

## MIDSHIPS

It became apparent now, after 180 days "on the line" that the war wasn't going exactly as we had planned. Our first patrol back in May went almost unnoticed by both us and the enemy. The few junks and sampans we boarded were friendly, and they weren't supposed to be. We were supposed to blast them out of the water, expending perhaps several rounds of 81 mm mortars and another few hundred clips of M16. For a while the 5-inch 38 remained silent. The crew waited for word of enemy troop concentrations, and a chance to run at flank speed to a spot off shore and send in round after round from the big gun. It wasn't until our second patrol that we got our first big chance. The boarding continued, the constant surveillance was always there, and the tedious task of running up and down the barrier reminded the crew that perhaps this wasn't the glory of fighting a war after all. But better days were ahead, the better days being the Philippines, Hong Kong, Thailand, Japan, Singapore, Taiwan. The tasks were tough, but always a few days away were those exotic ports where battle weary troops of the GRESHAM could relax with a few days Rest and Relaxation. They ended too quick and it was back on the line. By now we had earned two medals, the Vietnam Service ribbon and the Vietnam Campaign ribbon.

Song Ong Doc, a friendly village with a special forces contingent, was in the midst of VC controlled territory. Subjected to frequent harassment (getting shot at), the U.S. Army requested gunfire support to tame down the local VC. We responded with enthusiasm, tearing up big chunks of real estate in the vicinity of Song Ong Doc and the Camau Peninsula. The full extent of casualties inflicted we will never know, we sank some sampans, destroyed many structures and bunkers, and killed and wounded the enemy. We let them know we were there.

The next 180 days would be a cinch.