

Teacher on carrier was in harm's way -- twice

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Imagine being on a massive aircraft carrier as a civilian, and being told that the president of the United States has ordered the ship to travel to the Persian Gulf and that you were in imminent danger.

Morganton resident Roy McGalliard doesn't need to imagine such a scenario. He has encountered that situation not once but twice.

The 60-year-old retired teacher from Western Piedmont Community College was aboard the U.S.S. George Washington as an English teacher in 1994 and again just two months ago. Both times the ship was ordered into the volatile Middle East.

On each occasion, McGalliard, along with the other teachers on board the ship, were told they had a choice: stay on board or be sent home.

Despite being told he was in imminent danger, McGalliard chose both times to stay with the ship. "I

never really felt that I was in any real danger," he said.

"I realized that we would be vulnerable when we were in the Suez Canal and I realized we would be vulnerable when we went into the Straits of Hormuz . . . but once we got in the Persian Gulf we would be able to get our air cover up and our battle group around us to protect the carrier."

McGalliard retired from teaching in 1994, but just after leaving the college, he sign up with Central Texas College in a special teaching program

"The program is called 'The Program Afloat College Equivalent,' " said McGalliard. "It's fundamentally designed to offer the first two years of college just like Western Piedmont."

McGalliard stayed on the ship for four months in 1994. During that time, Iraq decided to hold what it called "military maneuvers," and massed troops near the border of

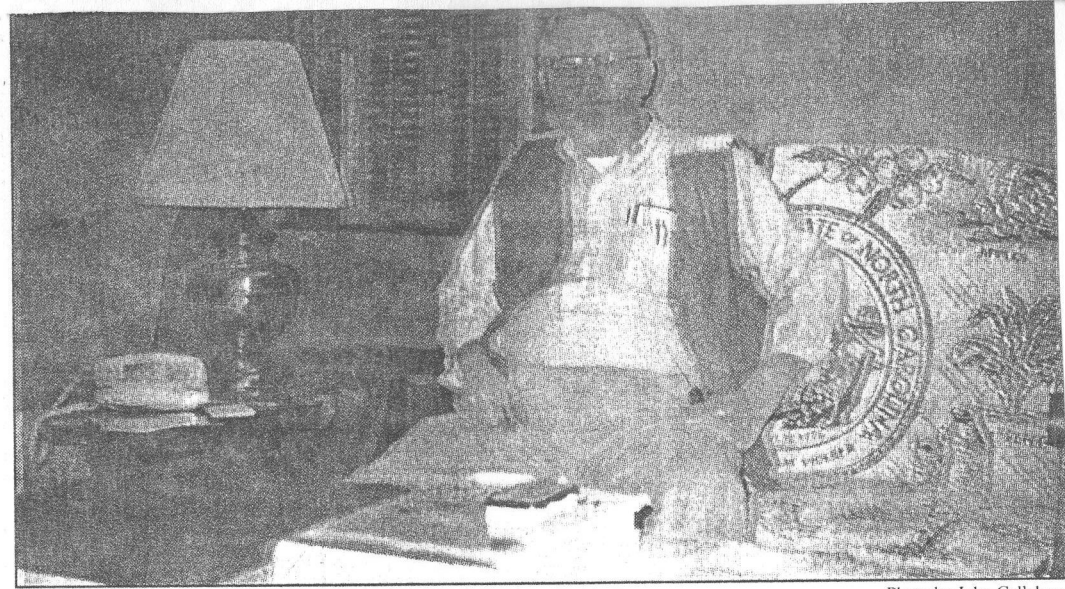
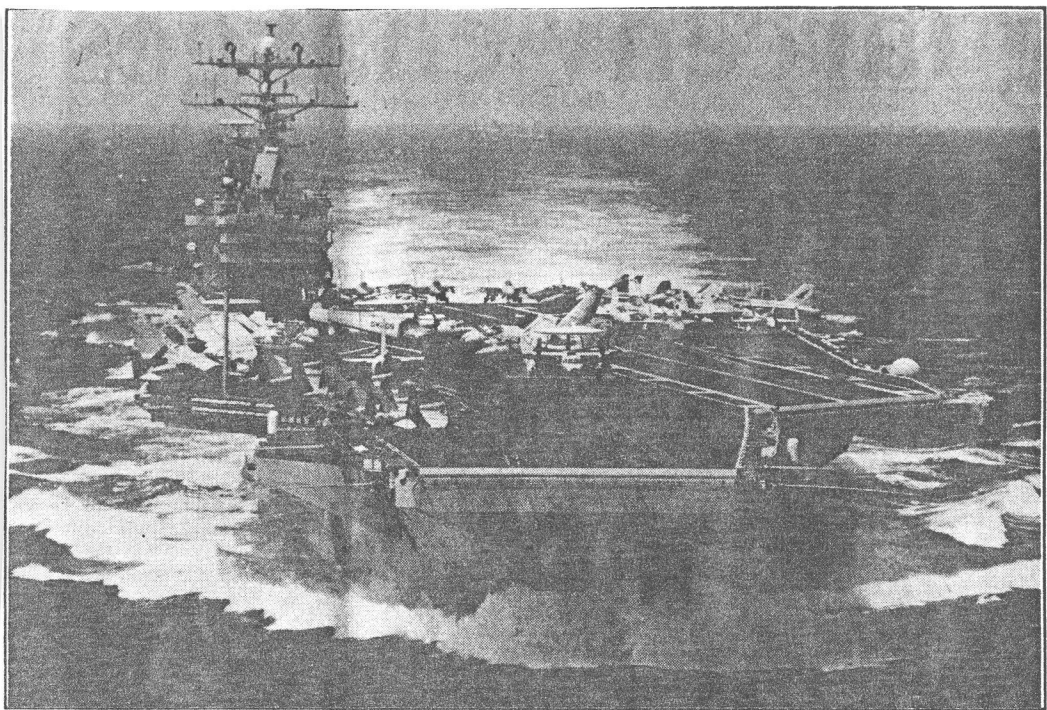


Photo by John Callaham

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Retired WPCC teacher Roy McGalliard is shown at his home in Morganton.



McGalliard was on this ship, the aircraft carrier U.S.S. George Washington.

Teacher

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Kuwait.

The aircraft carrier was ordered into the Persian Gulf by President Clinton to send a message to Iraq.

In October of this year, McGalliard again left Morganton to teach on the George Washington. This time the ship was ordered into the Persian Gulf after Iraq would not allow Americans on U.N. teams to inspect weapons facilities.

"One of the young men on board with me was on board in 1994 and told me, 'McGalliard, I don't want you to come out here. Every time you come out, we go to war,' " McGalliard joked.

While on board, McGalliard noticed that the attitude of the personnel is very different once the word is given that they might be going to battle.

"When you are just out cruising, doing standard air ops and playing

military games, there is a lot more humor involved and it is a relaxed atmosphere," he said.

That changes once the captain of the ship announces new orders from the president. "When you go into the wardroom to sit down to have dinner, you don't hear the banter, you don't hear the laughing and talking. People are more serious," McGalliard said.

Along with three other teachers, McGalliard conducted classes six days a week on the ship, teaching about 75 students.

Although McGalliard expected his students to handle the workload, he admits he gave some of them some slack, especially during wartime duties.

"When you have a guy on the deck loading bombs dealing with catapulting airplanes and he comes in the class dead-tired, the first thing he might do is go to sleep," he

said. "My standing order to my students was if someone goes to sleep, just make sure he doesn't crack his head when he lays it on the table."

The students in McGalliard's classes on the ship are perhaps more serious than his students were at WPCC.

"If I posed a question at Western Piedmont, it may or may not be answered," he said. "But if I posed a question on the aircraft carrier, I'll get an answer. I'll get three or four answers."

When he was not teaching aboard ship, McGalliard said he spent a lot of time reading and sometimes watching aircraft being launched.

Now that he is home again, McGalliard is ready to take on a more common pursuit, namely getting a real estate appraiser license.