



Commanding Officer  
USS MAHAN (DLG-11)  
FPO San Francisco  
96601

Dear Friend of MAHAN,

15 SEP 1969

My last letter left us steaming from the exotic port of Hong Kong where we spent 6 exciting days, to our home port of Yokosuka, Japan for a brief period. Our six days in Yokosuka was brief, but long enough for those of us with families in Japan to at least say hello before once again leaving for PIRAZ (Positive Identification Radar Advisory Zone), off the coast of Vietnam.

We sailed from Yokosuka on the 13th of June and headed for Subic Bay, Philippines. We stayed in Subic only long enough to refuel and bring aboard a Helicopter Detachment which always goes with us on our trip up to PIRAZ. We arrived on station, relieved as station ship and once again the PIRAZ PIRATS were in charge. The men-of-MAHAN (self proclaimed PIRATS) turned to with a will. They set about doing the same fine job they always do, upholding and maintaining the fine reputation they have established for themselves and their ship.

Our tour on PIRAZ was to be shorter than usual, but this fact in no way diminished the importance of our mission. We were due to be relieved by USS KING (DLG-10) on 1 July, but, as it turned out, our line period wasn't as short as originally planned. Our relief ship was in Subic Bay, effecting major repairs on her engineering plant. Four days before we were scheduled to be relieved we received a message from her stating that she would be late relieving since repairs were going a little slower than anticipated. On the morning of 7 July, seven days later than originally planned, our relief sailed into sight. By early afternoon of the same day we were relieved and heading for Yokosuka. Now, to many of you, leaving seven days later than we had planned may not seem like very long or much of a hardship. But to sailors at sea for those seven days, and who had been at sea 7 days before that and 7 days before that, a week's delay seems like a mighty long time. Add to this the fact that since April 16th we had spent only 6 days in our home port and you may see why we had a slightly unhappy bunch of sailors for awhile.



On the 12th of July we arrived in our homeport of Yokosuka for the start of our PRA (Planned Restricted Availability). PRA indicates an extended upkeep period in which the ship submits work to shore facilities for accomplishment while we are inport. Before we could start our PRA we first had to unload all our ammunition. This involved more than 4 hours of back breaking work, for all hands on board, carrying projectiles and powder cans weighing between 30 and 75 pounds. All hands were up at 0230 preparing for the event. By 0800 we were finished and ready to tie up for our longest inport period since leaving San Diego on 14 August 1968.

Almost before we had finished tying up, it seemed, yard workers had swarmed all over the ship, carrying the various tools of their trade and stringing power cables and air hoses back and forth like confetti. Chipping hammers started their noisy sing-song against the steel decks and bulkheads and everyone hurried to and fro as they began the fight to finish the almost unbelievable amount of work that had to be accomplished in these six short weeks. Though there was much work to be done in all parts of the ship, by far the most was in the engineering spaces, and I would like to take just a few lines to place a little credit where credit is due. In the past year, we have had our share of problems, as do all ships, with the engineering plant. However, the dedication and zeal displayed by the men in the Engineering Department never ceases to amaze me. While underway, equipment casualties of one kind or another do occur. Yet, they meet each one with a determination and positive attitude that is refreshing to see. Invariably they are the last ones to leave the ship when we enter port, and the first ones aboard before we leave. Generally speaking, they work the longest hours and complain the least, both inport and at sea. They are an outstanding and dedicated group of individuals and their hard work has not gone unnoticed by me. This is not to say other departments on the ship do not work long hours or have problems or are not dedicated; however, I wanted to specifically point out a Department that always does a big job but often gets small praise.



Though we work hard, we are not without our moments of fun and relaxation. In August our ship's softball team won the DESRON THREE Softball Trophy. The winning team consisted of:

C - SN MARTIN  
1B - RD3 RODIER  
2B - RD3 GUTH  
3B - SN KAUSTINEN  
SS - SN VILLANEUVA  
LF - SN WILEY  
CF - RD3 O'HALLORAN  
RF - RD3 STANSBURY  
P - SN BAINBRIDGE

LTJG MULLIKEN coached the team as well as playing on it. We also have a ship's bowling league, involving competition between all the divisions on the ship. The trophy winners for our PRA period were the SPOILERS of Supply and Navigation division. Individual high bowler for the ship was SN Gary MARTIN of NX Division.

Several tours were arranged for the benefit of the crew during this time in port. They included trips to nearby Hakone and Kamakura, on all day fishing trip and an overnight tour to climb Mount Fuji. Also, during this inport period we had the best ship's party I've ever attended. Plenty of refreshments and really professional entertainment.

Other developments since my last letter have seen DK1 BALZA and HM1 WIERSMA become DKC BALZA and HMC WIERSMA and join the special ranks of Chief Petty Officers on board. This promotion means a lot to both of these deserving petty officers, both financially and as career Navy men. Also, only recently we learned that Senior Chief Electronics Technician WILSON has been selected for Master Chief Petty Officer; the top rating that can be achieved as an enlisted man, and that Chief Petty Officers ROBINSON and MACDONALD were selected for Senior Chief Petty Officer. My congratulations to these men on their fine achievement.

As I write this we are just reaching the final stages of our PRA. It has been a short, hot, dusty, hard working six weeks. The ship, which at one time seemed to be mostly torn apart and lying in various shops on the base, is practically back together again and will run with a minimum amount of problems. The upcoming sea trials will serve to bear this out.

Sincerely,



D. M. ALTWEGG

P.S. - All went well on trials and we are now enroute to the Sea of Japan for special operations.