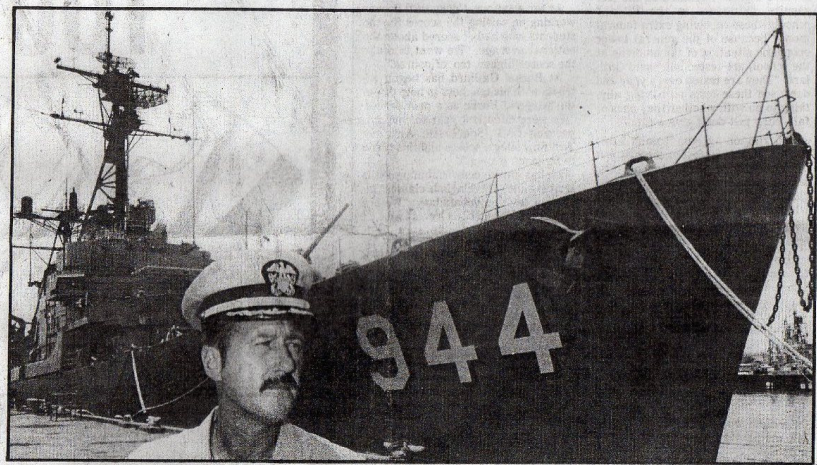


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# The Mullinnix succumbs to progress

## Navy to decommission last destroyer armed only with guns

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Cmdr. Richard Harry Schmidt and his ship, the 25-year-old Mullinnix

Staff Photo by Bill Jordan

By MERLE D. KELLERHALS Jr. Assistant Metro Editor

The Mullinnix, the last active Navy destroyer armed with guns only, will be decommissioned Thursday, ending an era of naval history.

Decommissioning ceremonies for the 25-year-old honor-laden warship

•Rear Adm. Baciocco turns over command... 5-C

will be held at Pier L at the Charleston Naval Base. It will be taken to the Philadelphia Navy Yard for final preparations before the ship is placed in safe storage.

The ship returned to Charleston May 20 after spending six months in the Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean supporting peacekeeping forces in Lebanon. It was at sea for 159 out of 180 days. For its service and performance, the ship will be awarded Departmental Excellence Awards for engineering, damage control, gunnery, communications, electronic warfare, anti-submarine warfare and anti-surface warfare, said Cmdr. Richard Harry Schmidt, skipper of the Mullinnix.

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## ...Mullinnix

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In its heyday, the all-gun destroyer made up in speed and punch what it lacked in size.

The Mullinnix, a Forrest Sherman class destroyer, was commissioned March 7, 1958. It is 418-feet long with a displacement of 3,850 tons. The ship's crew included 20 officers and 300 enlisted men.

The distinctive feature was the Mullinnix's three 5-inch .54-caliber deck guns — one forward and two aft. The ship also carried two triple mount torpedo tubes. It also was capable of steaming at better than 30 knots.

Today's newer destroyers carry an array of missiles, rockets, torpedoes and advanced electronic equipment, giving them greater firepower and range than the older Forrest Sherman warships.

Schmidt said the age of the ship and budget considerations were major reasons why the Navy has chosen to decommission the ship. The crew has been busy sealing the ship up and removing all equipment that was not built into the ship, he said.

It will be placed in safe storage in Philadelphia, and the Navy then will

determine whether it will be placed into mothballs or used for some other purpose.

Schmidt said the crew has worked hard to make the Mullinnix a good fighting ship, and it's hard to let it go. But, he said, there's some comfort in the knowledge that the crews that have served on the Mullinnix are among the best-trained in the Navy.

"Everybody invests a lot of themselves in the ship," he said during a recent interview. "It's not a funeral."

Over the past 25 years, Schmidt estimates that 4,600 enlisted men have served the ship along with about 200 officers.

For Petty Officer 2nd Class Dallas J. Tuttle, the decommissioning has special meaning.

He served on the ship from 1969-72 as a storekeeper before getting out of the Navy in 1972. After going to college and then returning to the Navy, he was reassigned to the Mullinnix in 1980.

"It's a little sad," he said of his feelings. "It's part of my life."

The Mullinnix was built by the Bethlehem Steel Co. in Quincy, Mass. It was the first warship named for Rear Adm. Henry Matson Mullinnix, who was killed in action during World

War II. The admiral died aboard his flagship the escort carrier Liscombe Bay.

At commissioning ceremonies, Mrs. Mullinnix gave the ship the admiral's sword and personal flag.

During the ship's career, it has steamed all over the world, visiting ports from Buenos Aires to Singapore to Bahrain to Izmir, and has engaged in a multitude of operations.

These include the recovery of a two-man Gemini Space shot in 1965; NATO operations in the North Atlantic; three tours of duty in the western Pacific, including service in the Vietnam War; and service in the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean Sea.

### The Rev. Ed McClain will speak at meeting

The Rev. Ed McClain will be guest speaker at the regular monthly meeting of the North Charleston branch of the NAACP, set for 7:30 p.m. Monday at Felix Pickney Recreation Center.

He is pastor of Calvary A.M.E. Church, host of radio station WWVZ's Gospel Train show and chairman of the Union Heights Community Alliance.