



pretty good one!

17 FEB 1969

Dear Friend of MAHAN,

My last letter left MAHAN steaming from PIRAZ station in the Gulf of Tonkin toward the exotic port of Hong Kong. We arrived November 1st. For many of the men this was their first time there and for those of us who had been there before it was a welcome return. Hong Kong is one of the finest liberty ports in the world for Navymen: truly the Pearl of the Orient, providing many beautiful and interesting places to visit, numerous shops and merchants offering bargain after bargain (I would venture to say many of your Christmas gifts were purchased in Hong Kong), plus a chance to observe a new country and a different culture.

We were in Hong Kong for five days and while there liberty was at a maximum we did only work necessary to keep the ship clean and equipment in proper operating condition.

While in Hong Kong the men of MAHAN had an opportunity to see Victoria Peak, from where one can see the entire city of Hong Kong, the Red Chinese Border, where Red China borders the outlying territories of this British Crown Colony, Ocean Terminal, where merchant ships from all over the world tie up with their cargo, and numerous other places of interest. Many of the men took leave in Hong Kong and stayed at some of the fine hotels there, such as the Hong Kong Hilton, the Mandarin, and the Peninsula, all considered among the finest in the world.

We formed an on the spot softball team while in Hong Kong for a game with a local junior college and were soundly trounced. But the men enjoyed themselves and it gave them an opportunity to meet and talk with some of the Chinese people.

I think we found our stay in Hong Kong too short, but five days was all our schedule would allow. so November 5th found us heading for the Philippines and Subic Bay.

We spent four days in Subic, but there was little time for the leave and liberty enjoyed in Hong Kong. Subic is a "working port" for us, and work we did. "Collimation" was the big order of the day. Collimation is a big word for an even bigger task. It involves bringing our missile system up to peak working order, and it is a tedious, mind-bending

job. Our Fire Control Technicians worked round the clock for the entire inport period and did an outstanding job. Many of the FT's were able to grab only an hour's sleep or so at a time, and I'm sure were glad to see us leave port so they could get a little rest. But all the hard work paid off on November 11th when the missile systems brought down a high speed drone target, and the FTM crew was able to paint another "kill" on their director.

From Subic we headed straight for PIRAZ (Positive Identification Radar Advisory Zone) with a brief detour for the missile shoot I mentioned above. We arrived on PIRAZ on November 13th and remained there until the 28th. The PIRAZ station is a 10 mile circle and sometimes becomes quite tedious for the men, steaming around in the same place day after day. But each and every man realizes our function and, I believe, truly has a feel for the work we're doing here and his importance as a vital part of that work. But boredom is not as prevalent as you may think. Each man is involved in his own particular duties and daily tasks, and these tasks present problems enough to keep anyone from being bored too long. In early November several of our men were presented with letters of commendation for their outstanding work and devotion to duty. RD1 Joseph WERDEN was commended for his outstanding work in installing numerous pieces of much needed radio equipment. Likewise, BTCS Winston TANNER received a commendation for his work and long hours devoted to keeping our main engineering plant at full potential 24 hours a day. Two Firemen, Michael RAINWATER and Richard BALICO were commended for their performance as watchstanders in the Engineering Department.

On November 28th MAHAN departed PIRAZ in company with the USS HANCOCK (CVA 19) and three other destroyers for the Sea of Japan and for operations in support of UN forces in Korea. We remained in the area for four days, during which time we were closely observed by various Russian ships. While in the Sea of Japan we were kept busy acting as plane guard and as a flight follower for HANCOCK, and believe me, in this type of operation every soul on board, from the bridge to the lowest manned space, is kept busy.

On the 4th of December we left the Sea of Japan and set our course for Yokosuka, Japan. In order to arrive in Yokosuka one day earlier we transited the Shimonoseki Straits, a very narrow body of water between the islands of Honshu and Kyushu. It was a foggy morning with visibility at times under 1/2 mile, ships of all kinds passing closely on all sides and currents running swift and strong. But with a navigation team led by LTJG NAU and QMC CASSON and LT MCBRIDE conning the ship we experienced no difficulty.

On the afternoon of December 6th, we arrived in our homeport of Japan, and not a minute too soon for anyone. After more than 2 1/2 months away we were glad to be back. We made the liberty policy as lenient as possible during the holiday season in Japan, but with all our efforts, liberty was far below what we wish it could have been. There was so much to do. Many work requests to be processed and followed through to completion, maintenance and preservation that could not be done at sea.

But with all our work we found time for fun and relaxation. Our newly formed basketball team, under the leadership of ENS STEWART and GMM3 POIRIER turned in some fine performances and rather soundly whipped several other teams off other ships in the squadron. We won both the lawn and table tennis championships in our squadron, with FTG3 EDEL providing much of the talent in those areas.

Another big project undertaken by the crew was the decoration of the ship for Christmas. Almost as soon as we entered port, plans started for decorating the ship. Everyone turned to with a will and soon MAHAN was sparkling like a large Christmas tree. Not just on the outside, either. Any space I cared to enter would remind me that Christmas was just around the corner and that the men of MAHAN had indeed brought with them to Japan the spirit of Christmas. The ship was decorated with one thought in mind - to make it look as much like Christmas as possible. But for our efforts we received an unexpected compliment when we were adjudged winner of the Christmas Decoration Contest for our category by Commander Naval Forces, Japan. This award was accompanied by a \$100 check for our Welfare and Recreation Fund. Those most responsible for

the ship's decoration were STCM MCCARTHY, IC2 TURNER, RD2 FOSTER and BM3 M. S. JONES.

Then on Sunday, December 22nd, the Supply Corps outdid themselves with a Dependents' Day Dinner on the ship. All hands were encouraged to bring their family or friends. The Dependents' Day started at 1000 with church services on board. Afterwards cartoons were shown to the children until time to eat. From 1200 until 1400 dinner was served, consisting of roast tom turkey, choice of vegetables, fruit cake, ice cream and assorted nuts - all by candlelight! After the meal all the children were gathered in the wardroom and shown the movie, "The Littlest Angel," while the mess decks were being cleaned and prepared for the visit of Santa Claus. At 1430 everyone was gathered in the mess decks and Santa entered. He stayed long enough to give each of the 40 children a small gift, then was on his way. LT COX and his merry band of men were largely responsible for the success of the day, along with STCM MCCARTHY, who helped Santa pick out his toys for the children.

Christmas Day was a day of quiet and rest on MAHAN. Church services were available on the base and on several of the large ships close by. This day found those with families in Japan at home, with the comfort of loved ones. Many of the men without their families were invited home for Christmas dinner.

MAHAN didn't linger long in Yokosuka after the holidays. Saturday morning, December 28th, found us underway for our "home away from home" on PIRAZ station in the Tonkin Gulf. We made a brief stop at Buckner Bay, Okinawa, for fuel, then on to fulfill our commitment.

As we did not arrive on station until January 2nd, 1969, we saw the new year come in while enroute. It was celebrated as best we could under the circumstances. Pizza pie was served at midnight and a double feature movie was shown. At the stroke of midnight all those awake - which included about 2/3 of the ship bid 1968 farewell and welcomed 1969. Those of you familiar with the Navy know of our respect for tradition and that we meticulously maintain logs of all events. On New Year's Day each year

the Navy combines the two and traditionally our Mid-Log is written in verse. Also, traditionally, the log is written by the junior officer on board. The following log, the first one for 1969, was written by ENS MEASEL.

As the new year doth break
Far distant are we
Leaving but a single wake
Steaming independently

From the Bay of Buckner
Our last stopping place
To the Gulf of Tonkin
Do we quickly race

250° PGC is our base course
With 22 knots along the way
As our ship plows with force
Against foaming wave and spray

Off to PIRAZ we go to meet
Commitments of constant travail
Compliments of Commander Seventh Fleet
Under whose schedule we sail

As we knife through the night
With YOKE set at each door
Showing only navigational lights
We stand in Condition FOUR

Our leader you see
Is but one man
Both SOPA and OTC
The skipper of MAHAN

So we take this chance
Although far away
To wish you all
A happy New Year's Day

I would like to echo the last verse of this poem and wish each of you
a happy and prosperous New Year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. M. Altwegg".

D. M. ALTWEGG
Commander, U.S. Navy
Commanding Officer