

NAVY DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS  
NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION (OP-09B9)  
SHIPS' HISTORIES SECTION

HISTORY OF SHIPS NAMED RELIEF

U.S. Navy Hospital Ship RELIEF (AH-1) is the fifth ship of the Fleet to bear the name.

The first RELIEF was a storeship authorized by Congress 30 June 1834, in connection with plans for a projected exploring expedition. Her keel was laid at Philadelphia the next year, and she was launched 14 September 1836, at a construction cost of \$91,228. Her length was 109 feet; beam, 30.9 feet; depth of hold, 19 feet; tonnage, 468; and complement, 44.

RELIEF sailed from Philadelphia 3 December 1836 to report to the exploring squadron at Hampton Roads, arriving 16 December. Here, she remained while problems of organization delayed the departure of the expedition, but put to sea 11-18 May 1837 for an experimental trip in the Gulf Stream. She sailed from Norfolk 12 October for New York, where the exploratory squadron, now under Commodore Thomas Ap C. Jones, was to make final preparations, and returned to Norfolk 16 May 1838, when Jones was relieved of the command. With the appointment of Lieutenant Charles Wilkes to head the expedition, final plans were concluded, and RELIEF at last departed on the exploring expedition 18 August 1838.

Four days out of Norfolk, RELIEF, a slow-sailer, was detached from the squadron, with orders to make rendezvous at the Cape Verde Islands, which the remainder of the squadron would reach after a call at Madeira. The squadron joined RELIEF at Porto Praya 7 October and together, sailed for Rio de Janeiro, arriving 23 November. Here the squadron remained for the rest of the year, since all of the vessels now needed extensive repairs in preparation for the difficult cruise to Antarctic waters which lay ahead. The squadron stood out of Rio de Janeiro 6 January 1839, and while the others spent a week surveying the bar at the mouth of the Rio Negro, RELIEF was sent on alone for a brief call at Good Success Bay enroute Orange Harbor, first good anchorage west of Cape Horn.

At Orange Harbor, the squadron was dispersed on a variety of missions. RELIEF was ordered into the Straits of Magellan by way of Brecknock Passage and Cockburn's Sound, carrying most of the civilian scientists attached to the expedition. RELIEF sailed from Orange Harbor 26 February but was forced farther to the southward by prevailing winds than had been anticipated, and was not able to make her entrance into the Straits by way of Brecknock Passage. On 17 March, RELIEF approached the coast, and the next day in a heavy gale, sought protection at anchor in a bay at Noir Island. The gale continued through the next few days, and on the 19th, a second anchor was let go. On the 20th, one of the cables was found to have parted, with the loss of an anchor, and so a third anchor was dropped. The weather became even worse, with a constantly rising wind, and by evening, RELIEF was dragging her anchors. Wind and sea were forcing her toward a reef, and a huge rock astern gave considerable

concern. At midnight, RELIEF had been pushed away from the rock but was almost upon the reef. Suddenly she shipped a heavy sea over her bows, and the resultant shock caused both cables to part. Fortunately, the set of the current was such that RELIEF was carried just clear of the reef.

Further attempts to carry out orders were now impossible, since the ship had lost all her anchors. Although her orders were to return to Orange Harbor at the conclusion of her explorations, RELIEF had no choice but to sail for Valparaiso, which was the squadron's next scheduled port of call. She arrived off Valparaiso 13 April, and was provided with an anchor by HMS FLY. At about the same time, the squadron was reuniting at Orange Harbor, and coming to the conclusion that RELIEF had been lost. The squadron all arrived at Valparaiso by 19 May, however, greatly surprised and pleased to find their store-ship there. With the squadron, RELIEF sailed from Valparaiso 6 June, and put in to Callao 30 June.

At Callao, Wilkes decided to send RELIEF home, since he felt her slow speed would retard all his operations and made her a constant source of anxiety. After having RELIEF smoked to destroy the rats with which she was infested, Wilkes ordered her to take aboard, as he described them, "all invalids and idlers." Sailing 13 July 1839 she called at Honolulu and Sydney, where she off-loaded supplies for the squadron to collect upon its arrival there. She then headed east, rounded Cape Horn, and arrived in New York 28 March 1840.

After overhaul and repairs, RELIEF sailed from New York 1 December 1840 for duty in the Pacific, cruising primarily off the western coast of South America. She did not return to New York from this cruise until 20 April 1846. Her next cruise was with the squadron commanded by Commodore Matthew C. Perry in the Gulf of Mexico, for which she sailed from New York 9 July 1846. Her cruising grounds were the West Indies, and the Gulf coast from Florida to Mexico. She returned to New York 13 July 1848.

RELIEF was repaired, and cleared New York 27 September 1848 for Norfolk, from which she sailed 28 October for duty on the Brazil Station. She returned to Norfolk 6 April 1849, and sailed north to New York 27 September. Between 26 October and 18 July 1850, she cruised on the Mediterranean Station, and between 20 September 1850 and 18 February 1851, made the first of a series of voyages to supply vessels on the Brazil Station. Similar voyages were made 7 May 1851-3 November 1851; 8 January 1852-28 July 1852; 27 September 1852-15 April 1853; 25 July 1853-29 July 1854; and 24 September 1854-16 November 1855. Returning from this last voyage, she was placed out of commission for an overhaul, but returned to service carrying supplies to the Brazilian Squadron through 1856 and 1857.

RELIEF spent most of the year 1858 at New York City in repairs and overhaul, and then joined the Home Squadron, cruising in the Gulf of Mexico, in patrol of the slave trade. In the first half of 1861, she crossed the Atlantic with supplies for the African Squadron. Through

the first part of 1862, she ferried supplies from New York City to the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron, and in July joined the West Gulf Blockading Squadron. She supported operations of Farragut and Porter primarily through duty as a station store ship at Ship Island until late in 1863 when she was ordered to Boston.

RELIEF was decommissioned at Boston 5 December 1863, thoroughly overhauled, and fitted out as a permanent storeship, intended for duty in some southern port. She was recommissioned 29 April 1864, but rather than being assigned as planned, was directed to sail for duty in the Pacific. She called at Rio 7 July 1864 to deliver supplies to vessels on the Brazil Station, and proceeded to Macao, China, where she arrived 9 December 1864. She served with the Asiatic Squadron until late in 1866, when she returned to New York City. Here she was placed in ordinary until late in 1871, when she sailed to Washington, D.C. After a few months in ordinary there, she became receiving ship at Washington, a duty on which she continued through 1877. In 1878 she was laid up in Washington, and remained in this status until sold to J. B. Agnew, 27 September 1883.

The second RELIEF was originally built as a passenger-cargo steamer in 1896 by the Delaware River Company, Chester, Pennsylvania. She was a merchantman of the New England coastal trade until outbreak of the Spanish-American War when she was purchased by the Army and converted into a hospital ship. She remained in the service of the War Department until 13 November 1902 when she transferred to the Navy and was placed in reserve at the Mare Island Navy Yard, California. RELIEF fitted out there as a Navy hospital ship during 1904-1905 but the controversy of whether a line officer or medical officer would command the hospital ship worked to delay her commissioning.

The war with Spain in 1898 had seen the Navy making more extensive use of hospital ships. This had led to the controversy at the turn of the century between the Medical Corps and the Line, over the question of command of hospital ships. Surgeon General of the Navy, Presley M. Rixey, reasoned that since a hospital ship is in fact a hospital afloat, a medical officer would be best qualified to command such a ship; furthermore, that placing hospital ships under the command of combatant officers might, under the Hague and Geneva Conventions, disqualify them for immunity from attacks.

The Bureau of Navigation replied that medical doctors having neither training nor experience in navigation and ship handling were therefore, not qualified to command. The Bureau of Medicine and surgery countered with a proposal to place navigation, deck, and engineering functions in the hands of a competent sailing master and a civilian crew, because the "command is eminently a non-combatant one."

The Secretary of the Navy and the President endorsed Surgeon General Rixey's views. In a letter of 4 January 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt wrote to the Secretary of the Navy: "The hospital ships of the Navy will hereafter, unless otherwise directed by Congress, be placed

under the control and command of medical officers of the Navy, their navigation being exclusively controlled by a competent sailing master and civilian crew, the sailing master having the complete responsibility for everything connected with the navigation of the ship...Military surgeons, including naval surgeons, have special knowledge of hospital ships, and they have in addition certain military duties of command, organization drills and discipline, just as do officers of the line, awarding punishments and being guided and governed in these military duties by the same regulations that guide and govern officers of the line. The command of hospital ships should unquestionably be vested in a medical officer, and no line officers should be aboard it." This decision was altered by a Congressional Act of 29 August 1916 which allowed navigation, deck, and engineering duties in a hospital ship to be assigned to line officers of the Naval Reserve Force, but left the command with a medical officer. Thus it came about that RELIEF commissioned 6 February 1908, Surgeon Charles F. Stokes, USN, commanding.

RELIEF had a length overall of 314 feet; extreme beam, 46 feet; displacement of 3,300 tons; mean draft, 15 feet, 10 inches and a designed complement of 16 officers and 105 men. Her average speed was 16-17 knots and her four principal wards designed to care for 195 patients. Her medical officer in command, his staff and assistants and older hospital corps men were all specially selected for service in her. The class just graduated from the Hospital Corps Training School in Washington, were transferred to her in a body. Thus, RELIEF, according to the announced policy of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, became a sort of post-graduate training school for apprentices. These men and others attached to RELIEF acquitted themselves most admirably.

The world cruise of the "Great White Fleet" of sixteen battleships to promote President Theodore Roosevelt's diplomacy led to RELIEF's commissioning the the Mare Island Navy Yard 6 February 1908. She stood out of San Francisco Bay 22 March and arrived in Magdalena Bay, Mexico the night of 27 March 1908. Having embarked 152 sick accumulated since the battleships had sailed from Hampton Roads, Virginia, 16 December 1907, she came into San Francisco from Magdalena Bay with her load of patients 7 April 1908. After transferring the serious and chronic cases to the naval hospital, she rejoined the fleet at San Diego, thence north as far as Seattle, while the battleships visited ports of the West Coast.

During the West Coast visit of the Atlantic Fleet battleships, RELIEF helped stem an invasion of scarlet fever that overtook battleship NEBRASKA at San Francisco. She stood out to sea in advance of the battleships 3 July 1908, taking station at Honolulu where she again came to the rescue of NEBRASKA. She received diphtheria patients from that battleship who was able to continue on the world cruise without further delay. The hospital ship departed Honolulu 22 July replenishing the surgical and medical supplies of nearly every battleship whom she spared any delays or inconvenience on account of quarantine at various ports. She was available for expert medical care, treatment and consult-

ations for more than 14,000 officers and men of the "Great White Fleet" as their cruise continued to Pago Pago, Samoa; Auckland, New Zealand; Sydney, Australia; and Manila, Philippine Islands. At Honolulu, RELIEF received 59 cases of contagious diseases. These men, after all danger of contagion was over, were returned to their respective ships in Australian ports. At Auckland and Sydney, a number of patients who would otherwise have had to be left at hospitals ashore, were taken on RELIEF and returned to their battleships at Manila.

RELIEF was detached from the "Great White Fleet" in November 1908 while at Olongapo, Philippine Islands. The Surgeon General of the Navy reported: "No such range or type of in-every-way desirable and beneficial services could have been performed by anything short of a hospital ship. The RELIEF's detachment from the fleet was a distinct loss to the efficiency of the fleet, as can be clearly demonstrated." RELIEF had treated 649 patients, nearly half of whom soon returned to duty, and 102 surgical operations were performed. There had been 125 admissions for contagious diseases, all demanding more or less rigid isolation, and six deaths had occurred.

Having been detached from the "Great White Fleet", RELIEF departed Cavite in the Philippines 14 November 1908, enroute to Guam on the first leg of a return voyage to the Pacific Coast of the United States. But she encountered a typhoon 18-19 November which so disabled her that she put back to the Philippines. She returned to Cavite 26 November 1908 and was found unseaworthy by a board of inspection and survey. Repairs enabled RELIEF to serve as a stationary hospital (naval floating dispensary) at the Naval Station, Olongapo, Philippine Islands. She arrived on her new station 25 January 1909 and decommissioned there 10 June 1910. She continued in service as a floating station hospital at Olongapo until the close of World War I. During that war, 11 April 1918, her name was changed to REPOSE and the name RELIEF assigned to a new hospital ship then under construction in the Philadelphia Navy Yard.

The career of REPOSE (ex-RELIEF) as a naval floating dispensary at Olongapo came to an end 15 May 1919 when she was sold for scrapping. During her full commissioned service as hospital ship RELIEF, she was commanded by the following officers:

Surgeon Charles F. Stokes, USN:	6 Feb 1908 - 1 Dec 1908
Surgeon Arthur W. Dunbar, USN:	1 Dec 1908 - 18 Feb 1910
Surgeon Robert E. Ledbetter, USN:	18 Feb 1910 - 10 Jun 1910

The third RELIEF (YP-2) was a wooden motor patrol boat built in 1910 at Yarmouth, Maine. She was acquired 13 June 1917 to serve the First Naval District out of Bar Harbor, Maine, as a tender to the men posted at Lookout Station on Crumple Island. She was sold 4 June 1921

to Gus Potter of Yonkers, New York. The patrol boat had a registered length of 35 feet; beam, 9 feet, 9 inches; and could accommodate six men.

The fourth RELIEF (Identification Number 2170) was a steel-wrecking steam tug built in 1907 by the Harland & Hollinsworth Corporation, Wilmington, Delaware. Owned by Merritt-Chapman Derrick & Wrecking Company, she was acquired by the Commandant of the Third Naval District 13 August 1918. During World War I she served as a patrol and rescue-salvage tug out of New York Harbor. She returned to her former owner 15 May 1919. The tug had a length overall of 200 Feet; beam, 30 feet, 3 inches; a displacement of 1,306 tons; draft, 14 feet, 6 inches; a speed of 14.5 knots; and a designed complement of 5 officers and 53 men.

The fifth RELIEF (AH-1) was the first ship of the United States Navy designed and built from the keel up as a hospital ship. She was like other Navy hospital ships, a physical nautical expression in steel and human skill of the ultimate in floating hospitalization - a means of fulfilling a duty to return every sailor fighting man taken ill or injured, in or out of battle, to his family in as near to perfect health as medical science and unlimited hospital resources can provide. The Navy Hospital Ship has progressed from a converted river steamer of the Civil War to a concept of elaborate floating hospitalization that guarantees the best medical care in the world, everywhere in the world, for every American sailor or fighting man who can be reached by water.

RELIEF ( AH-1 ) was built by the Philadelphia Navy Yard. Her keel was laid 14 June 1917. She launched 23 December 1919. The hospital ship commissioned in the Philadelphia Navy Yard 28 December 1920, Commander Richmond C. Holcomb, Medical Corps, U.S. Navy, commanding.

RELIEF (AH-1) had a length overall of 483 feet, 10 inches; extreme beam, 61 feet; normal displacement of 10,112 tons; mean draft, 19 feet, 6 inches; designed speed of 16 knots; and a designed complement of 44 officers and 331 enlisted. She had a bed capacity for 500 patients, and was the most modern and best equipped hospital ship in the world when first commissioned.

RELIEF was assigned to the U.S. Atlantic Fleet. She departed Philadelphia 26 February 1921 to provide the fleet conducting maneuvers in the Caribbean Sea with all the facilities of a modern shore hospital. As might be available in the Public health laboratory of a large city, she carried specialists for consultation in any branch of medicine and surgery. Expert diagnosis, tests and care were immediately available to thousands of men in Navy fighting ships far removed from the scene of a modern shore hospital.

RELIEF returned north to Philadelphia 28 April 1921 to serve the fleet in waters ranging from the Virginia Capes to the coasts of Maine and Massachusetts. During this service 5 September 1921, Captain Richmond

C. Holcomb, Medical Corps, U.S. Navy, was relieved of command of RELIEF by a Line Officer, Captain Thomas L. Johnson, U.S. Navy. Since the proclamation of Theodore Roosevelt in 1908, it had been traditional for a hospital ship to be under the command of a medical officer. But now the pendulum swung back to line officer command as a result of a review decision of the Judge Advocate General made 6 June 1921. This review dealt with the refusal of a line reserve officer to sign a noon position report as ordered by a medical doctor in command of a hospital ship. The Judge Advocate General held that "medical officers cannot exercise command in the line or other staff corps either by law or existing regulations and therefore the accused was not guilty of having disobeyed the lawful order of his superior officer." As a result, Navy Regulations were again changed, and the controversy ended with only the line considered eligible for command of hospital ships (Change No.2 to 1920 Navy Regulations, promulgated 1 November 1921.) Post World War II regulations specify that the senior medical officer in a hospital ship is under command of the commanding officer. But the commanding officer does not have control, within the hospital spaces, over such matters as medical technical procedures; administration and organization, or accountability of funds allotted to the medical department.

RELIEF continued to serve the Atlantic Fleet until the conclusion of the winter-spring maneuvers of 1923 which took her to Cuba and Panama Bay. She departed the Panama Canal 31 March 1923 for San Diego, California, arriving 12 April 1923. She relieved MERCY (AH-4) as hospital ship for the U.S. Pacific Fleet, plying from west coast ports to tend the Fleet on joint battle problems conducted northward to Alaska and westward to Hawaii. Her usual itinerary was interrupted 1 July 1925 when she sailed from Pearl Harbor to tend the sailors and Marines of the Battle Fleet making the goodwill practice cruise via the Samoan Islands to Sydney, Australia and Auckland, New Zealand. She returned to San Pedro, California, 26 September 1925. She continued to serve the Pacific Fleet as war clouds gathered and the National Emergency preparations swelled the ranks of sailors and Marines preparing for the defense of their country. This duty ended 3 June 1941 when RELIEF departed San Diego to transit the Panama Canal enroute to Norfolk, Virginia.

RELIEF arrived in Norfolk 20 June 1941, thereafter serving as a base hospital for the Atlantic Fleet in waters ranging south to Charleston and north to the newly established and powerful advanced naval base at Argentia, Newfoundland. She was in the latter port 7 December 1941 when the "Day of Infamy" burst over Pearl Harbor and plunged the Nation into a second great World War. The following day RELIEF was enroute to Boston, thence to Norfolk and finally Casco Bay, Maine, where she arrived 28 April 1942. There she was stationed for almost a year, working day and night to preserve the health of the war-swollen complement of men training to man the new Navy fighting ships. She also cared for the gallant sailors who were victims of naval combat actions and the vicious seas of the winter western ocean.

On 8 February 1943 RELIEF shifted from her berth in Casco Bay into the Boston Naval Shipyard to prepare for duty in the combat zones of the Pacific. This preparation included a coat of "Torpedo-proof" white paint to replace the peacetime color of drab grey. A broad green stripe around her hull and Red Cross markings on her side, superstructure decks and stack completed the paint job designed to inform all by sight that she was a ship of mercy, immune to hostile attack. By the 23rd she was bound via the Panama Canal direct to the South Pacific Advanced Fleet Base at Noumea, New Caledonia. The bitter struggle to drive the Japanese from the Solomon Islands was still in progress when she reached her destination 2 April 1943. Marine, Navy and Army patients brought out of the combat zones of the Solomons awaited in the New Hebrides Islands for transport to better hospital facilities at Auckland, New Zealand. This evacuation duty kept RELIEF occupied until 15 November 1943 when she departed Auckland to evacuate battle casualties of the amphibious invasion assaults on the Gilbert Islands.

RELIEF reached her specified ocean rendezvous off Apamama in the Gilbert Islands the afternoon of 24 November 1943. But her arch rival, Navy hospital ship SOLACE had beat her to the punch, having embarked the last casualties from the transports off the Gilbert Islands a scant hour prior to RELIEF's appearance on the scene. She retired to Funafuti Atoll, Ellice Islands to serve as a base hospital until 4 January 1944, then performed identical service off "Bloody Tarawa" in the Gilbert Islands for the remainder of the month. On 31 January 1944 she got underway to care for battle casualties of the brilliant and victorious amphibious assault on the Japanese-held Marshall Islands. On the east side of Carlson Island in Kwajalein Lagoon, she received battle casualties by small boat direct from the islands under attack. By the afternoon of 4 February 1944 she was bound for Hawaii with 607 patients. She came into Honolulu Harbor 12 February to debark Army casualties to waiting ambulances. The following morning she entered Pearl Harbor and transferred her Navy, Marine and United States Coast Guard patients to medical facilities on shore.

RELIEF returned to the newly-won Marshalls 21 February 1944, bringing medical supplies used in establishing shore hospitals on Roi Island. After embarking battle casualties from Navy transports, she shifted to base in Majuro Atoll Lagoon 4 March 1944. During the following three months she was the only hospital ship there, serving some 200,000 officers and men of the FIFTH Fleet. Medical facilities ashore were limited to dispensary character, all hospitalization of fleet casualties being delegated to the care of RELIEF. During this period, units of the Fleet made constant air and surface attacks on the enemy at Jaluit, Mili, Maleolap and Wotje and other outlying Marshall Islands Atolls. Enemy attacks on Eniwetok were repulsed. From these operations as well as attacks made by the fleet against Truk and Palau, a large number of battle casualties were received. RELIEF admitted 1,329 patients and discharged 693 during this period of 4 March-4 June 1944. In addition she operated as the general medical center for the Fleet. More than 8,000 consultations were carried out for other fighting ships sending



men for expert examination and advice. As there was no Fleet Surgeon in the area, she took appropriate action and made recommendations on many important sanitary problems for the Fleet. She also served as medical supply depot, furnishing large quantities of supplies including serum and vaccines for the combat forces. When the Fleet departed the Marshalls 4 June 1944 for the amphibious assault on the Marianas Islands, RELIEF evacuated her patients by air or surface transport to shore facilities and prepared to evacuate battle casualties of that campaign.

RELIEF left the Marshalls astern 21 June 1944 and anchored off Saipan three days later to receive casualties directly from the combat then in progress. She departed that night with 656 patients and debarked safely at Kwajalein the 29th. She again came off Saipan 15 July to receive a total of 658 patients including 284 Japanese who were given the same professional medical service as the Americans. All were debarked 20 July to shore hospital facilities on Kwajalein. The next morning found RELIEF again headed for the Marianas to receive 400 casualties of the battle for Tinian Island. Nearly all were very serious cases so field hospital facilities in the Marshalls were by-passed for better treatment available in Hawaii. RELIEF entered Pearl Harbor 15 August 1944 and disembarked 399 patients to the U.S. Naval Hospital, Aiea, T.H. After taking on a maximum load of medical supplies and stores, including one complete field hospital unit, she put to sea 25 August for return to the Marshall Islands.

RELIEF arrived at Eniwetok 3 September 1944. She transferred 175 tons of medical stores to medical stores barge SILICA for use of Service Squadron Ten. Meanwhile, her pathologist and laboratory technicians worked to control an epidemic of bacillary dysentery that had broken out in the harbor. The morning of 18 September she got underway for the Palau Islands, arriving off Peleliu and Anguar to receive 759 casualties. Some were discharged prior to sailing 30 September with 680 casualties evacuated to Army and Navy hospitals in New Caledonia. She reached that destination 11 October 1944 and received the welcome news that she was to evacuate patients direct to the United States. She commenced loading casualties at noon, 14 October, and all 489 were on board within three hours. She sailed from Noumea the following morning, touching Pearl Harbor on her way to San Francisco, arriving 3 November 1944. After sending her patients to shore hospitals, she was overhauled by the General Engineering and Drydock Company, Alameda, California, 6 November 1944-10 February 1945. Three days later RELIEF stood out of San Francisco Bay enroute to the huge advanced Fleet base at Ulithi, Western Caroline Islands.

RELIEF arrived at Ulithi 5 March 1945. Her first patients were Army flyers from a B-29 Bomber which crashed into the sea after a mission over Japan. Rescued by a destroyer, they were transferred to RELIEF for treatment 6 March. The night of 11 March two Japanese suicide planes penetrated the harbor, one crashing the after flight deck of aircraft carrier RANDOLPH and the other crashing on Sorlen Island. She

received the casualties of RANDOLPH as well as those from task forces returning from operations against the Japanese homeland. She departed Ulithi 26 March and entered Apra Harbor, Guam, the following day to transfer 184 patients on shore in preparation for the Okinawa Campaign.

On 1 April 1945 Marines and Army fighting men stormed the shores of Okinawa in a fierce amphibious assault covered by heavy naval gunfire and air attack. The following morning found RELIEF in company with hospital ship COMFORT some 30 miles distant. At 0610 a single-engined Japanese plane crossed her bow at about five miles, made a ninety degree turn, and approached RELIEF and COMFORT from bow on. But vigilant destroyer WICKES (DD-578), on picket station off Okinawa, came to the rescue. As the enemy plane continued straight in for RELIEF, the destroyer's gunners placed a close burst of anti-aircraft fire so near as to rock the enemy's wings. This came just as the aircraft released a bomb, causing it to fall a few yards wide of RELIEF. She was shaken violently by the nearby underwater explosion but suffered little damage save for temporary loss of suction in a lubricating oil pump. The enemy aircraft turned for another run on RELIEF but was turned away by a barrage of anti-aircraft fire from WICKES. A few hours later another Japanese aircraft flew directly over the hospital ship and stunted above her for several minutes but made no attack. RELIEF anchored off the invasion beach by day and deployed to sea each night, illuminated "like a Christmas tree." As massive suicide aerial raids became common at night, the retirement plan was abandoned 9 April and the hospital ships remained in the anchorage area, taking advantage of the cover of smoke screens and securing their illumination.

The afternoon of 10 April 1945 RELIEF got underway from Okinawa with 556 battle casualties enroute to Saipan. She then made a quick run to the Fleet base at Ulithi for stores and diesel oil, thence back to Okinawa, arriving 22 April 1945. Having delivered a complete Field Hospital Unit on shore at Okinawa for the XXIV Army Corps, she departed 26 April with 613 casualties brought safely into Tinian Harbor the 30th. In four similar mercy missions she evacuated nearly 2,000 wounded fighting men from Okinawa to hospital facilities at Guam and Saipan.

RELIEF departed Saipan, Marianas Islands, 7 July 1945, touching Guam enroute to San Pedro Bay, Leyte, Philippine Islands. She served as a Fleet Base Hospital in the Philippines for the remainder of the War. She departed Subic Bay, Luzon, 28 August 1945, enroute via Okinawa for Darien, Manchuria. Her mission was the recovery of allied prisoners of war from the former Japanese military prison camp at Mukden, Manchuria, located some 200 miles northward of Darien. As she passed on her route through the East China Sea and Yellow Sea, destroyer escorts MCNULTY (DE-581) and EUGENE E. ELMORE (DD-686) searched ahead to destroy floating mines sighted. Off the China Coast, 6 September 1945, MCNULTY picked up a Chinese woman and man from a sampan which had been swept out to sea five days previous by a typhoon. They were transferred by

breeches buoy to RELIEF who treated them for exposure and abrasions. The following day the alert escorts guided the hospital ship away from ten floating mines. One crew member of MCNULTY was injured by shrapnel during mine destruction duty and was transferred to RELIEF. She appeared before Dairen Ko, 8 September 1945 but gained no sight of tugs or pilots promised by the Russians. She entered the unfamiliar harbor and moored unassisted, to Pier Number 2. The town of Darien was under Russian Military control. Shore leave or liberty was not permitted but officers were invited ashore on guided observation tours. There was no definite word on the Allied Prisoners save that they were enroute by rail from the former prison camp at Mukden, Manchuria. This was some 200 miles north of RELIEF's location at the Port of Darien. The morning of 11 September 1945 a Navy doctor and a Marine Sergeant reported on board from the Camp. Through them, RELIEF learned the approximate number and condition of her prospective passengers.

All afternoon of 11 September 1945, rumor swept through RELIEF that the train bringing the prisoners was nearing its final destination. At 2050 a commotion was heard from out of the dark beyond the docks. Then one or two liberated prisoners stepped into the glare of dock floodlights, then ten, then the whole procession. There were 753 of them, Dutch, British, Australians, and Americans. Many had made it through the infamous death march at Bataan and most had survived prison camps in the Philippines, Formosa, Honshu and finally Munkden in Manchuria. They carried all their worldly possessions on their backs or in duffle bags. Stories of their treatment as prisoners of war are a first hand record of infamy.

The entire ship's company of RELIEF manned the rails to greet the liberated heroes. Senior officer of the group was Colonel Lawrence Sprague Churchill of New York, formerly of the Far Eastern Air Force. Also coming on board was Captain Arthur Wermuch, U.S. Army, of Chicago Illinois, known in the early days of the war as the "One-man Army of Bataan." Another liberated prisoner was Lieutenant Claus M. Fraleigh, DC, USN, of Gulfport, Mississippi. He formerly served the Army Detachment of General Hospital #1 on Bataan. He was greeted by RELIEF's Chief Nurse, Lieutenant Ann Bernatitus, who had served with Lieutenant Fraleigh on Bataan and Corregidor until ordered evacuated by submarine. Two former civilian internees were Mr. Franklin C. Lewis and his wife Claudia, of Washington State, American Consul at Mukden prior to the War.

The recovered prisoners of war were treated with a shower, soap, towels, a huge steak dinner (ice cream for dessert) and soft beds. They were outbound to freedom 12 September 1945 and entered Buckner Bay, Okinawa, three days later. Before they could be transferred to shore, RELIEF was ordered out to sea on typhoon evasion deployment. She came back into Buckner Bay 18 September and the Allied prisoners were debarked by high noon. On the 26th of September 1945, she was underway for Taku, China, arriving the 30th to provide medical facilities to men of the First Marine Division assigned to occupation duty in

North China. This service continued until 24 October 1945. On that day, RELIEF was ordered to evacuate patients to the west coast of the United States.

RELIEF embarked patients at Tsingtao (1-2 November), Okinawa (5-8 November) and Guam (13-14 November 1945). Sailing direct from Guam to San Francisco, she debarked 361 passengers and 386 patients the day of her arrival in the latter port, 30 November 1945. By this time the World War II service of RELIEF had included steaming the equivalent of almost four times around the world while evacuating nearly ten thousand fighting men as patients from scenes of combat in nearly every military campaign area of the Pacific War. Her last trans-Pacific voyage began 15 December 1945 when she stood out of San Francisco Bay for direct sailing to Yokosuka, Japan, arriving 4 January 1946. She embarked Navy passengers there before proceeding to Saipan and Guam in the Marianas. When she departed Apra Harbor, Guam, 15 January 1946, she carried 282 patients and 717 returning veterans bound direct to San Francisco, California.

RELIEF arrived in San Francisco on her last voyage from the Orient 2 February 1946. She debarked her passengers and patients the day of her arrival and sailed the 19th for the East Coast. She transited the Panama Canal 7 March 1946 and reached Norfolk the 28th to prepare for inactivation. She decommissioned in the Norfolk Naval Shipyard 11 June 1946. Her name was struck from the Navy list 19 July 1946 and she was delivered to the War Shipping Administration for disposal 13 January 1947. RELIEF was sold for scrapping 23 March 1948 to the Boston Metals Company.

RELIEF (AH-1) received five battle stars and other awards for the World War II operations listed below:

- 1 Star/GILBERT ISLANDS OPERATION:  
25 Nov-9 Dec 1943
- 1 Star/MARSHALL ISLANDS OPERATION:  
Occupation of Kwajalein and Majuro Atolls: 3-4 Feb 1944
- 1 Star/MARIANAS OPERATION:  
Capture and Occupation of Saipan: 24 Jun-4 Aug 1944
- 1 Star/WESTERN CAROLINE ISLANDS OPERATION:  
Capture and Occupation of Southern Palau Islands: 6 Sep-14 Oct 1944
- 1 Star/OKINAWA GUNTO OPERATION:  
Assault and Occupation of Okinawa Gunto: 25-29 Jun 1945
- NAVY OCCUPATION SERVICE MEDAL (Asia):  
7 Sep-9 Nov 1945, 2-9 Jan 1946
- CHINA SERVICE MEDAL:  
7 Sep-9 Nov 1945

LIST OF COMMANDING OFFICERS - USS RELIEF (AH-1)

Commander Richmond C. Holcomb, MC, USN:	20 Dec 1920-	5 Sep 1921
Captain Thomas L. Johnson, USN:	5 Sep 1921-	21 Mar 1923
Captain Cyrus W. Cole, USN:	24 Mar 1923-	20 Jun 1923
Lt. Commander Ralph R. Stewart, USN:	20 Jun 1923-	3 Jul 1923
Captain Zachariah H. Madison, USN:	3 Jul 1923-	24 Dec 1924
Commander William H. Toaz, USN:	24 Dec 1924-	1 Apr 1925
Commander Duncan M. Wood, USN:	1 Apr 1925-	12 Aug 1926
Captain Robert A. Dawes, USN:	12 Aug 1926-	13 Apr 1928
Captain James D. Willson, USN:	13 Apr 1928-	10 Feb 1930
Commander Henry A. Orr, USN:	10 Feb 1930-	4 Feb 1931
Commander Emory F. Clemet, USN:	4 Feb 1931-	7 Mar 1931
Captain William A. Hale, USN:	7 Mar 1931-	1 Aug 1932
Captain Charles C. Hartigan, USN:	1 Aug 1932-	8 Jun 1934
Captain Thaddeus A. Thomson, Jr., USN:	8 Jun 1934-	19 Feb 1936
Commander Clifford E. VanHook, USN:	19 Feb 1936-	6 Oct 1937
Commander Oliver L. Wolfard, USN:	6 Oct 1937-	2 Jul 1938
Commander Lyal A. Davidson, USN:	2 Jul 1938-	27 May 1939
Captain Oliver M. Read, USN:	27 May 1939-	27 Jun 1940
Commander Kemp C. Christian:	27 Jun 1940-	27 Mar 1941
Commander Charles G. Wheeler	27 Mar 1941-	3 Jul 1941
Commander James M. Lewis, USN:	3 Jul 1941-	2 Feb 1943
Lt. Comdr. James B. Bliss, USN: (temporary)	2 Feb 1943-	7 Feb 1943
Commander Peter M. Money, USN:	7 Feb 1943-	21 Oct 1943
Commander James B. Bliss, USN:	21 Oct 1943-	4 Jun 1944
Commander Joseph C. Sever, USNR:	4 Jun 1944-	11 Dec 1945
Lt. Comdr. Irving B. Smith, USN:	11 Dec 1945-	11 Jun 1946

(decommissioning)