



MONTICELLOGRAM

SAN DIEGO
31 MARCH 1972

Dear Families and Friends of MONTICELLO:

I want to take this opportunity to introduce myself to you, and to fill you in on what has been happening on board ship since her return to the United States in December.

The ship returned to San Diego on December 20th following a three month deployment to the Indian Ocean and Western Pacific. On December 21st, I relieved Captain Walter SPANGENBERG, Jr. as Commanding Officer, having ridden the ship home from Hawaii and observed the crew in both their daily routine, and at various drills, evolutions and inspections. Captain SPANGENBERG departed the area and is now serving in Washington, D.C. with Naval Air Systems Command Headquarters.

I feel extremely privileged to be the first officer in the rank of Commander to command this ship. MONTICELLO was one of several ships in which the Commanding Officer's rank was lowered one grade by our new Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral ZUMWALT. As for my background, I enlisted in the Navy in 1951, advancing through the ranks to Petty Officer First Class. Commissioned in 1956 as an Ensign, I have served at sea on destroyers and amphibious ships, and I have had two shore tours, one in Washington, D.C., the other here in San Diego. MONTICELLO is my third command, the previous two were also amphibious ships, USS PAGE COUNTY and USS COOK.

Since December 21st, we have only been to sea once, when we went to Seal Beach, California to offload all our ammunition in preparation for our present overhaul period. The months of January and February were full of inspections of all types. The Command Inspection by our Squadron Commodore was the last of these, and following his personnel inspection, he stated that the appearance of the crew was outstanding, the best he had seen in several years.

The overhaul period started in early March and is scheduled to be completed in early June. The noise and discomfort during an overhaul makes it an extremely difficult period in the life of a ship, and in addition to the work being accomplished by the shipyard, we have bitten off a big chunk for the crew to accomplish. It will be a period of hard work, but the end result will make it all worthwhile. In addition to the engineering, electronics, ordnance and hull repairs which will be done, we are putting a lot of money and effort into habitability improvements to bring MONTICELLO up to or beyond the standards of the newest ships in the fleet. The crew's berthing, messing and head facilities are to be remodeled in order to provide the utmost in comfort, privacy and cleanliness. I hope that as many of you as possible will be able to visit the ship when the overhaul period is over to see the dramatic improvements that will have been accomplished.

Immediately following the overhaul, the ship will enter what we call the "training cycle" in preparation for our upcoming deployment to the Western Pacific in the fall. I will let you know more about this in the next familygram.

We have been active in athletics during the last few months. The ship's basketball team got to play several games just after our return to San Diego - they played valiantly, but with the limited time to practice with all the time at sea did not fare too well. The softball team is just starting into full swing and won their first practice game in preparation for the upcoming Eleventh Naval District Fleet League.

Our Monday night ship's bowling league appears to be both competitive and a lot of fun for the fourteen teams which participate. We have some really excellent bowlers in the crew, and will perhaps be able to form a ship's bowling team to compete against other ships.

In the past few months, I have had the pleasure of reenlisting some 11 crew members, and advanced 15 to the next higher grade. Of all the tasks which are mine to perform, these two are my favorites. On several occasions, the wives of the men reenlisting or being promoted were able to be present for the ceremony. I would like to encourage any of you who can to accompany your MONTICELLO man to any ceremony in which he is involved; not that it is necessary to wait for a ceremony; I would personally welcome the opportunity to meet any of you who could pay a visit to the ship at any time.

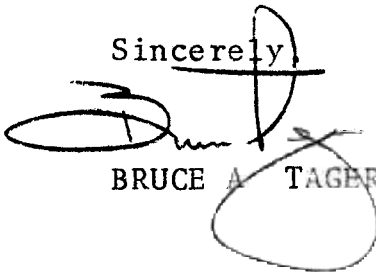
Along this line, I want each of you to correspond directly with me if you would like any questions answered concerning the ship, the Navy, my policies, etc. On many occasions, by doing this, it may be possible to clear up any problems before they get out of hand, and hopefully make you feel a little closer to the ship. Rest assured, any letter I receive will be answered promptly and in confidence.

Many ships have organized enlisted wives' clubs. I would certainly welcome your thoughts along this line, and should you desire to do this, I will assist in every way possible to meet with you and help you get organized. Besides providing an "information" network during periods the ship is operating, it also can provide the basis for worthwhile projects and the opportunity for the MONTICELLO "family" to take care of our own.

March 29th marked the ship's 15th birthday. We held a cake cutting ceremony in the crew's mess, and since this week had been declared by President NIXON as National Week of Concern for Prisoners of War/Missing in Action Week, we prevailed upon the Squadron Chaplain to join with us in prayer for the early and safe return of the some 1,618 American servicemen who are MIA and POW in North Vietnam.

I have rambled on enough for this familygram. I hope to make it a monthly occurrence in the future. In closing, I'd like to officially welcome aboard the families of the crew members who have reported since our return to San Diego.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce A. Tager". The signature is stylized with a large, looped initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline that extends across the name. The name "BRUCE A. TAGER" is printed in a simple, sans-serif font directly below the signature.

BRUCE A. TAGER