

U.S.S. JOHN R. PIERCE (DD-753)

FAMILY GRAM

10 September 1964

When you sit down to read this edition of the PIERCE FAMILY GRAM series, we, in PIERCE, will be on our return trip to Norfolk. Reflecting back to early August, you recall that we were to spend a five week period of refresher training under the close supervision of the Fleet Training Group at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Pierce departed from Norfolk in the afternoon of the 6th of August and set course for Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The trip southward was uneventful and pleasant. We arrived in GITMO early on the morning of 9 August, a Sunday, full of anticipation and apprehension over the forthcoming weeks of training.

On Monday the 10th of August we started our cycle with an Arrival Readiness Inspection (ARI) designed to determine whether Pierce was ready to commence training. This inspection took the morning period and a series of conferences filled the afternoon. On Tuesday, the 11th we had a full schedule of conferences which required the attendance of all our essential and key personal. Needless to say, ships like PIERCE consider all of their people "essential and Key", although some are more essential than others. We can not afford the luxury of non-producers or "gold bricks". Wednesday, the 12th, saw JOHN R. PIERCE in the very middle of an action packed training session which lived up to our previous expectations. We didn't stop training or doing thereafter.

The training was long, hard, hot and sometimes discusting but each day we saw an increase in our team-capability; slow as it may have appeared to some of us.

About one-half the way through the period, Hurricane CLEO blew through to the south of Cuba. Although CLEO did not bother us in the harbor, it did necessitate reorganization of the training program and cause some loss of training and preparations for the Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI). The tempo of operations had reached a new high and we were in the swing of it.

Finally, we took a rest! We spent the week-end of the 29/30th of August in Kingston, Jamaica. Jamaica was a British Crown Colony until recently and as such is a quaint combination of Caribbean tropicanna and British worldliness. We all enjoyed the Jamaican version of tropic hospitality.

Monday, the 31st saw us back on the training cycle full of determination for the prospective full scale tests just two weeks away. Our training continued with no let-up until the first Operational Readiness Inspection and the full day of shore bombardment at Culebra Island which followed the ORI. Upon completion of the shore bombardment exercise on the 11th we severed our ties with the Fleet Training Group, Guantanamo, and headed for a fuel and recreation stop in San Juan, Puerto Rico. We were a tired, but far better prepared team than we were when we arrived at GITMO.

The stay in San Juan was short and pleasant. Our single men wanted to stay longer while the prospect of leave or liberty in Norfolk or home elsewhere was much in the minds of the married members of the crew.

What does the future hold for PIERCE and the good people who man her? To begin with we ought to mention that PIERCE is no longer scheduled for inactivation in 1965 as you might have known. COMCRUDESANT recently decided that PIERCE and our sister ship, BARTON, would better serve our country in the Naval Reserve training program than elsewhere.

As of 1 March 1965, PIERCE's home port will be changed to New York, New York from Norfolk. On 1 April 1965, PIERCE will assume a Group I Naval Reserve Training (NRT) status relieving USS SULLIVANS (DD-537). This change in status may necessitate the move of some of our families. However, don't worry about

that now since we expect some changes in our crew roster before we depart for New York. There will be more information on this move later. Don't sell the farm...yet, wait until we have firm instructions concerning the movement and our exact location.

Now, back to Norfolk! We will arrive in Norfolk on the 17th and go alongside USS SIERRA (AD-18) for a three-week tender availability (17 September to 8 October). During this time we will have a full scale supply inspection, a Pre-deployment (POM) inspection, accomplish much essential ships work and, hopefully, enjoy some rest and relaxation.

On 30 September JOHN R. PIERCE will be 20 years old. We are planning to have a birthday party in her honor. There will be more details on this later, also. And, if we can arrange it, we hope to have a dependents cruise one day ~~toward the end of our POM period.~~ This proposal may not materialize but we are planning toward that objective.

Our deployment date has been set for 8 October 1964. We will stop in Cartagena, Spain for fuel on the 19th of October and from there proceed eastward to arrive at Athens on the 23rd. We are scheduled for a short stay in Athens, departing for the Red Sea via the Suez Canal on the 25th. We should transit the canal on the 27th and commence our Red Sea Patrol duties on the 28th. In early December, we will visit Port Said and depart from the Red Sea via the Suez again. Our schedule of port visits thereafter is vague at this time, although we do know that PIERCE will enjoy a tender availability alongside USS GRAND CANYON (AD-25) in Toulon, France from 14 December until 28 December. Our schedule until we leave the Med is unknown however we do expect to be in Norfolk in mid January.

The tour with the Sixth Fleet is not without purpose. It is important that we consider our tasks as a member of this mighty force. As "ambassadors" in the various foreign countries to be visited we are constantly reminded of the following mission of the Sixth Fleet:

- \* To help preserve the peace.
- \* To assure Mediterranean and Near East countries of our friendship and readiness to help them.
- \* To protect and support U.S. citizens, interests, and policies in the Mediterranean and Red Sea areas.
- \* ~~To be prepared to carry out such wartime assignments as superior U.S. or NATO commands may order.~~

During our extended overseas stay I would again remind you of our correct telegraphic address in the event it is deemed necessary to wire the ship:

JOHN DOE  
USS JOHN R. PIERCE (DD-753)  
NAVAL COMMUNICATIONS STATION  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

The cost of such telegrams is borne by the sender for the distance from the point of origin to Washington, D.C. (plus tax). The balance of the distance is carried by the Navy.

The Sixth Fleet is an extremely vital peacetime force, primarily deployed in the Mediterranean Sea. Vital statistics as permitted by the security rules are provided for your information as follows:

The fleet consists of about 50 ships, 50,000 men and about 200 aircraft. This includes 2 large carriers, 2 missile-cruisers, and about 16 destroyers. The main striking arm is Task Force 60 with the high speed jet bombers operating from the aircraft carriers in all kinds of weather.

In addition there is an amphibious squadron (including minesweepers) with about 2000 combat-ready Marines embarked.

The service force will be present and provide us with the fuel, food, repair parts, etc. which is required to keep the Sixth Fleet mobile.

During our deployment there, unfortunately, will be "trials and tribulations" at home which will require immediate action on the part of dependents at home. It is extremely important that our wives, parents, and guardians, as the case may be, are alerted to the assistance available for emergency situations from specified agencies, such as; the American Red Cross, Navy Relief, Navy Mutual Aid, Navy Legal Assistance, and other Armed Forces activities. Here is a run-down on the services available:

**RED CROSS** - social welfare assistance including financial aid. The Red Cross is an authorized medium of communication between families and the Navy. They work with emergency leave cases, humanitarian transfers, welfare reports and dependency discharges.

**NAVY RELIEF SOCIETY** - a Navy-family organization dedicated to providing a wide variety of assistance to Navy men and their dependents. Financial assistance in the form of loans is often available. A personal visit to the Navy Relief Office is necessary in order to obtain a loan.

**NAVY LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM** - exists in some localities. Should this service not be available, dependents should call the local Navy legal officer before securing civilian legal aid (it might save you money).

Please keep in mind that mail service will not always be the best during our absence. At time we will enjoy mail service as though we were right in Norfolk - however there will be periods when two weeks could pass without mail from us. It is particularly important to remember that mail will not leave the ship for 10 to 14 days after we leave Norfolk on 8 October 1964 - so - add the "mail travel time", and we may well not receive a letter for the first three (3) weeks. Mail service while in the Red Sea may be slow and difficult.

It is extremely important to have a close touch between dependents at home and the personnel who have accurate information as to the movements and activities of PIERCE. The worst that can happen (barring personal emergencies to our loved ones at home), is to have rumors, usually not accurate, dashing over the Norfolk telephones, quickly written in letters or dispelled by word of mouth. This situation can snowball to outlandish proportions and, as is often the case, create anxiety, frequently grief and often great disappointment at home and on board ship. Be sure when you write - do not guess or speculate.

Emergency leave cases will occur during our absence from home port. It should be remembered that emergency leave can be granted under the following circumstances:

- \* When the return of the serviceman will contribute to the welfare of a dying member of his immediate family (father, mother, sister, brother, spouse, only living relative, or relative who "stands in" as a parent).

- \* Upon the death of a member of the immediate family.

- \* When a serious family problem arises as a result of an accident or serious illness.

- \* When the serviceman's presence is required to ease a real and definite hardship.

Any request for emergency leave must be accompanied by Red Cross verification of the situation which created the need for the man's presence. Should any situation arise that indicates the real need of the serviceman's presence at home - NOTIFY THE RED CROSS so they can get to work immediately and they will notify the PIERCE.

I am forwarding this Family Gram early so that you may have an opportunity to clear up any questions before our departure date! This is most important to all of us - since the well being of our fine crew depends so much on their knowing our families are well, safe, and being taken care of at home. Again - it is a pleasure to write to you all and, God willing, I will write to you all again during our deployment.

Sincerely,

  
K.G. HYLLEND, CDR, USN