

A Journey Into History – Part I

Description

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I don't recall the exact date it was, but it was in January 20 years ago, and the location was an island paradise referred to as "[DGAR](#)" (pronounced Dee-gar) by the multitude of airmen and sailors who have had the pleasure of transiting, by ship, sub or plane to the southern reaches of the Indian Ocean in the Chagos Archipelago. Being south of the equator, it is more than likely responsible for many "[Shellbacks](#)" of the various services as well.

I pick up the story a few months later. But to catch up quickly, my travels to DGAR began in Norfolk, VA at the end of Oct, 1985. Sailing with the [USS CORAL SEA \(CV-43\)](#) Battle Group, under the command of [Commander Carrier Group TWO](#). Assigned to the Battle Group was Destroyer Squadron THIRTY TWO, [USS BIDDLE \(CG-34\)](#), [USS CAPODANNO \(FF-1093\)](#), [USS JESSE L BROWN \(FF-1089\)](#), [USS JACK WILLIAMS \(FFG-24\)](#) and USS MONOGAHELA (AO-178), we headed east to the Med to swap out our CV and Group Commander, before heading to the North Arabian Sea. My "boss" was Capt Wes Jordan, Jr, Commodore for DESRON 32, and the Chief Staff Officer was CDR William "Bill" Nurthen. Staff OPS was LCDR Steve Nerheim, LCDR AL McCollum was our token ASW TACCO from the P-3 community to help make sure us "shoes" did ASW right. Much, much more on that later....OSC(SW) Jim Koch was our OPS Assistant, and RMCS(SW) Rumbaugh the Communications Officer. We had a chaplain and an RP (religious program specialist), but I can't recall their names. They were farmed out to the ships of the Battle Group and rarely we with us. YN1 Thorton and a MS1 as the Commodore's staff rounded out our little "family."

Our sailing from Norfolk in October had been a wonderfully exciting day, as all our gear had been loaded aboard USS BIDDLE, but during the night before, the deck crew was hoisting a 40' Utility Boat back aboard when a limit switch failed, allowing the winches to keep running, after the davit arm was fully upright. The result was a bent davit arm. [COMNAVSURFLANT](#) directed BIDDLE to remain inport and effect repairs, as our deployment would require anchoring out a lot, and the boat davits would be used extensively.

The Commodore issued orders to find another flagship. Looking to the north, we could see the CORAL SEA already moving from the piers. USS MONOGAHELA was still moored at her berth, so we yelled for help from the BIDDLE's crew, and got our gear to the Oiler....

Off we go, but more background to come. Anyhow, on or about this date, 20 years in the past, I was headed towards the brow, so I could say I had a beer on Diego Garcia, after being on duty the first day inport, having just arrived from Singapore, where most of our Battle Group had spent Christmas. I heard "All Hands Prepare to Get Underway!" on the USS SARATOGA's 1MC system.....

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