

## WALTER CRONKITE – IMAGE #14

The United States Bicentennial was a series of celebrations and observances during the mid-1970s that paid tribute to the historical events leading up to the creation of the United States of America as an independent republic. The Bicentennial was a central event in the memory of the American Revolution. The celebration culminated on Sunday, July 4, 1976, with the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence.

Festivities included elaborate fireworks in the skies above major American cities. President Gerald R. Ford presided over the display in Washington, D.C., which was televised nationally. A large international fleet of tall-masted ships gathered first in New York City on Independence Day and then in Boston about one week later. Of the relatively few “tall ships” that were in service around the world at the time, sixteen sailed to the United States to participate in the Parade of Ships. They were mostly sailing ships from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Each of them flew a banner featuring the tricolor star insignia of the Bicentennial. Along with a few U.S. Navy warships and dozens of smaller vessels, they first converged on New York harbor to participate in the celebration. These nautical parades were named Operation Sail (Op Sail). They were witnessed by several million observers. These vessels docked both in New York City and in Boston. The general public was allowed in both cities to tour the ships, while their crews entertained on shore at various ethnic celebrations and parties.

In addition to the presence of the “tall ships,” many nations sent naval warships to New York harbor for an International Naval Review held on the morning of July 4<sup>th</sup>. President Ford sailed down the Hudson River into New York harbor aboard the guided missile cruiser *U.S.S. Wainwright* to review the international fleet and to receive salutes from each visiting ship. This ended with a salute from the British missile cruiser *HMS London*. The review was completed just above Liberty Island at 10:30 a.m.