

USS KASKASKIA (AO 27)*Ed Devlin (10,975)**3 Mason Ct**Charlestown, MA 02129***USS KASKASKIA (AO 27) a CIMARRON-class (Type T3-S2-A1 tanker hull) fleet replenishment oiler**

KASKASKIA was launched 29 September 1939 by the Newport News Shipbuilding & Drydock Company, Newport News, Virginia as the civilian tanker Esso Richmond; sponsored by Mrs. Joseph P. Kennedy. Acquired by the Navy 22 October 1940; commissioned 29 October 1940, Commander Joseph W. Gregory in command.

KASKASKIA cleared Boston, Massachusetts 19 November 1940 for Pearl Harbor, T.H. arriving 3 January 1941. She transported oil between West Coast ports and Pearl Harbor, making six cruises before 7 August 1941, when she made an oil run to Johnston Island. The oiler returned to Mare Island, California 10 September 1941 for overhaul and repairs. In San Francisco when the Japanese made their surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, KASKASKIA immediately began preparations to join the Service Force in the Pacific.



Figure 1: USS KASKASKIA First Day Postal Service

World War II

Sailing from San Diego 6 January 1942, KASKASKIA commenced fueling operations en route before arriving at Pago Pago 20 January 1942. For the next six months she operated out of Noumea refueling the fleet. The oiler arrived in Kodiak, Alaska 3 July 1942 with a cargo of oil and fuel to be used in the Aleutian Islands campaign. She returned to Wilmington, California and loaded oil and aviation gasoline and continued oil runs to Alaskan ports until she steamed to Noumea late in March 1943. KASKASKIA supplied many ships during the successful campaigns in the South Pacific.

KASKASKIA returned to San Pedro, CA on 28 July 1943 for repairs before resuming her duties at Pearl Harbor 21 September 1943. She transported oil between California and Hawaii until she sailed 25 November 1943 to support the Gilbert Islands campaign. Returning to Pearl Harbor 10 December 1943 the oiler resumed her cruises between San Pedro and Hawaii.

KASKASKIA departed Pearl Harbor 16 January 1944 to support operations in the Marshall Islands. After the Navy had captured the Kwajalein and Majuro Atolls, KASKASKIA supported carrier task forces during their raids on Truk, the Marianas Islands, and Palau Islands in February and March 1944.

KAS continued fueling operations in the Marshall Islands area until she cleared Majuro 6 June 1944 to fuel destroyers and destroyer escorts in the invasion of Saipan. Throughout June and July KASKASKIA remained on hand, assisting the fleet to take Saipan, Guam, and Tinian - important supply areas in the future campaign for the Philippines.

As the Navy fought toward the Philippines, Admiral Nimitz decided to take the Palau Islands as a staging area for aircraft and ships during the invasion of Leyte. KASKASKIA departed Manus 4 September 1944 with a task group bound for an assault on Peleliu. Prior to the actual landings at Leyte, she fueled units of the fleet, continuing this vital duty until a beachhead had been established.

After an overhaul at San Diego from December 1944 through February 1945, KAS arrived at Kwajalein 11 March 1945 to service the fleet. The oiler cleared Ulithi 30 March for the fueling area off Okinawa, the last major step before the Japanese homeland itself.



Figure 2: USS KASKASKIA (AO 27) and USS HART (DD 594) separate, after refueling at sea, 23 December 1944.

KASKASKIA departed Ulithi 3 July to refuel units of the carrier task forces launching raids on the Japanese Islands of Honshu and Hokkaido. When the Japanese surrendered KASKASKIA steamed into Tokyo Bay 10 September 1945 with ships of the Occupation Forces. She continued refueling operations in Japan, China, and Formosa for an entire year before arriving in San Pedro 28 September 1946.

Korean Conflict

Between 1947 and 1950 she ferried oil and aviation gasoline from the West Coast to the Far East and naval bases in the mid Pacific. When North Korean troops invaded South Korea, the United States ordered forces to defend the embattled peninsula. KASKASKIA cleared San Diego 16 September 1950 to operate out of Sasebo, Japan. During October she fueled ships off Wonsan that were blockading and bombarding that key port.

During December 1950, KAS arrived off Hungnam to service ships engaged in evacuation operations in that area. Throughout the harsh winter months KASKASKIA continued vital fueling missions between Japan and Korea. During the United Nations counteroffensive in the spring of 1951 she also stood by for fueling operations. The oiler returned to Long Beach, California 27 August 1951 for overhaul and operations along the Pacific Coast.

KASKASKIA sailed for her second Korean tour January 1952, arriving Sasebo on 22 January to refuel the ships engaged in the Korean Conflict. In addition to services in Korea she supplied units in Japan, Okinawa, and Formosa before returning to Long Beach 31 July. Overhaul and training preceded her third Korean deployment from 27 December 1952 to July 1953. Returning home 17 August 1953 KASKASKIA underwent overhaul. She then sailed again for the Far East on 4 January 1954, operated out of Sasebo, and returned to San Francisco 12 October 1954. Following coastal operations the oiler was placed out of commission, in reserve, 8 April 1955.



Figure 3: USCS Admiral Moffett Chapter #6 printed cachet by Ray Milling for the 100th Anniversary of the Ratification of the Kanagawa Treaty. USS KASKASKIA Type 2 cancel.

KASKASKIA was transferred to MSTS 8 January 1957 and operated in that capacity with a Navy crew until 21 October 1957 when she decommissioned and was turned over to the Maritime Administration 10 December 1957. KASKASKIA was struck from the Navy List 2 January 1959 and was placed in the mothball fleet at Beaumont, Texas.

Berlin Crisis

On 4 June 1961, Premier Khrushchev created a new crisis when he reissued his threat to sign a separate peace treaty with East Germany, which he said would end existing four-power agreements guaranteeing American, British, and French access rights to West Berlin. However, this time he did so by issuing an ultimatum, with a deadline of 31 December 1961. The three powers replied that no unilateral treaty could abrogate their responsibilities and rights in West Berlin, including the right of unobstructed access to the city.

As the confrontation over Berlin escalated, US President John F. Kennedy in a speech delivered on

nationwide television the night of 25 July reiterated that the United States was not looking for a fight and that he recognized the, "Soviet Union's historical concerns about their security in central and eastern Europe." He said he was willing to renew talks. Nevertheless, he announced that he would ask Congress for an additional \$3.25 billion for military spending, mostly on conventional weapons. He wanted six new divisions for the Army and two for the Marines, and he announced plans to triple the draft and to call up the reserves. Kennedy proclaimed, "We seek peace, but we shall not surrender."

That same day, Kennedy requested an increase in the Army's total authorized strength from 875,000 to approximately 1 million men, along with increase of 29,000 and 63,000 men in the active duty strength of the Navy and the Air Force. Additionally, he ordered that draft calls be doubled, and asked the Congress for authority to order to active duty certain ready reserve units and individual reservists.

During the Berlin crisis of 1961, 18 vessels were activated and remained in service until 1970. USS KASKASKIA was one of several fleet oilers withdrawn for the National Defense Reserve Fleet, Beaumont, Texas for reactivation on 10 August 1961. KASKASKIA was reinstated 8 September 1961. At the same time, her recommissioning crew was assembled and was undergoing training at Naval Station, Norfolk.

Following overhaul and alterations to provide a full cargo deck above the tank (jungle) deck, she recommissioned at Hoboken, NJ, 6 December 1961, Captain John D. Howell in command. After shakedown operations off Guantanamo, Cuba, the oiler was homeported at Mayport, Florida, 1 May 1962. Throughout the summer, she engaged in exercises off the Florida coast and sailed for the Azores with a port call at Funchal, Madeira while preparing to participate as a recovery ship in the Project Mercury manned orbital flights. She was in company with USS KEARSAGE (CV 33) during the latter's recovery of Astronaut Wally Schirra on 3 October 1962 demonstrating the role of the Navy in space operations.

KASKASKIA returned to Mayport on 22 October and immediately loaded fuel and deck cargo around the clock. Two days later, KAS sailed to participate in the Cuban Blockade. President John F. Kennedy ordered the blockade when the Soviet Union tried to plant offensive missiles only 90 miles from the United States. The naval pressure persuaded the Soviet Union to withdraw the missiles, easing the crises. KASKASKIA provided fuel to the fleet while steaming in a patrol zone off northeast Cuba to the Florida coast off Miami. The oiler returned to operations out of Mayport 21 November 1962.

She cleared Mayport 5 February 1963 for a six months Mediterranean cruise to refuel ships of the US 6th Fleet including the newly commissioned USS ENTERPRISE (CVN 65) then on her maiden deployment. Upon return, KASKASKIA resumed refueling exercises off Florida and in the Caribbean, constantly seeking improved methods to increase the mobility of the fleet.



Figure 4:
USS
ENTERPRISE
takes on fuel
from
KASKASKIA
during UNREP
in the
Mediterranean
March 1963.

Photo:
Richard Jones

USS KASKASKIA was decommissioned for the final time 1 December 1969 and sold for scrap 1 September 1970.

KASKASKIA received nine battle stars for WW II and seven battle stars for Korean War service.

<http://kaskaskia27reunion.com/kascomnd.html>



Figure 6: Used shoulder patch from uniform of BM 3 Richard Jones



Figure 5: Ship's store stationery with printed cachet and corner card. KASKASKIA was in Brindisi, Italy 14-18 March 1963 on her first Med cruise.

On 6 January 1965, KASKASKIA sailed for another 6th Fleet deployment. While she was operating in the Mediterranean her crew worked day and night delivering over 19,000,000 gallons of fuel to 169 ships. KASKASKIA returned to Mayport on 7 June 1965. She operated primarily along the Atlantic Coast and in the Caribbean into 1967. Highlights of this period were service to ships patrolling off the coast of riot torn Santo Domingo in the summer of 1965, and participation in the recovery team for an unmanned Apollo Program space flight 1 February 1966.



Figure 5: First APOLLO unmanned flight recovery force. Type 2(n) (USS)

Ship's patch design.



First Day Postal Service Parcel Post Type 9x

First Day Postal Service Registered-- Type 9v



First Day Postal Service Money Order Business M.O.B. -- Type 9w



Editor's Note: I served in USS KASKASKIA as a member of her recommissioning crew after being one of the called up Reservists in August 1961. As a BMSN, I was assigned to Second Division; I was Coxswain of Utility Boat 2 and Rig Captain for Station 8 during Kaskaskia's first MED cruise.
BMCM Jones