

(Below) Crewmembers bow their heads for a benediction after debarking their ship for the last time. (Right) Cmdr. Howard L. Stone, Willamette's former commanding officer is ceremonially piped aboard before the decommissioning ceremony.



## Willamette Decommissioning Day

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emotional than any other I've been to," said Machinist's Mate 1st Class (SW) Lino Dieron. "It's not what you look forward to but eventually, ships have to be decommissioned."

"This is my first time being part of a ship's decommissioning," said Ship's Storekeeper 1st Class Eladio Garcia, who was holding the ship's Ensign that flew over the ship during the decommissioning ceremony.

"I never thought that when I hauled up the Ensign this morning, that this would be the last time it would fly over the ship. This is a proud moment for me."

"I've been on board for two years and it's been a great Navy experience," said Interior Communications Electrician 2nd Class (SW) Debra Edwards. "If we had a problem onboard, we'd work together to fix it. This crew could really get things done. I hope I'll run into them again around the fleet."

"This was my first command," said IC3 Cindy Lambert. "Our chain of command made a great difference in my life. I realized that I wasn't alone. That's when the crew became like a big family to me. I'll miss this ship and the crew."

"I took down the commissioning pennant," said Signalman 3rd Class Lamont Watkins. "I was thinking that this is the last time anyone will pull any halyards [line on which signal flags are attached] on Willamette's signal bridge. Right then I realized this ship was really going away."

"As a signalman, this ship helped me a lot in my rate," Watkins continued. "We would regularly signal ships alongside for UNREPs. That helped me become very good at my rate. USS Willamette went out on top. We were the best in Pearl Harbor; we took first place in the surface line week competition."

"It was a sentimental closing day for Willamette," said Seaman Apprentice Heather Duffin, who sang the National Anthem during



(Above, l to r) Willamette color guard members EM3 (SW) Miranda Weeks, MS3 Jason Kugler, EM2 (SW) Victor Morales, SK3 Jesus Lujan parade the colors. (Left) SN Nicolas Villalobos lowers the Ensign at the end of the decommissioning ceremony. (Below) In a light drizzle, MM1 (SW) Lino Dieron (right) and SK1 Eladio Garcia (center) carefully fold USS Willamette's Ensign while SK1 (SW) Mackarl Manuel (left front) holding the ship's commissioning pennant - looks on.



photos by  
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"People count more than guns in the rating of a ship."

- John Paul Jones