

AREA NINE

25 February 1969—

The SPENCER arrived on Area 9 of the Market Time Barrier and commenced relief of the CGC Wachusetts. The Wachusetts briefing party assured SPENCER that Area 9 was deadly dull, and that the only enemy we would be fighting was boredom. Area 9 covers the southern tip of South Vietnam and all of its western coastline up to the Cambodian border. So with visions of lazy sunny days ahead, the SPENCER began her first patrol.

However, as it so often happens when the John C. goes anywhere, the action soon increased. The Navy Riverine force under the command of Captain Hoffman, USN, decided to step up its operations. The SPENCER became "Mother Ship" to the Swift Boat Forces operating in the nearby rivers, and the SPENCER crew was shocked into the cold realities of the war. With shouts of bravado the swift boat crews would daily return to the SPENCER after close intense combat with the Viet Cong in their river strongholds. The "A" Gang would provide the swifts with fuel and water while the SPENCER Hilton gave the tired riverines a "real rack" for the night and good chow from the SPENCER kitchens. SPENINDINT managed to keep the troops entertained with movies, soft drinks, popcorn, and pizza. As SPENCER DC's and MM's and ET's aided the Swifts with equipment and manpower in the repairs necessitated by damages sustained in a firefight. The SPENCER medical department attended to the wounded. Seventeen Purple Hearts were awarded to the Brown Water Sailors, during our short three week patrol on area 9 of the Market Time patrol.

