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Korea Remembered: Enough of a War: The USS Ozbourn's First Korean Tour, 1950-1951

Charles F. Cole

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The Korean War began by interrupting the American adjustment to peace following World War Two, and ended not only without a victory but with a United States loss of life and suffering comparable to Vietnam. Even today, nearly four times as many American MIAs from the Korean War remain unaccounted for as from Vietnam. Ensign Charles F. Cole, graduated from Cornell University in 1950, and was also in the first Naval ROTC class to be commissioned. Cole and his classmates anticipated two years of peace-time duty to repay their obligation. Instead, within a few weeks of graduation, they were swept into the Navy's frantic preparation to re-equip a Navy whose war-time strength and proficiency had been decimated by military cutbacks. The skeleton Navy force on duty in both Atlantic and Pacific fleets was quickly augmented by those 1950 NROTC Ensigns and the recall of World War II Reservists. The former provided the large number of Ensigns needed by an expanded Navy. The latter, who still retained their World War II skills, provided the expertise needed to man the ships coming out of mothballs. Cole is unstinting in his praise for the returning Reservists. He and his fellow classmates are an emphatic affirmation of the value of the NROTC program envisioned by Dr. (Captain) Arthur Adams and named in honor of Admiral James Holloway. Without those NROTC Ensigns and the returning Reservists, the United States Navy's participation in the first year of the Korean War would have been minimal at best. Cole served eighteen months on the USS Ozbourn off the Korean coast. Underwater Demolition Teams began during world War II to help ensure the safety of forces landing on the various Atlantic and Pacific beaches. This type of unconventional warfare was in its infancy when Cole took his Navy demolition training in 1951.

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