

Warship docks at port; crew polishes up deck

by Karen Robin
Times Writer

The first of the seven U.S. Navy warships due in Anchorage for the Fourth of July holiday arrived midafternoon Tuesday, but only a second look brought it into view at the northern end of the pier.

The ship, the USS Excel, floated on shallow waters of the low tide, with only its mast and a forest of antennae and lights showing above the pier.

After docking at about 1 p.m., the crew of the minesweeper struggled for nearly three hours to secure a gangway, or brow, as the Navy calls the walkway reaching from dock to deck.

But finally, with the help of a few lines, a hacksaw and some good ol' sailor heave-ho's, the ramp was lowered to the deck and the crew stepped onto dry land again.

Before they spread out for shore leave, how-

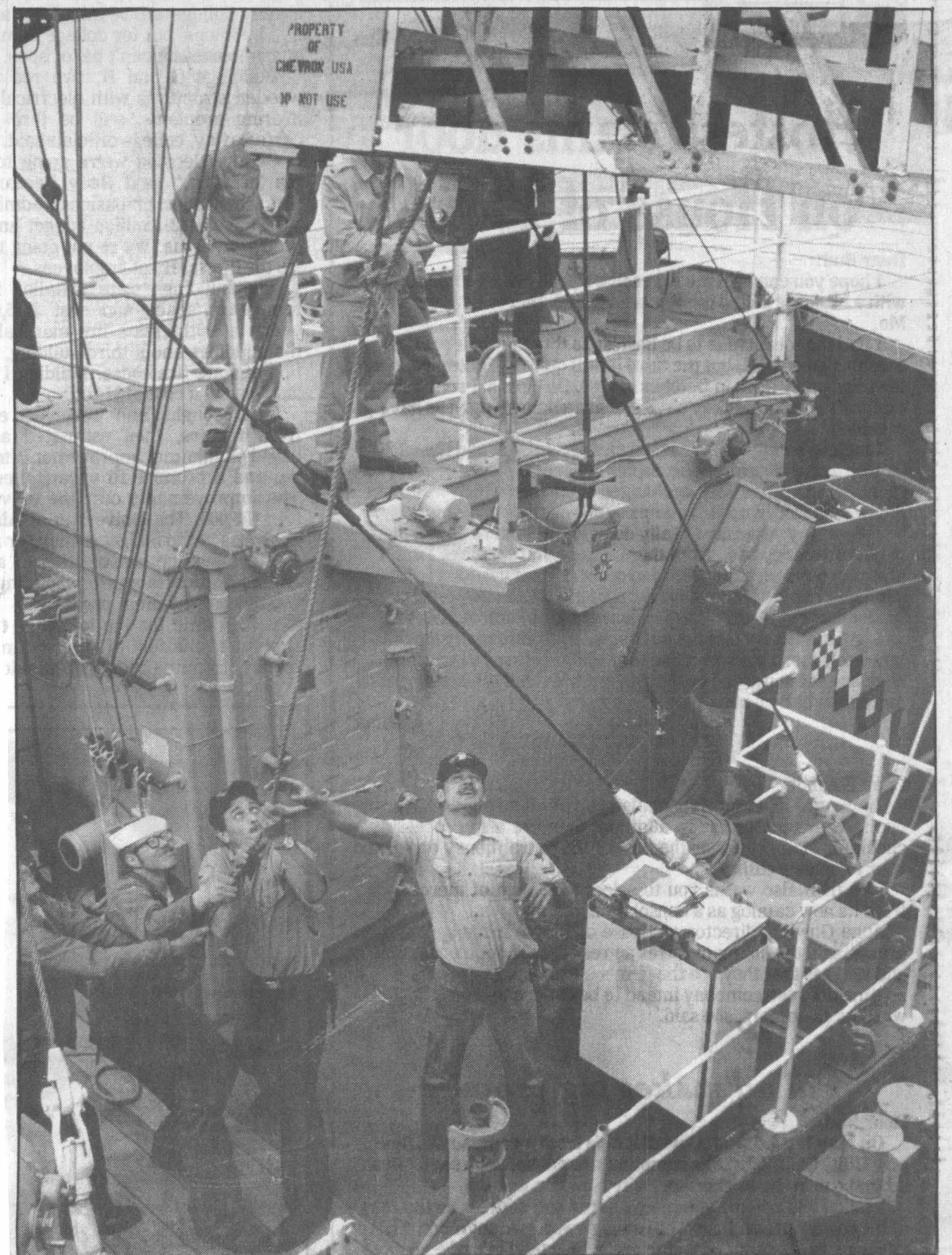
ever, they'll give a spit polish to ready the ship for public tours.

Lt. Cmdr. Lee Foley said the crew has been on exercises since the end of May, and has called on ports in Seattle, British Columbia, Ketchikan and Kodiak.

The minesweeper is used to train midshipmen and Naval Reserve troops. About one-third of his crew is reserve forces, Foley said.

Many of those reservists were wrestling with the brow as it came aboard, having to relocate it once to please the captain. A small crowd of welcoming spectators watched as one cable after another was held aside for the ramp.

Foley, apparently enjoying the attention, said, "It's a nice feeling when you come into a port and there's people on the pier to welcome you, wanting to help."



Wendi K. Brown of The Times

Crew members of the USS Excel attempt to move the ship's gangway Tuesday after docking



Times photo by Mike Dinneen

Dangling gangway

Changing tides in Anchorage are presenting problems for ships docked at the Port of Anchorage this week. The USS Harold E. Holt's fallen gangway is

an example. Seven Navy ships are squeezed into the Port for the Fourth of July holiday weekend. Stories, page B-1, B-2.



Times photo by Mike Dinneen

A tug boat maneuvers the USS Truxtun into the Anchorage dock this morning

Ships ahoy!

by Karen Robin
Times Writer

A cheer went up from the decks of the USS Harold E. Holt early this morning as its lines reached the Port of Anchorage docks.

And down the pier, a tug boat nudged the USS Truxtun, a nuclear-powered guided missile cruiser, toward the shore.

Yes, the U.S. Navy is in town. Seven ships in all will be at the Port of Anchorage until July 7, just in time to join in the city's Fourth of July celebrations.

Approximately 1,600 crewmen on leave will be "adopted" by area American Legion, American Veterans and Veterans of Foreign Wars posts for Fourth of July picnics. They will also be touring

See Navy, page A-14

Navy ships open for tours

Continued from page A-1

Anchorage and Alaska, most of them for the first time.

Docking shortly after 6 a.m. in the light morning rain, the crewmen stood by, as patiently as can be expected after weeks at sea.

The Truxtun's crew threw its lines overboard to be secured behind the Holt, a fast frigate.

Saturated with water, the lines took three men to wrestle to shore.

The linesmen, volunteers from the Naval Reserve Unit stationed at Elmendorf Air Force Base, didn't seem to mind the rain to help out their fellow sailors.

"These people are eager to get off," said Petty Officer 3rd Class Steve Reschke, one of the reservists. "They've probably been at sea for a good 30 days. That's a long time to look at water."

Meanwhile, the second frigate, the USS Brewton, cooled

its heels out in the Cook Inlet, waiting for the go-ahead before a tug would help it into position to tie up alongside the Holt.

Even after the Holt tied up,

the crew still faced hours of work, cleaning up and hearing the rules and regulations for their shore leave in Anchorage.

Sailors' banquet

Continued from page A-1

provide Alaskan food for our military guests," said the auxiliary's food chairman Heidi Wallace. "And our plea really paid off."

People from all over northeast Anchorage dug into their freezers and found seafoods and wild game.

Wallace said the sailors will dine on baked king salmon, salmon spread, smoked salmon dip, crab salad and crab dip. They will savor deep fried halibut chunks, baked halibut, clam fritters and bear and caribou meatballs.

"The VFW is putting all the

food together, adding drinks and desserts, and the Navy has offered the makings for hamburgers and cheeseburgers. But for the most part it's the people of Eagle River who will make this meal something the sailors will never forget," Wallace said.

After their meal early Thursday afternoon, the visiting sailors will be entertained with a jam session and a friendly afternoon in Eagle River at the VFW Post on Eagle River Road. Local residents are encouraged to mingle with the visitors after lunch has been served, Wallace said.