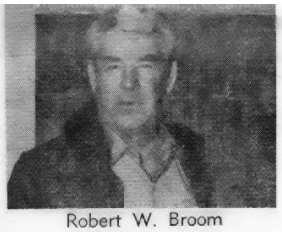
LARRY BONKO



Robert W. Broom

LOOK OVER THERE, EVERYBODY. Look to Pier 12 at Little Creek. Could that be the USS Pueblo tied up there? It looks like her. Wait a minute. This ship is painted white.

That can't be the USS Pueblo. Maybe it is the son of Pueblo. There is a name on the starboard side. RANGE RECOVERER. It is the image of the Pueblo, which committed an unpardonable sin for a spy ship. It got caught spying on Jan. 22, 1968.

Although it has a tall radio mast and $3 million in electronic equipment, the Range Recoverer is not in a surreptitious business.

It fetches what is left of rockets put aloft at Wallops Island.

The Range Recoverer once brought back leeches, which had been in orbit.

The captain of the Range Recoverer said he has nothing to hide. "It's a coincidence that this ship resembles the Pueblo. All the equipment aboard is unclassified."

A versatile ship

Robert W. Broom of Slidell, La. has been on the sea for 25 years. He has graying hair and a cordial manner. Twice in the last two years, the ship has been cited as a "smart ship."

That is the Military Sealift Command's version of an Oscar.

The Range Recoverer earned the honor by never losing a rocket payload, by having an excellent safety record and by serving tasty lunches.

While finishing up some ice cream cake, the captain said, "This is excellent duty. Every trip is different. Morale is high."

Nobody commits mutiny aboard a ship which has ice cream cake for dessert.

The Range Recoverer is 189 feet long and 32 feet at the beam. It is versatile. The ship is free to sail in shallow waters. The draft is 11 feet. The Range Recoverer is a big help to the space program. You remember the space program.

A valuable recovery

The ship made a lot of friends last spring when it located a rocket payload on the floor of the Atlantic. The Range Recoverer has a snappy new sonar which ping, ping, ping-ed like mad as it picked up the target 6,000 feet down. The load plunged to the bottom when a parachute failed.

There was a satellite in deep water. It had data from the total solar eclipse of last spring.

Said Broom, "On the basis of determining that the payload was on the ocean floor, Wallops and Washington decided to recover. It proved to be a valuable payload because we will not have another solar eclipse on the east coast in 70 years."

I can't get it out of my mind how much the Range Recovery resembles the Pueblo. Both ships are the same at the beam. The Pueblo is 3 feet, 6 inches shorter than Range Recoverer.

They are 25-year old light cargo ships. The U.S. Army ordered these ships to carry supplies to islands in the South Pacific. Mister Roberts served on one of these ships. Thirty were built.

The Range Recoverer is dressed up in new equipment.

Enormous radio mast

Below decks, the ship has the gear to track missiles and to record these events. The word for this is telemetry. The Range Recoverer has mighty equipment to transmit by radio.

There are 22 men in the crew. All civilians. Eight scientists often come aboard to work.

The ship has a wet lab. For heavy work, there is a winch on the stern. You can't miss her. The ship is white from stem to stern. There is an enormous radio mast amidships.

Broom is waiting for his first orders of 1971.

"When the shot is programmed, my orders are originated in New York. I proceed to the designated station and maintain radio contact at all times with Wallops control. Our primary job is to track.

"If the helicopters cannot make recovery of the nose cone, we proceed to the payload and recover from the ship."

Suppose I told you that the Range Recoverer has a following. Would you believe it?

The captain has a file of letters from people across the U.S. They want his autograph or some other momento of this space shot or that one. The space nuts, I call them. They are still writing for a souvenir of the Range Recoverer's mission as telemetry ship for the frog launch.

Two frogs are up there in orbit, sacrificed to NASA's quest for knowledge about the inner ear in weightlessness.

Broom reported aboard four years ago from Vietnam, where he delivered cargo for Military Sealift. He considered the Atlantic one day recently and said, "Every day is different on this ship. But the ocean stays the same."

Space - Tracking Ship Visits NUWS

CAPT Lundy and Test Director Lenehan examine some of the new-type sonar system aboard the NASA space-tracking ship Range Recoverer.

CAPT ROBERT BROOM, MSTS
SKIPPER OF *RANGE RECOVERER*

An unusual ship under contract to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and loaded with special electronic gear valued at $3,000,000 visited NUWS for four days in early April and underwent evaluation of her unique sonar system by Station Engineers and Scientists.

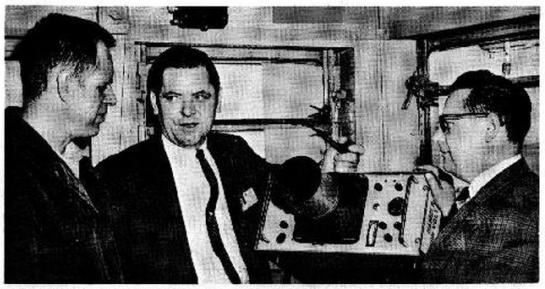
The *Range Recoverer*, already well-experienced in tracking all kinds of space shots, including the fantastic Apollo moon missions, was used to keep track of the Apollo 13 space ship as it returned to earth. Manned by a Military Sea Transportation Service (MSTS) civilian crew of twenty-two and skippered by CAPT Robert Broom, the ship is used by NASA mainly for tracking the re-entry and recovery of space vehicles.

Homeported in Little Creek, Va., the 176 ft.-long sister ship of the *NUWS* (IX 306), with its unusually sophisticated sonar system, located the payload of a satellite launched to study the recent eclipse of the sun. The important scientific equipment was pinpointed in 6,000 feet of ocean by the *Range Recoverer's* sonar.

For four days, NUWS Engineers and Scientists made evaluation of the ship's new sonar gear, which has the capability of picking up passive signals of missiles and torpedoes on the ocean bottom. Under a programmed test plan as part of their evaluation, NUWS personnel completed various ocean-bottom acoustic measurements and checked acoustic signals of submerged torpedoes and buoys at sea. Previously with the equipment, Station personnel had effectively picked up signals at a range of up to two-and-a-half miles.

The *Range Recoverer*, recipient of an award for being the outstanding MSTS special service ship during 1969, is also leased by other government agencies and universities for oceanographic research. Her oceanographic equipment includes a wet laboratory for experiments and a winch on the stern.

Gene Lenehan, DA2b3, is Test Director for the program, and Don Horne, DA2b1, is Engineering Adviser. LT Bruce Banks, RA, is also serving with the group evaluating the system.



EVALUATING NEW SONAR SYSTEM – *Engineering Adviser Don Horne, Test Director Gene Lenehan and NASA Project Engineer Raymond Lovelady on the Range Recoverer's bridge.*