

MEMORANDUM

F196-2

SUBJECT: On board USS CANBERRA (CA-70)(CAG-2)
PLACE: Terminal Island, California
DATE: 29 December 1980

Ray Coats of National Metals phoned: "Meet me at 8 AM in the yard and we will go aboard the CANBERRA and look around." With cameras slung and a full complement of gloves, flashlights, hard hats and small tools, we advanced on this once grand ship.

With the 18-foot ladder in place against the hull, we climbed to the main deck--the first of many vertical ups and downs which took us through numerous hatches and trunks during the next four hours.

The usual clutter of loose gear is evident from her long sleep in Bremerton. Planking shows effects of the wet Puget Sound weather. The calking is working out, some plugs are missing as are a few planks. Only the port anchor and chain remain--the starboard is missing. The anchor windlass appears intact.

Evidence of salvage and vandalism is obvious--most small bronze, brass and copper items are missing--gages are broken, remaining furniture is damaged and files strewn about. The flying bridge and pilot house are stripped of essentials--the wheel and stand are gone--the engine order telegraph in shambles and all phones and other gear removed--apparently done by the Navy while in Bremerton.

However, there remains an immense amount of electronic gear intact in CIC, gun directors, radar control, etc., all apparently outdated.

All guns have been disabled. The breeches and some training gear are torch cut--the 5-inch barrels are partially burned through. There are no 20MM guns.

We prowled the superstructure, main deck and only some of the many below deck spaces. Mainly we worked aft from the busen's locker through warehouse country, past the Log Office, post Office, crews mess and galley, the CPO quarters until finally into the trunk descending into steering aft. Although this latter space appears to be intact, both brass wheels have been removed.

The missile storage area is overwhelming in size and appears to extend to the bottom plates. This space and its contents are strange to me since #3 turret was here during World War II.

In summary, I find the CANBERRA scarified superficially. Many small items will need to be replaced from some source, followed by extensive patching, clean up and paint to make the ship cosmetically presentable for museum purposes.

The CANBERRA lays alongside the bones of her sister ST. PAUL (CA-73), new out to her waterline. She will be shortly hulked out and the CANBERRA will take her place. Quite unofficially it appears cutting will probably commence about mid-January.

J.L. Whitmeyer

Beach CA 90277

Ex Shipmates attempting to save this Heavy Cruiser for Charleston, S.C.