

Many thanks to Joe Dent (BT3, 55-59)  
for sending a copy of this January 1958 Family Gram  
(Captain at the time was Cdr Edward A. Lane, Jr.)  
along with newspaper clippings of the December 1957 storm.

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U.S.S. GEARING (DD 710)  
FAMILY-GRAM

Volume 2, No. 1

26 January 1958

We regret that there has been a considerable lapse of time since our last Family-Gram, however, better late than never so here goes -

NORVA-GIBRALTAR CROSSING - On 4 December 1957 we headed back for the Mediterranean and a resumption of our SIXTH FLEET duties after a brief but pleasant five weeks in Norfolk. We had been quite busy during our stay in port and experienced a large turn over of personnel but still managed to accomplish a considerable amount of routine repairs and organize three pre-Christmas leave parties. The new men who reported aboard before sailing were a fine lot - in fact, the best draft of men we have seen come aboard in some time.

As you probably know, our crossing was rather rough. We encountered a storm the first night out which lasted for two and a half days and thoroughly indoctrinated our new men, many of whom were on their first trip to sea. Needless to say, the old family two-and-a-half gallon bucket proved an indispensable item in many cases. After a few days of relative calm weather we encountered a second storm for which the first had evidently been just a preview. From the evening of the 10th through the 13th we were tossed about considerably by mountainous waves and high winds. All hands were kept busy about the ship keeping the moderate storm damage within bounds and from becoming serious. The number of cases of sea sickness fell to almost zero, and even our old mal de mer standbys experienced a complete recovery and pitched in with the rest. The USS SALAMONIE, a Navy tanker, rendezvoused with us on the 12th for a scheduled refueling but because of sea conditions attempts to refuel were unsuccessful. During this time one of our seaman, George SCHACK, from Union Town, New Jersey was washed over the side. We came about to recover him but the SALAMONIE, which was astern of us at the time, stopped and effected an outstanding recovery despite the extremely adverse conditions prevailing.

On the 13th the seas had calmed little, but an attempted fueling that morning proved successful largely through the efforts of Philip M. MAYER, Signalman third class and Irwin L. HUMPHREY, Quartermaster third class, who were the helmsmen, and Ensign Palmer D. SPARKMAN, John P. GALO, Chief Boatswain Mate, and Herbert L. NORFOLK, Boatswain Mate first class, who ably handled the lines out on deck despite difficulties encountered with the fueling rig. The period 13th through the 15th was spent alternately pumping salt water ballast from empty fuel tanks and receiving fuel in its place. The 15th saw us finally enroute again to Gibraltar.

Our stay in Gibraltar was brief and we were glad when COMDESLANT representatives investigating the storm damage recommended the repairs be accomplished by the destroyer tender USS TIDEWATER, then at Naples, rather than in a foreign shipyard as had been considered. As a result we departed for Naples on the 20th.

NAPLES: The passage to Naples was uneventful, and after an interesting approach passing close by the Isle of Capri and Mt. Vesuvius, we entered the beautiful Bay of Naples and arrived in port early the 23rd, a scant 2 days before Christmas. Christmas Day was bright and clear and LTJG MC SWAIN, our Supply Officer, Chief Commissaryman Webster, and the ship's cooks and bakers prepared one of the finest holiday meals I have seen on any ship. Many of us attended the special Christmas Church services held on the TIDEWATER and the evening before a number of the men attended candle light services in churches of various denominations ashore. We all missed being with our families for this holiday period but were aware of the necessity of taking our share and turn of duty in the SIXTH FLEET at this time. Those of us who had families in the Norfolk area were especially grateful for the Christmas party sponsored by COMDESFLOT 4 for the families of deployed destroyermen. From all reports received, it was a highly successful endeavor and greatly appreciated by families

Although most of the time alongside the TIDEWATER was devoted to repair work, several organized parties visited Rome, the ruins of Pompey and Mt. Vesuvius. A few hardy souls even braved the cold choppy passage to Capri on some of the numerous small excursion boats. By 21 January the TIDEWATER had completed all repairs to the damage caused by the storm and refueling attempts the month before. Once again we were ready to actively take our place in the Sixth Fleet. The repairs and other work accomplished by the TIDEWATER cannot be praised too highly - the willingness, quality of work performed and general can-do attitude of the tender personnel was unmatched in our experience with tenders. Also to be commended was our own crew, which pitched in as never before and made the tender period one of the most productive periods we have ever experienced. For example, the shipfitter gang turned to all day with tender personnel and then often worked all night to accomplish considerable other work for the ship. The fire controlman, gunner's mates, deck and engineering personnel also put in long hours to bring the ship up to its highest material standard yet, (the engineers in particular have made great gains in this respect), and all hands deserved a well done. While alongside the tender, it was also my pleasure to award letters of commendation to personnel for outstanding performance of duty during the storm 10-13 December. These men were:

MANN, Carrol G., FTC, USN from Dungannon, Virginia  
PELISSIER, Roland H., BTC, USN from Woonsocket, R. I.  
NOFFOLK, Herbert L., BML, USN from Baltimore, Md.  
DENT, Joseph R., BT3, USN from Riverdale, Md.  
HUMPHREY, Irwin L., QM3, USN from North Granby, Conn.  
MAYER, Phillip M., SM3, USN from Anderson, Calif.

NAPLES - ISKENDERON - On 21 January we got underway from Naples for Iskenderon, Turkey. For a while it looked as if the TIDEWATER were reluctant to let us part - it was only after some two or three hours that we were able to disengage our anchor from the tender's anchor chain and get on our way. That evening enroute east, we passed close by Stromboli, the island of volcanic and Ingrid Bergman fame, but unlike previous passings this one found the volcano quiet, and we missed a good scenic attraction. Later that evening we sailed through the Straits of Messina, that narrow heavily trafficked strait between the toe of Italy and island of Sicily. As always, it kept the Navigator on his toes and provided us with an interesting hour or two as we avoided shipping and whirlpools while passing close by between the well-lighted shores. The next few days we concentrated on general drills and battle problems to get back in shape after our long stay in Naples and to uncover any minor defects in equipment or organization. On the 23rd we joined the USS DAVIS (DD 937), one of our new destroyer leaders, and proceeded in company with her to Iskenderon, where we both fueled at the Turkish Naval Base located there. As this was a fueling stop only, time did not permit us to go ashore. However, as viewed from the ship, it did not look as though we missed much. Iskenderon appeared to be a small bleak town clinging tenaciously to the steep bay's edge while surrounded by high snow-capped mountains. Having been warned by Turkish naval officers of the sudden and violent storms which sweep down from the mountain passes, we were glad to get underway that same night for Ismir, Turkey, a more attractive liberty port.

BROTHERS. Looking over our roster we were somewhat surprised to see that we had four sets of brothers serving aboard ship - they are:

CROSSFIELD, C.E., Seaman Apprentice, Deck Division, and  
CROSSFIELD, F.H., Seaman, Communication Division, from Lewistown, Minn.  
SMITH, H. P., Machinist Mate third, Repair Division, and  
SMITH, H. H., Sonarman third class, Foxtroct Division, from Portsmouth, Va.  
BIFESCH, J.H., Boilerman fireman, Engineering Division, and  
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BIFESCH, J.M., Electrician third class, Repair Division, from Revere, Pa.

SANTMAN, G.E., Seaman, Deck Division, and  
SANTMAN, E.W., Seaman, Supply Division, from Ocala, Florida.

boss (Commander Destroyer Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet) for the past two years, was relieved by Rear Admiral Edmund B. TAYLOR, USN. We were sorry to see Admiral Daniel leave. Perhaps this message by COMDESFLOT FOUR (our Norfolk boss), best sums up our feelings:

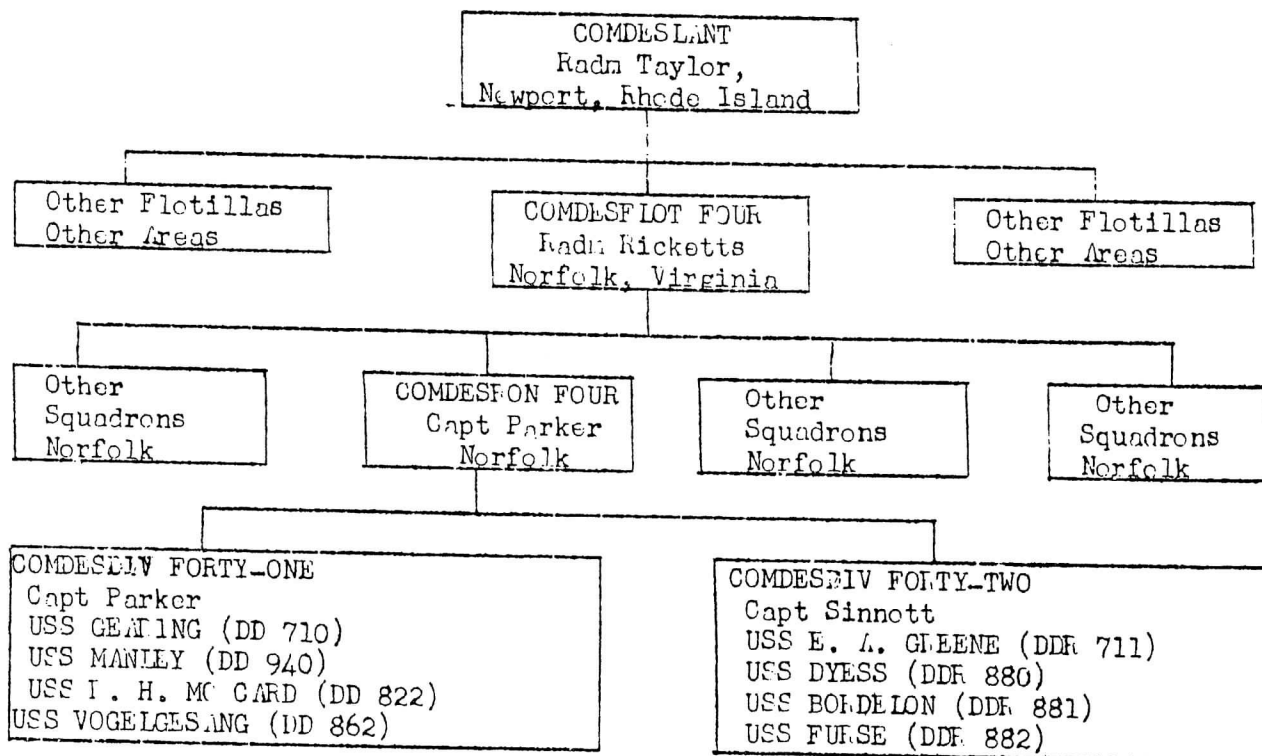
FROM: COMDESFLOT FOUR TO: COMDESLANT INFO: CINCLANTFLT and DESFLOT FOUR

FOR ADM DANIEL X THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF DESFLOT FOUR FEELIZE THAT HAULING DOWN YOUR FLAG AS COMDESLANT SIGNALS THE DEPARTURE FROM THIS FORCE OF AN AERDENT CHAMPION WHOSE PERSONAL EFFORTS HAVE DONE SO MUCH TO INCREASE THE STATURE AND PERFORMANCE OF DESTROYERS AND DESTROYERMEN X EVEN THOUGH THE DISTANCE BETWEEN YOUR HEADQUARTERS AND DESFLOT FOUR HAS USUALLY BLEN GREAT YOUR INTENSE PERSONAL INTEREST IN OUR WEIFARE HAS BEEN AN INSPIRATION TO US AND WE HAVE FELT SECURE IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT YOUR LOYALTY WOULD SUSTAIN US IN ADVERSITY X WE BID YOU GOD SPEED WITH THE HOPE TH T FORTUNE WILL FAVOR US BY SEEING YOUR FLAG FLY AGAIN IN TASK FORCES OF WHICH SHIPS OF DESFLOT FOUR ARE A PART.

Although we regret Rear Admiral Daniel's departure, we are fortunate in having another ex-destroyerman take over the helm. Again I would like to pass on COMDESFLOT FOUR's message to Rear Admiral Taylor:

FOR ADM TAYLOR X SPEAKING FOR ALL HANDS OF DESFLOT FOUR I EXTEND TO YOU A WARM WELCOME ON THE OCCASION OF YOUR RETURN TO DESLANT AS OUR NEW BOSS X WE KNOW YOU SHARE OUR PRIDE IN A FORCE WHICH CAN PERFORM MOIE EFFECTIVELY IN MOIE WAYS THAN ANY OTHER TYPE X TO YOU WE LIFT OUR SALTIEST STEAMING CAPS AND PLEDGE OUR STRONGEST SUPPOIT.

OUR BOSSES. Incidentally you might be interested in knowing something about our destroyer command set up -- our bosses. In addition to COMDESLANT in Newport, we have another admiral in Norfolk, Rear Admiral Claude V. Ficketts. As Commander Destroyer Flotilla FOUR (COMDESFLOT 4), Admiral Ficketts is in command, under COMDESLANT, of all Norfolk-based destroyers. Under Admiral Ficketts, we have a number of Destroyer Squadron Commanders, each in command of 7 or 8 destroyers. Ours is Commander Destroyer Squadron FOUR (COMDESRON 4), Captain A. E. Parker, USN. Each destroyer squadron is in turn divided into two divisions, usually of 4 ships each, and commanded by a division commander. We are in Destroyer Division 41, and Captain Parker doubles as both the Squadron and Division Commander. The other division of our squadron is DESDIV 42, commanded by Captain R. E. Sinnott, USN. Graphically it looks like this:



## Ships Battling Storm Now Out of Danger

WASHINGTON — (AP) — The navy said yesterday that four ships which have been battling a North Atlantic storm off Spain are now considered out of danger.

The two destroyers which were in worst difficulties Thursday, the Gearing and the Vogelgesang, were refueled yesterday. Thursday they were scraping the bottom of their tanks after wind and mountainous seas prevented refueling by a nearby tanker. A third destroyer, the McCord, which had a larger fuel supply and was in less danger, is to refuel shortly, the navy said.

Wind and sea conditions have improved considerably in the area, about 400 miles northeast of the Azores.

A fourth destroyer, the USS Manley, which lost a crew member and suffered superstructure damage, was able to proceed toward Lisbon and was due there late yesterday (4:30 p.m. EST).

## Four Navy Ships Battling Seas Out Of Danger

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A Naval spokesman in Norfolk said a second member of the Manley's crew has died of injuries suffered when the ship was struck by towering seas Wednesday night. The name of this second victim has not been released pending notification of next of kin.

Several other members of the Manley's crew who were injured will be hospitalized in Lisbon, the Navy here said.

Two ships, the transport Gen. Hodges and the light carrier Tripoli, which had been ordered to the scene to help if needed, have now been released to resume course.

The refueling operation was accomplished by the fleet oiler Salmone.

Dec. 13, 1957