

Durham Native Selects Navy For Opportunity

Story and Photos by JOI Ken Duff

(With the U.S. Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean) — "The Navy is a good place to make good," exclaims North Carolina native Rodney Williamson, 25, of Durham. There's no other place, in my opinion, for people to get the finest training and education for their jobs.

To me, it is the Navy and the Navy way of life." Williamson, son of Mrs. Lenora Williamson of 212 Elmira Avenue, Durham, is a Radioman Third-Class Petty Officer serving aboard the 4,600-ton guided missile destroyer USS Coontz (DDG-40). Williamson's ship recently returned to

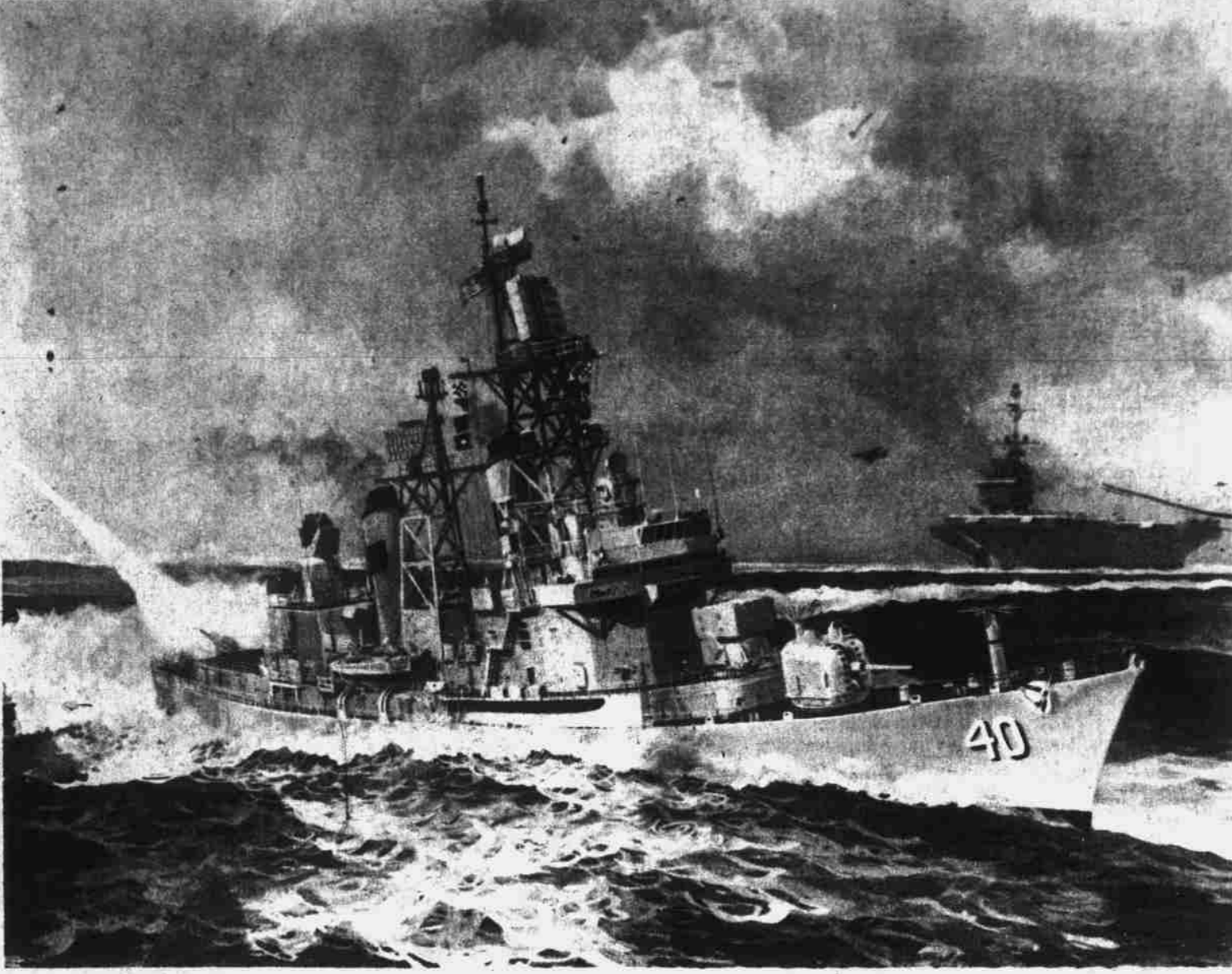
the United States after a five-month deployment with the U.S. Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean.

"I am not in the Navy today, simply waiting for my enlistment contract to end," says the 6'6" Navyman. "I feel that I am high caliber material and I joined feeling that my own personal goals and interests could be fulfilled in the Navy — I'm still in the service."

Aboard the 377-man guided missile destroyer, Williamson works as a radioman. "My job as a radioman on Coontz is that of communications," says the hazel-eyed Navyman. "Underway and inport communications are a vital link of the ship with other naval activities both ashore and afloat. As a communicator in the Navy, I transmit and receive information and data which play an important part in the day-to-day operation of the ship."

While in the Mediterranean, Coontz participated with more than thirty ships of the fleet in a variety of national and NATO exercises. The 156-meter-long ship was deployed to the Mediterranean from its homeport of Norfolk, Va., from September, 1981 to February, 1982.

One of the facets of Navy life that William-



AN ARTIST'S CONCEPTION of the USS Coontz taking part in carrier operations. The primary mission of the 4,600-ton guided missile destroyer is that of anti-submarine warfare.

Official U.S. Navy Photograph



DURHAM NATIVE RODNEY WILLIAMSON is a radioman third class petty officer stationed aboard the guided missile destroyer USS Coontz with the U.S. Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean.

son enjoys the most is the travel. "Since I joined the Navy, I have been able to visit places that before I only dreamed about," smiles Williamson. "Whoever would have told me when I was in high school in 1974, that I would be able to visit Africa before my 25th birthday? Well, I have and I have also been able to visit most of the other countries on the Mediterranean. It is a pleasure for me to visit countries aboard a U.S. Navy ship — because I feel that our Navy is respected in the world today."

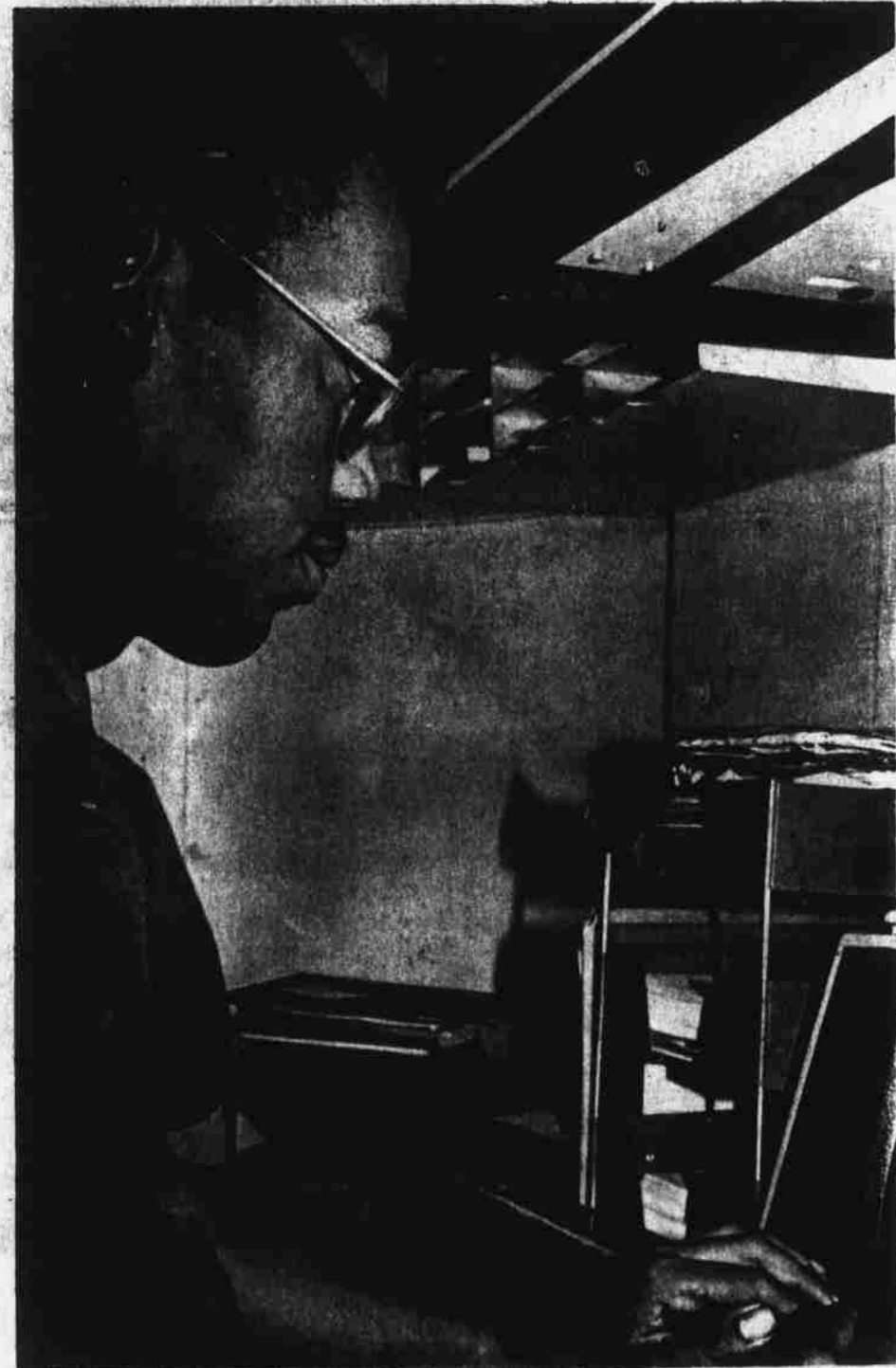
"I am proud to be in the Navy today," smiles Williamson. "The Navy has given me the chance to prove myself. I have learned from the Navy and I have advanced in the Navy and I feel successful."

When queried about the disadvantages of Navy duty, Williamson said, "Family separation is part of the job — part of the commitment that has to be made. In the Navy, a person has the chance to advance and make something of himself. For me, with that there is also a price that has to be paid." My wife, Pattes, and I realize that if we are go-

ing to have all of the benefits of Navy life, we have to be willing to make some of the sacrifices as well."

Williamson and his wife reside at 1120 Matthew Henson Street, Norfolk, Virginia.

Commissioned in July, 1960, Coontz is the lead ship of the "Coontz" class of guided missile destroyers. The ship is equipped with one twin Terrier/standard surface-to-air missile launcher, one anti-submarine rocket launcher and two triple torpedo tubes. The ship is capable of speeds in excess of thirty knots.



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