A Journey into History â€“ Part II

Description

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Part IX

Needless to say, I was rather disappointed. I mean, get all the way to about 13 degress south of the equator in the Indian Ocean, and you canâ€™t even get a chance to have a beer, and see if the Exchange has any T Shirts to prove you were there.

Back the stateroom, back into khakis, and head aft about a 1/3rd the length of the ship, then up 7 decks via â€œladders.â€• In the Navy, ladders are mostly very steep stairs, not vertical ladders like you might think, but some actually are, usually in the out of the way places, not were there is normal people traffic.

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(returning to the build up to the main story line â€“ hereâ€™s more back ground)
So, we hauled our stuff to the MONOGAHELA (AO-178) and let that shipâ€™s company decide where to put us. The staterooms are huge on those ships, as they have so much space above the area they needed for tanks for fuel. Most officers on the ship already had two man rooms by themselves, so we fit in well, for last minute visitors. Steve was left to getting our gear hauled to Combat Information Center (CIC), and OSCS Koch went to work getting our Joint Operational Tactical Systems (JOTS) HP-9020 computers set up and patched into the radio circuits for LINK 14 data. Controlled chaos was the mood, but, the hosts took care of us.

We sailed on time, and settled in for a long planned 6 month, but actual 7 month deployment, not expecting a lot besides boring holes in the waters of the North Arabian Sea, letting Iran know we were thereâ€¦.

The MONOGAHELA did not man the CIC full time. They really didnâ€™t need to. With no weapons, and being counted on to just deliver fuel and some cargo, the bridge watch could generally handle the radio traffic and radar watches along with their tasks. They did man up for us, and several Boatswainâ€™s Mates (BMs) were provided, along with the Operations Specialists (OSs) to support us. We found out they had cross trained their senior BMs to be CIC supervisors and they were very proficient at their duties.

We steamed east, and rendezvoused with the USS CAPODANNO out of Newport, RI, the JESSE L BROWN out of Charleston, SC and USS JACK WILLIAMS from Mayport, FL. A few days later, we received a message fro BIDDLE that repairs were completed and she was getting underway, with â€œexcess SOAâ€• authorized. For transits out of local op areas, we had a top speed limit (on over all average speed) for the shipâ€™s movement, which helped plan logistics for fuel delivery, at sea and to forward shore stations. SOA means â€œspeed of advance.â€• 16 kts was the normal limit. BIDDLE would be steaming about 2/3rds of the way to the Straits of Gibralter at close to her top speed.

About a day out of our arrival at the entrance to the Mediterranean, the BIDDLE caught up to use late in the day. We packed up our gear, short essentials, and palletized it for highline transfer. BIDDLE came alongside MONOGAHELA just before sunset to commence alongside replenishment at sea (RAS), and our pallets were sent over. The master plan was for us to be heloed over in the morning, to embark on the planned flagship for our staff.

Fast forward: Itâ€™s about 5 AM local time, and Iâ€™m one watch. BIDDLE calls us frantically on one of the circuits, reporting white smoke in one of her shaft alleys. Shaft Ally is the last space in the ship where the shafting from the ships turbines then penetrates the hull, heading out to the struts and the propeller. White smoke in there is a bad thing. The response is for the Engineering Officer of the Watch (EOOW) to direct the shaft be stopped ASAP, and then to lock the shaft in place. The net reslut of this action is like dropping a large sea anchor, for the blades of the affected prop are being pulled almost sideways thru the water and not turning. BIDDLEâ€™s max speed in this condition was several knots slower than we had to go to arrive in the Med on time to reported to COMSIXTHFLT. I notified the Commodore and the Ops Boss. Planning went into affect for what to do until BIDDLE caught up, since our records and publications were over there.

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The affect on the Staff was not too bad professionally, as the MONOGAHELAâ€™s library would have publications we could use, but the biggest impact was the Chief Staff Officer, Bill Nurthen, has also send his clothes over, except for a single change of them. Well, you can imagine his angst, but also how were were able to play on this to get under his skin for the rest of the cruiseâ€¦.

Later that morning, the OPREP (operational report) from the BIDDLE made itâ€™s way to use, and listed the cause of the loss of all oil in the main shaft bearing as sabotage. Someone had uncapped the drain line, and big machinery, which in many cases actually relies on the oil as a medium to carry heat off the movig parts as much as it being a lubricant, does stuff like get hot and the glows red, and then breaks or catches on fire.

Shortly after this message came out, the Battle Group Staff lawyer sent one back, letting the BIDDLE know the reported was to read, or any subsequent reports to list sabotage as â€œmalicious destruction.â€• Thatâ€™s the term used when itâ€™s one of your own people who causes the damage.

(back to the story)
So was sailed by late afternoon, the SARATOGA, SCOTT, JACK WILLIAMs, BROWN, CAPODANNO and MONOGAHELA all in formation. We left in strict EMCOM â€œA.â€• That means no, I mean no, radio communications and all radars were turned off. Once clear of the harbor, our orders were to proceed NNE at top speed in EMCOM. We didnâ€™t even know were we were going, except a point south of the Arabian peninsula.

More to comeâ€¦

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Date Created
January 18, 2006
Author

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