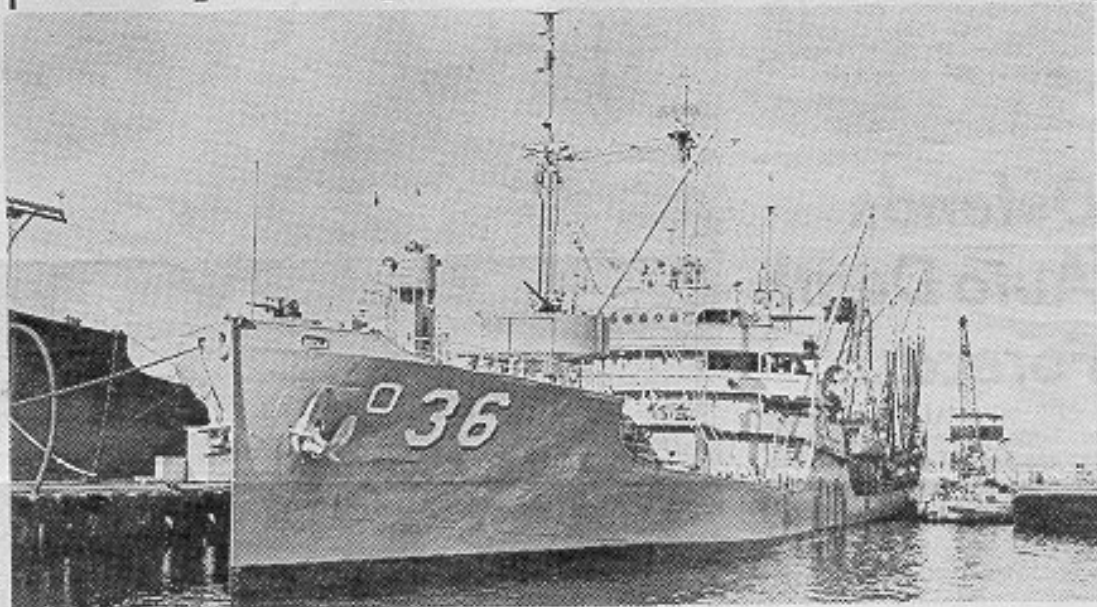


Veteran of 3 Wars

# Navy Ship Thrives on Crisis



KENNEBEC TAKES ON A LOAD OF FUEL AT SUBIC BAY NAVAL BASE. (USN)

By JOC C. K. Ferguson  
SUBIC BAY, R.P. (PAO) — Europe was aflame — Hitler's tank-led troops overran France and the word "blitzkrieg" was on everyone's tongue. Churchill spoke of "blood, sweat and tears".

In Asia, Japan was stalemated in China and looking for easier prey elsewhere. In the United States the big band era was in full swing. "Gone with the Wind" was setting box office records and President Roosevelt was re-elected for an unprecedented third term.

It was 1940 and it all seems long ago.

Hitler's tanks, Hitler himself, the "Spitfires" and "Hurricanes" that won the Battle of Britain, the Japanese Imperial Fleet, the U.S. Army Air Corps' Flying Fortress and nearly all of man's contrivances of that time have been swept up in

history's dustpan.

But the U.S. Navy has a "hunk of equipment" that dates back to 1940 that's as useful today as 28 years ago. It's the fleet oiler Kennebec, which is helping to perform the vital task of refueling the 7th Fleet off Vietnam so that the ships can remain at sea for long periods and maintain pressure on the enemy with naval gunfire and naval aircraft.

Born a "child of calamity," the Kennebec owes her lengthy naval career and her very existence today to the world's continued unsettled state.

Three times in the post World War II years, the Kennebec was "retired" from active duty and put into the "mothball fleet". Once she was even "stricken from the list" of Navy ships, which is normally the final step before disposal (which in a ship of Kennebec's age would have almost certainly meant the scrap pile).

Each time, however, the Kennebec was saved by a fresh world crisis — the Korean War in 1950, the Suez crisis of 1956 and the Berlin emergency of 1961. The Kennebec has remained on continuous duty since 1961.

Although completed in 1940, Kennebec began her career as a civilian hauler and wasn't "enlisted" into the Navy until 1942. Formerly the steamship Corsicana owned by the Socony Vacuum Oil Co., the Navy

named her Kennebec after the river in Maine in accordance with the tradition of naming Navy oilers for rivers.

One of her first duties was to help refuel the first big Allied invasion fleet of the war — the task force that landed troops in North Africa in late 1942. She spent most of the rest of the war refueling convoys in the storm-tossed North Atlantic.

The Korean War was spent shuttling back and forth between the West Coast and Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. When recalled to service during the Suez crisis she went to the Persian Gulf to pick up fuel for the fleets in the Mediterranean, Far East and North Atlantic.

Since her recommissioning in 1961, Kennebec has become very much an "Asia Hand" with continuous service with the Service Force of the Pacific Fleet. She is currently on her sixth tour of duty in the western Pacific since her recall.

Her homeport is now Hunter's Point, San Francisco Bay, and the skipper is Capt. Edward T. Alberta.

With her less than 20 miles an hour cruising speed and 100,000 barrel maximum capacity, the Kennebec has neither the speed or fuel hauling capability of the newer fleet oilers, but has adopted the slogan, "We try harder!"

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