19 Years Ago â€“ Life at Sea â€“ Part X

Description

I donâ€™t recall the time, but we finally arrived at the pier at the Charleston Naval Base. We moored starboard side to, bow out at one of the southernmost piers.

The trip up the channel revealed a flattened landscape, the vegetation stripped away along the shores, leaving an eerie feeling for us. The temporary range markers looked like toy replicas of the permanent ones we had been so used to â€œridingâ€• in and out of port, but they were all there and usable.

The arrival pierside wasnâ€™t greeted with the families and friends. It was the DESRON staff personnel to get us ready for the work effort to help restore Charleston at several levels.

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Obviously, we had to make some decision. The work force had a lot of their minds, after being gone since the Monday and now their personal lives were first and foremost in their minds. Our base was decimated, and then the overall civilian community needed help. Beyond our ability to control the assignments, we were tasked with providing working parties men for the Naval Station, the Naval Weapons Station, and the local Red Cross. So, the priorities cameâ€¦and came, and came. Oh, and the other non-negotiable was factored in: Deployment to the Middle East for convoy escort dutyâ€¦.and did I mention a minor event know as â€œChange of Command?â€•

One of those â€œdetailsâ€• of life at sea now came to the forefront: Water. The base couldnâ€™t provide it. Sounds like not too much of a big deal, as you know we make our own water, but, there are these sticky things called â€œsanitation regulations.â€• For health reasons, we do not make water within 3 NM of land. Itâ€™s a basic rule to ensure we donâ€™t have the run off from the land, carrying the entrained refuse of humanity, to get into our source of drinking water. Now we were well within that limit, and up a major river. The decision: Fire up the evaporators and â€œsuper-chlorinateâ€• the water. That was also a part of the regulations, in the event you ended up in a situation like this, or in some body of water that indicated it may be more polluted than it should be.

Power? Not a problem. Shipâ€™s run their generators alongside the piers all the time.

The takeaway here? The crew, while â€œin port, homeport,â€• had a wide variety of extra duties to conduct, well above and beyond any normal set of circumstances. Besides all the working parties, and the routine work that had to necessarily continue, we also were â€œsteaming,â€• and not â€œCold Iron,â€• which required a more extensively manned inport watchbill. Add to this the family issues, and the uncertainy as to when any of this might return to the â€œnormalâ€• level of Naval chaos we had become accustomed to and comfortable with.

The crew, rolled up their sleeves and got to work, day and night. During the day, they dutifully cleaned debris on our base and the other other government facilities, and those in the community as assigned. When they were done for the day, and not assigned to the duty section, they were out lending a hand to their shipmates families, and their neighbors. The â€œunattachedâ€• crew members were especially helpful, as they had the time, but they willingly helped as they could.

So were were home, in our wrecked homeport, and we had our work cut out for us.

My car? I wouldnâ€™t have the opportunity to get out to James Island to see it. I had a crew to keep running, and a car was not necessary for this, and besides, it wasnâ€™t able to be driven from the description.

Category

1. Navy

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