

# THEY SERVED IN SILENCE

## The Story of a Cryptologic Hero FN Duane D. Hodges



**When you're standing on the edge of nowhere...  
Through the darkest nights to see the light shine bright  
When heroes fall in love or war they live forever**

Lyrics from "The Lonely Bull," the ship's song of the USS Pueblo.

The National Cryptologic Memorial Wall is a tribute to those members of the cryptologic service who have died in the performance of their duties. However, it also the case that while most individuals on the wall were professional cryptologists, many were not. Making and breaking codes on the land, on the sea, and in the air is a complex task that requires not only intelligence experts, but a wide range of support personnel. The service and sacrifice of FN Duane D. Hodges more than represents this critical element of the U.S. cryptologic community.

Hodges was born in Creswell, Oregon on September 5, 1946. Creswell is a small lumber and farming community located in the far western portion of the state. Duane attended Creswell High School, where he was a member of the wrestling team, and after graduation, worked briefly for his brother's carpentry shop. In time he made the decision to join the US Navy. The Hodges family was no stranger to the military. Two of Duane's older brothers were Navy veterans and another had served in the Marine Corps.

After basic, Duane was trained as an FN or Fireman. Unlike the traditional meaning of the word, the naval term was originally coined to describe the duties of those responsible for keeping a ship's boilers in good order. In modern times, firemen perform basic engineering and maintenance duties aboard ship. 1968 found him serving as part of the crew of the USS Pueblo.

In the 1960s, the US Navy began using a series of ships to conduct seaborne signals intelligence missions. These efforts had been extremely useful, particularly during incidents like the Cuban Missile Crisis. The Pueblo was part of this program. Originally a cargo vessel for the US Army, in 1966 it was transferred to the Navy.

On January 5, the ship, under the command of Commander Lloyd Bucher, left Japan and headed northward to monitor and collect intelligence from Soviet naval vessels and North Korea. Due to the nature of the mission, the ship was on its own. As Bob Chicca, one of Hodges's shipmates, noted, "We were out there alone. That's why the ship's song was 'The Lonely Bull'...we were supposed to just collect intelligence and not cause trouble."



January 23 found the Pueblo in international waters off the coast of North Korea. Over the previous three days, the ship had been subjected to a series of concerning but ultimately innocuous actions from a host of North Korean ships and aircraft. Aware that this kind of harassment was not unprecedented, Bucher attempted to quell the situation by moving

the ship out of harm's way; however, his effort was thwarted when one of the pursuing craft began firing on the ship.

Even before the attack, orders had gone out to destroy classified materials to prevent them from falling into enemy hands. Chaos ensued, but cryptologists and sailors alike, including Fireman Hodges, dedicated themselves to this critical effort. As he was attempting to carry classified information from the intelligence operations area to the main deck for destruction, a naval shell burst in the compartment area, injuring his shipmates and mortally wounding him.

Knowing that the Pueblo did not have the firepower to fight back, and wanting to prevent further carnage and death, Commander Bucher allowed the ship to be boarded by the North Koreans. Both ship and crew were towed to Wosan, where they were taken into custody. Bucher and his men would undergo 11 months of unspeakable cruelty and torture. A series of long, grueling negotiations ensued. Finally, on December 23, the crew was transported to the Korean Demilitarized Zone and allowed to cross the Bridge of No Return back into South Korea. As they crossed, they carried with them the body of their fallen comrade.

A 9 November Associated Press article in describing the return home of Hodges and the Pueblo crew related that "A band struck up 'The Lonely Bull.' Families and friends hurried to greet them. Tears. Embraces. A glance to see that it was really true... Then an honor guard of sailors carried out the casket of Duane Hodges. Trumpeters played the 'The Navy Hymn.' An honor guard fired three rounds into the air. Captain Bucher, after embracing Hodges's mother, bowed his head. Then a gray hearse drove Hodges's body away from his shipmates. They saluted."

His childhood friend Leroy Davis remembered Duane as "a regular boy growing up in school ... quite a wrestler ... easy going ... polite and never got into trouble with anybody." However, to his shipmates, the US Navy, and the country, he would forever be remembered for his courage, initiative and his dedication to upholding not only the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service, but the cryptologic service as well.

