A Journey Into History â€“ Part I

Description

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Part IX

I donâ€™t recall the exact date it was, but it was in January 20 years ago, and the location was an island pardise referred to as â€œDGARâ€• (pronounced Dee-gar) by the mulitude of airmen and sailors who have had the pleasure of transiting, by ship, sub or plane to the southern reaches of the Indian Ocean in the Chagos Archipeligo. Being south of the equator, it is more than likely responsible for many â€œShellbacksâ€• of the various services as well.

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I pick up the story a few months late. But to catch up quickly, my travels to DGAR began in Norfolk, VA at the end of Oct, 1985. Sailing with the USS CORAL SEA (CV-43) Battle Group, under the command of Commander Carrier Group TWO. Assigned to the Battle Group was Destroyer Squadron THIRTY TWO, USS BIDDLE (CG-34), USS CAPODANNO (FF-1093), USS JESSE L BROWN (FF-1089), USS JACK WILLIAMS (FFG-24) and USS MONOGAHELA (AO-178), we headed east to the Med to swap out our CV and Group Commander, before heading to the North Arabian Sea. My â€œbossâ€• was Capt Wes Jordan, Jr, Commodore for DESRON 32, and the Chief Staff Officer was CDR William â€œBillâ€• Nurthen. Staff OPS was LCDR Steve Nerheim, LCDR AL McCollum was our token ASW TACCO from the P-3 community to help make sure us â€œshoesâ€• did ASW right. Much, much more on that laterâ€¦.OSC(SW) Jim Koch was our OPS Assistant, and RMCS(SW) Rumbaugh the Communications Officer. We had a chpalian and an RP (religiuos program specialist), but I canâ€™t recall their names. They were farmed out to the ships of the Battle Group and rarely we with us. YN1 Thorton and a MS1 as the Commodoreâ€™s staff rounded out our little â€œfamily.â€•

Our sailing from Norfolk in October had been a wonderfully exciting day, as all our gear had been loaded aboard USS BIDDLE, but during the night before, the deck crew was hoisting a 40â€² Utility Boat back aboard when a limit switch failed, allowing the winches to keep running, after the davit arm was fully upright. The result was a bend davit arm. COMNAVSURFLANT directed BIDDLE to remain inport and effect repairs, as our deployment would require anchoring out a lot, and the boat davits would be used extensively.

The Commodore issued orders to find another flagship. Looking to the north, we could see the CORAL SEA already moving from the piers. USS MONOGAHELA was still moored at her berth, so we yelled for help from the BIDDLEâ€™s crew, and got our gear to the Oilerâ€¦.

Off we go, but more background to come. Anyhow, on or about this date, 20 years in the past, I was headed towards the brow, so I could say I had a beer on Diego Garcia, after being on duty the first day inport, having just arrived from Singapore, where most of our Battle Group had spent Christmas. I heard â€œAll Hands Prepare to Get Underway!â€• on the USS SARATOGAâ€™s 1MC systemâ€¦..

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