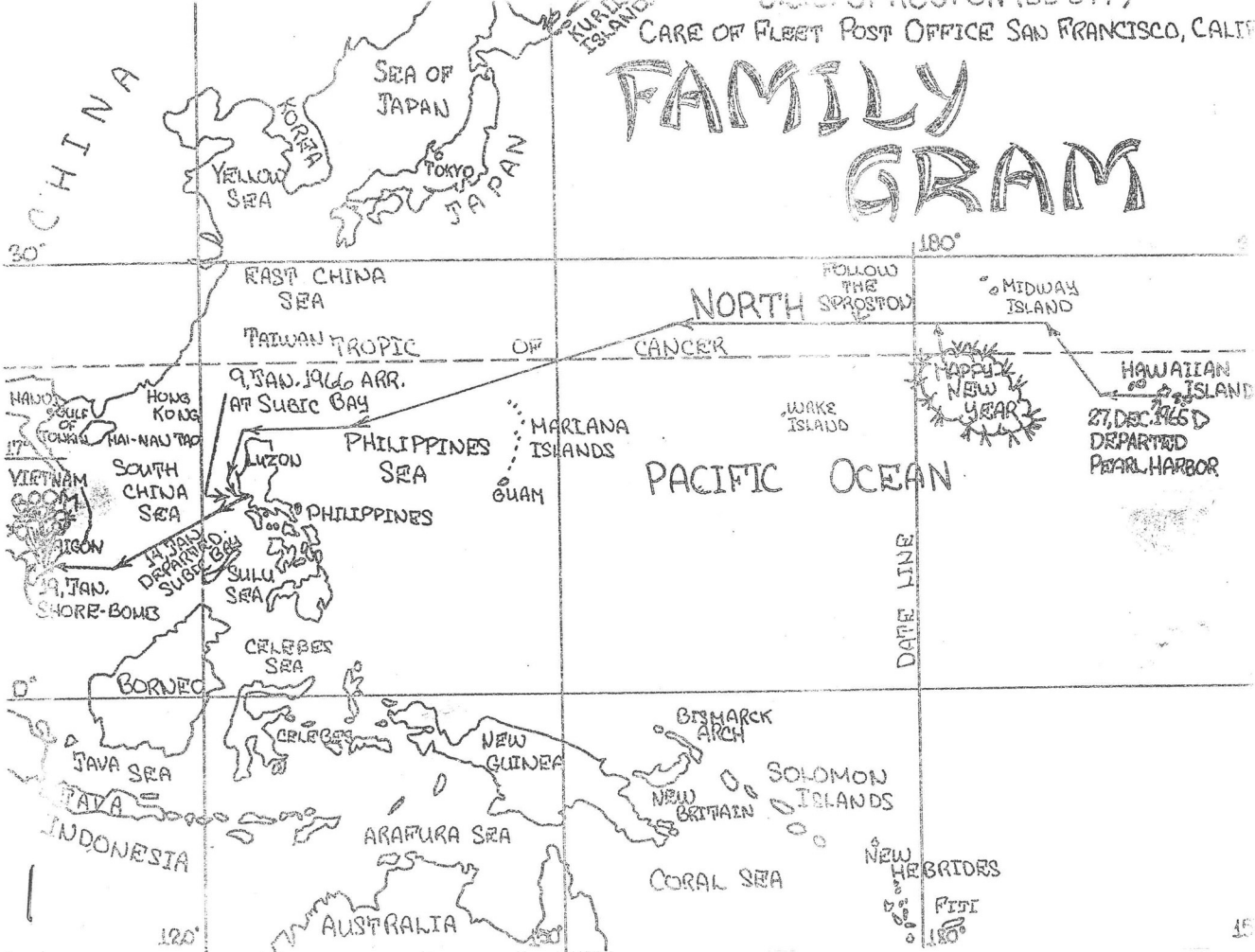


CARE OF FLEET POST OFFICE SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

# FAMILY GRAM



USS SPROSTON (DD-577)  
Care of Fleet Post Office  
San Francisco, California

7 February 1966

Dear Family and Friends of the SPROSTON:

Not much more than a month ago, I wrote you just prior to the SPROSTON's departure from Pearl Harbor for employment in the Western Pacific. It's been a very educational time for all of us; I'll try to pass some of what we've learned on to you.

The 5,000 mile trip from Pearl Harbor to Subic Bay, from 27 December to 9 January was a rather quiet and uneventful one. On 30 December, we crossed the international dateline at the 180th meridian; all of a sudden, instead of its being 1200 on 30 December, it was 1200 on 31 December. Two days later we became officially a part of the mighty U.S. SEVENTH Fleet. As we steamed west-south-west, the temperature gradually eased upward, and it was hot when we arrived in Subic Bay, Philippines some six degrees (360 nautical miles) closer to the equator than Hawaii! We stayed in Subic a few days longer than the rest of our Task Group, to complete some engineering repairs. Liberal liberty hours were enjoyed by all. Though the short time in port did not permit taking advantage of tours, SPROSTON sailors did utilize the extensive base recreational facilities, and took liberty in the town of Olongapo. You may be interested to know that their conduct ashore was excellent.

On 14 January, we pulled out of Subic and proceeded to join our "mother" carrier and escorts. We operated off the southern coast of South Vietnam for a while and then proceeded north where we've operated for the remainder of the patrol. The carrier with whom we operate is supporting U.S. and RVN operations in South Vietnam. Our duties, when we're with the carrier, are to provide protection against submarine or air attack and to assist in the rescue of crew members of aircraft which might go down in our vicinity.

We had a bright spot in our tour when we were nominated for and acted as a naval gunfire support ship. In the vicinity of Vung Tau, at the mouth of the Saigon River, we dumped tons of 5"/38 shellfire at Viet Cong base camps and assembly areas while navigating in very shallow water. Our spotter, who observed the results, stated that our coverage of the designated areas was "excellent." We look forward to more opportunities for the SPROSTON to take a similar active and vital part in operations.

I'm sure you've read in your SPROSTON sailor's letters of the frequency of "UNREPS", or underway replenishments. As you know by now, ships in the Western Pacific spend much of their time at sea. Considerable effort must be devoted, therefore, to making ships as self-sufficient as possible. These efforts include emphasis on self-maintenance of all equipment, to keep it peaked up for maximum usage and minimum "down-time" for repairs. These efforts also include providing the ships at sea with sufficient "beans, bullets and black oil." It is this latter aspect of self-sufficiency in which UNREPS play such an important part. As my "educational corner" in this month's Family-Gram, let me tell you a little about UNREPS. At sea, the ship requires re-supply of food, fuel, general stores (everything from spare parts to brooms, soap and paint), and ammunition. The Service Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, has, as one of its missions, resupply of ships. For this purpose, AFs ("reefer ships", with fresh provisions, including vegetables, meat and "dry" stores, like flour), AEs (ammunition ships), AOs (refueling ships), AKSs (general stores ships), plus "combination" ships (i.e., AOE's, which supply both ammunition and fuel) are provided to serve the fleet. UNREPS, themselves, are typified as follows. The SPROSTON is steaming with the carrier and three additional

secret compartment. We move into a UNREP formation, after joining up with, say, an AO (oiler). Two DDs are stationed ahead of the oiler, to screen against possible submarines. One DD goes alongside the AO's starboard side, the carrier goes alongside the AO to port, and the other DD is astern of the oiler as "lifeguard." As one DD completes fueling she moves up to a screen station. One of the screen DDs drops back to lifeguard and the former lifeguard goes alongside the AO. And so on until completion. By "alongside", I mean 80-100 feet, which is fairly close for two ships to cruise together. When a destroyer goes alongside a replenishment ship, there are various "rigs" by which the oil, provisions, etc., can be transferred. The basic rig calls for a wire to be hooked up to the DD; the wire is kept taut by winches on the replenishment ship and the fuel oil hose can be led to DD by means of a trolley block arrangement which attaches the hose to the wire. Our personnel at the refueling stations (we have two) and the high-lines, where we transfer movies, mail and personnel (seated and strapped into a chair-frame arrangement) are becoming most proficient. Incidentally, we UNREP day and night. At night, we have a few dim red lights rigged to help the personnel rig their stations. As I said we're getting pretty good at it; our stations average about 5-7 minutes from the time the first line is received onboard until we're ready for the AO to commence pumping fuel. UNREPS are all-hands affairs; First Division, under ENS WALDRON and CLEMENTS, BMC, plays a key part but all divisions provide personnel to man the stations. B Division, under the guidance of MILLER, BTC and CARSON, BTL the "Oil King" (petty officer in charge of refueling), deserve special recognition for it is they who make sure that just enough fuel goes into the right tanks and that we get properly "topped off". It's no easy job, believe me, but they do it speedily and well. For the Service Force ships, UNREPS are their primary duty; for us, it's just a sideline, incidental, but necessary to sustaining ourselves at sea so that we can go "where the action is."

For those of you whose SPROSTON sailors have been in WESTRAC before, you're well aware that this cruise is entirely different from previous ones. In prior cruises, the SPROSTON spent up to 60% of the time in port. Much more of our time will be spent at sea this trip, with a grimly realistic tinge to all our operations.

Being self-sufficient includes making our own water. The salt water all around us is not consumable in its natural form and must be converted into potable water (used for cooking, bathing, laundry, etc.) and feed water (pure, mineral-free water used in the ship's boilers). This is produced from sea water in the ship's evaporator. The SPROSTON's evaporator was not functioning properly for a while on this cruise and we were dangerously low on both feed and fresh water necessitating very strict curtailment of fresh water usage. Thanks to the intense repair efforts of the engineers lead by STORTS, MMC, and the "gift" of several thousand gallons of fresh water from several UNREP ships, our evaporator is now functioning better than ever and we are back to normal water usage.

To shift the news a bit, the following personnel were advanced to the rate shown by successful completion in examinations since we left Pearl Harbor: R. C. BACCI, SN; J. R. VIVES, SN; D. L. JOHNSON, SN; A. G. IVES, SN; D. R. YATES, SN; R. L. GRIFPEY, FN; R. W. GLYNN, FN. Our Weapons Officer, S. FITCH, has been promoted to Lieutenant. And we've just completed the semi-annual advancement examinations. We'll have news of the results in late April or May. (The examinations are machine-corrected at the U.S. Naval Examining Center, Great Lakes, Illinois.)

What do we do at sea in our limited spare time? We have a popular slot car track, purchased by the ship's Welfare and Recreation Fund. The Fund also sponsors tournaments - cribbage, pinochle, etc. We are planning a talent show. The nine divisions are competing for the Captain's Cup; this competition includes points for participation in tournaments, excellence of conduct ashore, participation in USAFI classes, performance at inspections, etc. USAFI (U.S. Armed Forces Institute) is an educational center which provides, cost-free, all materials needed

or either individual correspondence courses, or for classes taught on board ship by qualified instructors. On the SPROSTON we have three such courses in progress: Bookkeeping and Accounting, taught by ENS HITCHCOCK, English, taught by LTJG MILLIS, and Basic Mathematics, taught by ENS PRINTY. We're proud of the students enrolled in these classes, who are taking advantage of these courses to better themselves.

Our Man of the Month selection for January was a close one. W. R. ROSHAU, SN, was nominated for Supply Department, C. E. RANGEL, QM3 for Operations, R. G. KELSEY, SA for Weapons, and D. M. GEERING, BT3 for Engineering. GEERING was finally selected. Hats off to him and to the others who were nominated in recognition to their contribution to the SPROSTON's effectiveness.

And so it goes. The days pass; we have completed our first long "patrol" and return to port for a breather. I am impressed with the spirit and "can do" attitude that the SPROSTON sailors exhibit.

Rest assured that you have good cause to be proud of your member of the crew. May I invite you to write them often to show that you, also, back them 100%!



R. L. HOFFMAN

Commander, U.S. Navy  
Commanding Officer  
USS SPROSTON (DD-577)