

27 March 1966

Dear Families and Friends of the SPROSTON:

It's been a "bang-up" patrol for the SPROSTON, as I will presently explain. The six weeks since the previous Family Gram have been busy, indeed.

Our first patrol was concluded by two major entertainment events. The first was the SPROSTON "Olympics"; this contest included an obstacle race, push-ups, pull-ups, weight-lifting, etc. The first three individual prize winners were: CARRASCO, SA - GERGER, SN - SHEPARD, SN, each of whom were awarded prizes. The winning divisions, for the Captain's Cup were: 1st, 3rd and OC divisions. This event (which took place, by the way, on a cool and rainy day) was followed by a talent show. Entrants were: SWICK, SN - JETTER, EM2 - Gaylord and Bob (SCHAUDIES, RDC & MUNDY, RD3). SWICK was adjudged winner, with JETTER, EM2, and Gaylord and Bob runners up. During the contest, we passed relatively close aboard to a Soviet Trawler. We trust that the Russians enjoyed the show!

The Division Medical Officer, Dr. DEMAGGD, was chief judge for our beard growing contest. He found the task not to be an easy one but, among about 15 entrants, judged ELMORE, SN, to have the "most vigorous and esthetically pleasing growth."

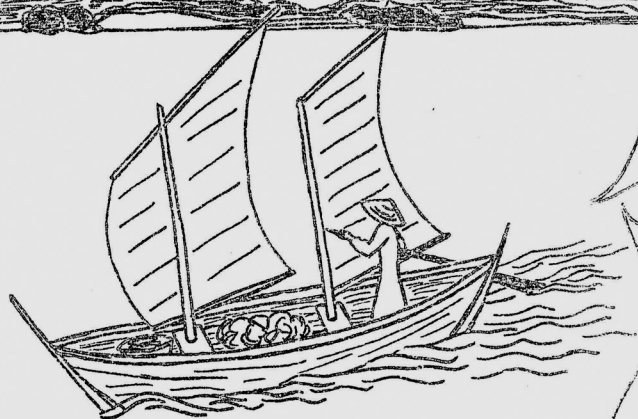
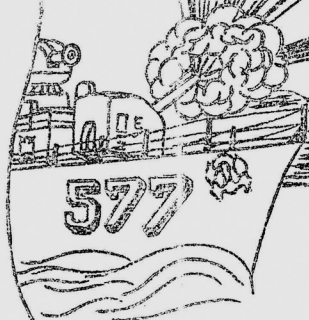
This contest immediately preceded our arrival in Subic Bay for a brief "pit stop". During our stay, considerable work was undertaken and accomplished by ship's force, particularly "B" division, which had to get our boilers back in shape, and First division, which had the chore of chipping and painting much of the hull, deck and superstructure. The ship sponsored a tour to Manila and one to Grande Island. Grande Island, at the mouth of Subic Bay, is the site of overnight cabins and offers just about every recreation facility possible, from horse shoes to water skiing. Several officers travelled to Baguio, a fabled resort area in the mountains nearby. All enjoyed the opportunity to get ashore for a while and to relax in the warm (and then some!) Philippine climate.

February 22nd found us underway again, headed back to chase our "birdfarm" (carrier) around while she launched air strikes against North Vietnam. For destroyers this escort duty gets rather tedious, so we were delighted to be assigned naval gunfire support duties in the II Corps area from 1--20 March! During the first few days, we were supporting the First Air Cavalry Division on the coast, east of Bong Son. Our fire missions consisted primarily of neutralizing areas where helicopter landings were to take place, and of knocking out pockets of armed resistance. Then we moved a little north and took up gun fire support duties for Vietnamese marine units and their U.S. Marine advisors. During this period we were credited with stopping several battalion-size VC attacks against the Marines' positions. Our record for the 20 day period includes firing 1171 rounds of 5"/38 ammunition inflicting many Viet Cong casualties and destroying or damaging more than 50 VC structures. Our naval gunfire support team is formed of gun mounts, themselves; CIC (where the mission information is received, plotted and relayed as necessary), and forward plot, where the orders of CIC are electronically and electrically sent to the guns. LT FITCH, our Weapons Officer, is the hub of the entire evolution - we are fortunate to have an officer of his caliber aboard.

U.S.S. SPROSTON (DD-577)

CARE OF FLEET POST OFFICE SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

# FAMILY GRAM



MARCH 1966

Navigation is most important to the mission. SMITH, QMC, on the bridge, and SCHAUDIES, RDC, in CIC are the two who supervise the efforts of their personnel to insure that not only do we know where we are, but we know where we'll be at a given time in the future!

Naval gunfire support is sometimes a rather curious affair in Vietnam. Though the ship fires round after round at the enemy inland, often we are steaming right smack dab in the middle of many fishing boats at sea. These fishermen casually go about their chores, pulling in their great nets (they appear to get generous catches!) while our guns roar nearby. We often have to change course to avoid their craft and their net markers. Firing a wartime mission, we find ourselves the middle of a peaceful fishing scene. As I said - a curious affair.

The crew enjoys naval gunfire support; we all feel that we are making a direct and positive contribution to the cause of eventual victory and freedom for the people of Vietnam.

Incidentally, we have embarked two recently commissioned Vietnamese Ensigns, ENS Ninh Duy DINH and ENS Nguyen Ba TRAC. They are aboard for their first shipboard indoctrination of their careers. We're trying to give them a thorough training in all aspects of shipboard life and, in turn, are learning about Vietnam from them. I trust that they will benefit from their tour on the SPROSTON just as we have enjoyed their presence aboard!

In between fire missions, recently, we managed to find time for a barbeque (complete with charcoal and blinding smoke!) on the fantail. REYNOLDS, CSCS, ZELINSKI, CS2 and WHITE, CS3, plus the stewards and remainder of the cooks and mess cooks all teamed up, under LTJG SCHOLL's guidance, to produce a most enjoyable affair.

The second SPROSTON Olympics produced a new host of champions. CARRASCO, SA, walked away with top honors, with PEARSON, SFP3, MIZE, MMFN, PENHALL, GMG3 and SHEPARD, SN, following in that order. The events included weight-lifting, push-ups, pull-ups, sit-ups, standing broad jump, and jump reach. The big event of the day, won by PENHALL, GMG3, was the "Grand Prix", an "obstacle race", using ladders, ropes, passageways, scuttles, etc. as the race course. The greatest "obstacle" was that the winner had to cross the finish line with an unbroken egg in hand! The final event of this patrol was our talent show. With J. JETTER, EM2, performing as the affable master of ceremonies, G.W. SWICK, SN and A.E. FITZ, STG2, offered several "houn' dawg"-type numbers which were greatly enjoyed. PETRAGLIA, SN got all "dolloed up" for an amusing dance number. Several of the officers put together a skit based (loosely) on shore bombardment, and G.N. SCHAUDIES entertained with several instrumental numbers. A most enjoyable respite from our patrol routine!

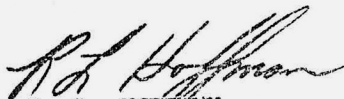
We ran a minor survey recently and I thought you might be interested in the results. Our crew of about 270 enlisted personnel hail from 45 states, plus Washington, D.C., the Philippines and Canada. The youngest is 17, the oldest 54; the average age is 22½. We have a man on board who's completed only 7 years of education and one who has completed 3 years of college. Our "average" man is credited with 11 years of education. GCT (roughly equivalent to IQ for which the Navy-wide "average" is 50) ranges from 22 to 70 with the SPROSTON mean being 51.1. Our sailors have been in the Navy from 5 months to 25 years with an average service time of 4½ years. A total of 1,200 years of service are represented on board.

While I'm talking statistics, did you know that we've steamed over 21,000 miles so far this cruise, using over 1,300,000 gallons of fuel? And we still have a long way to go!

Advancement news! In recent Seaman/Fireman tests, the following personnel were successful and were advanced as indicated: KINNEY, RDSN, BENFER, SN, GOODWIN, SN, WEIDNER, SN, DAVID, TN, TEAFF, FN, KING, FN, SEGURA, FN, STEEN, FAN, PRITCHARD, FN, ROMERO, FN.

And our "Man of the Month" selection for February was a close one! DECKER, FTG3, was chosen as top man among the other nominees, ROSHAU, SN (nominated for second month in a row), BAILEY, FN, and EATON, RMSN. Well done to these conscientious, and enthusiastic men who serve as excellent examples of the type of professional and technical performance that the Navy seeks.

And thus, as we sail into Yokosuka, Japan, another patrol is ended. After a short respite, we expect to be back on the high seas again with the mighty U.S. SEVENTH Fleet. In the meantime, though northern Japan is chilly and rainy this time of year, you can be sure that our spirits cannot be dampened. Your SPROSTON sailors are doing fine work and deserve high praise for their efforts; I am proud to be associated with them.



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

P.S. Though I cannot acknowledge your letters individually, I do appreciate the many thank you notes regarding the Family-Grams. Are there any special subjects you'd like discussed in future issues?