

DULUTH GATOR GRAM

Volume 3, Issue 1 of 2

December, 2004

SHIP'S ADDRESS

**USS DULUTH (LPD 6)
FPO AP 96663-1709**

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CDR L. D. Grippin

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

LCDR P. A. Gilmartin

COMMAND MASTER CHIEF

CMDCM (SW/AW) Burrhus

COMMAND OMBUDSMAN

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Group name: LPD6**

FAMILY RESOURCES

NAVY ONE SOURCE	(800) 540-4123
CARELINE	(619) 685-3472
TRICARE SERVICE CENTER	(800) 242-6788
BALBOA PRIME AFTER HRS	(800) 453-0491
FAMILY SERVICES	(619) 556-7404
DUTY CHAPLAIN	(619) 556-1246 x1247
RED CROSS	(619) 291-2620
NMCRS SAN DIEGO	(619) 238-1587

SKIPPER'S CORNER

By CDR L. D. Grippin

Season's Greetings families, friends, and Sailors,

Deployment is upon us, and we are proceeding west on our journey. WEST PAC 2005 marks the culmination of our months of training and preparation, and the fulfillment of our duties and responsibilities as service members in the United States Navy and Marine Corps. The first two weeks have been very successful, as the crew has worked diligently, embarking the LCU, at flight quarters, and during a number of evolutions with other ships in the ESG.

The day of departure, December 6th, was bittersweet, as we bid farewell to loved ones staying behind, and yet looked forward, with enthusiasm, to the opportunity to do our part in the defense of our country, and our ideals. The crew extends a heartfelt thank you in appreciation to the family and friends who showed up to send us off. The support shown was unparalleled and we look forward to seeing you all again on the not-too-distant day of our return.

Life aboard ship has changed somewhat for DULUTH's sailors. More than four hundred of our Marine Corps brethren have embarked the mighty DULUTH for WEST PAC 2005. In addition to more than doubling the population onboard, the Marines have provided additional training opportunities for the crew, a renewed vigor in physical fitness at sea, and countless opportunities for new friendships. We are truly grateful for the hard work and dedication of our Green counterparts, and anticipate the successful collaboration between our two services in the accomplishment of our common goals as one team.

-Continue on page 3-

GREETINGS FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

By Suzanne Faler

Family, friends and Sailors of DULUTH, our DULUTH is underway due to operational commitment and the amount of support we have received from our friends and families have been fantastic. We have a few wives that are starting a Family Group and they are looking for more volunteers if anyone is interested.

I would like to take this opportunity to tell you a little bit about myself. I come from a suburb of Chicago, Illinois, where I have spent most of my life. I am a stay at home mother, with three children and I have been married for three years. I met my husband in Great Lakes Illinois in 1999 and I have been a proud supporter of the US Navy and I am extremely proud of the USS Duluth and the sailors onboard. Over the last few years the OMBUDSMAN have helped me throughout my husbands deployments and I wanted to give back what I have received, which is why I wanted to be your OMBUDSMAN

I am starting to plan for the "halfway" party. I am looking for ideas on ways to raise money to fund our party, so if anyone has any suggestions please contact me at LPD6OMB@yahoo.com.

I'm looking forward to working with all of you. If anyone needs anything, please don't hesitate to call. That's what I'm here for.

You will find a Family Information Form attached to this Newsletter. Please fill out and return to me.

Thank you,
Suzanne Faler
Ombudsman

FROM THE CMC'S DESK...

By CMDCM (SW/AW) Burrhus

As everyone knows we are now underway for WESTPAC. We have spent a lot of time preparing for this deployment, both personally and professionally. I am confident the crew is ready for any task we may face. Now that we are deployed, this monthly Gator Gram will become even more important. To date we have published every submission to this newsletter. If you have not read anything about your Sailor or their division, it's because there has been no submission for that division. The Chaplain and his assistant have taken on the task of assembling this Gator Gram and I personally appreciate the time they spend on this worthwhile task. If you want to read about what your Sailor is doing, please encourage them to submit an article to the Chaplain for this Gator Gram. Finally, I would like to wish all of you a HAPPY and SAFE Holiday season, you're always in our thoughts and prayers.

JOIN THE YAHOO GROUP, TO KEEP UPDATED ON THE DULUTH GATHERINGS AND MUCH MORE!!!

I have had a lot of people asking questions on how to join the group on Yahoo Groups. Here are some basic instructions.

First you must have a yahoo ID...to create an ID, go to www.yahoo.com and click on new users, create ID. After an ID is created, go to www.yahogroups.com and type in LPD6 where it says join a group. The group name will come up, just click on that and follow the prompts.

I post a lot of useful information on this group. It is moderated by me, and messages can be posted. They go through me first for approval. If anyone has any questions on how to sign up, please call my cell phone at 619-994-1705.



Educational Benefits

- Studies prove that the most important thing adults can do in preparing young children for success in school is to read aloud with them.

Uniting Through Reading®

UNITING THROUGH READING®

Amid the clangs, whistles, and other customary sounds you would expect onboard the **USS DULUTH (LPD 6)**, a new sound is being

heard. It is the sound of Sailors reading to their children though they are thousands of miles away. The **USS DULUTH (LPD 6)** is participating in Uniting Through Reading, a program of Family Literacy Foundation, which provides deployed Active Duty personnel the opportunity to read stories aloud on videotape to the special children in their lives back home.

Sailors either select a book from the ship’s onboard library or read a book they have packed with them. They are videotaped reading the book, and then the tape (and book if owned by the Sailor) is sent home to the child who can watch and follow along with a copy of the book. One of the best parts of this program is the opportunity for your child to view the tape over and over again. According to research and Family Literacy Foundation, reading aloud has been shown to be the single best predictor in a child’s future academic success. Encourage your Sailor to participate in Uniting Through Reading and bring their face and voice into your home even when they can’t be there.📖



A Picture Speaks A Thousand Words, But Reading Aloud Is Priceless. Military families of deployed sailors are realizing the many benefits of Family Literacy Foundation’s Uniting Through Reading® program as videos sent home from special sailors become number one hits and provide deployed personnel an opportunity to continue reading stories “together.”

Skippers Corner – Continued from pg. 1

Aloha! The first port visit of WEST PAC 2005 to the beautiful shores of Oahu, Hawaii has already come and gone. The crew of DULUTH, after a first week of fairly rough sea in the Pacific transit, was able to relax for a couple of days in the warm tropical breezes of Honolulu and Waikiki. Sailors and Marines ventured out all over the island attending everything from a golf tournament to the Hale Hoa Luau to the Polynesian Cultural Center to the many restaurants, shops and clubs in Waikiki. Some also made last minute holiday shopping excursions for the family and friends back home. The port visit was a great success and the crew looks forward to ensuing visits in the next few months.

In closing, I’d like to extend my best wishes for the holidays season! Onboard DULUTH, we are celebrating the holiday season in a multitude of ways. Currently underway is a Christmas door decorating contest! There will also be a special meal on Christmas day, and a day of favorite holiday movies being shown on SITE TV. Despite the absence of our crew from the festivities at home, it is hoped that the good cheer and celebration found at Christmas, Hannukah and the ringing in of the New Year is still enjoyed by our family and friends throughout the holiday season! We thank you for your love and support in our absense, and look forward to the many tidings sent from home!

SUPPLY DEPARTMENT

S-1 DIVISION



From top row, left. SK1(SW) Sanchez, SK2(SW) Huizar, SK1(SW) Santiago, SK2(SW) Landman, SK2(SW) Fuhriman, SKC (SW) Canonizado and SK3 Estrada.

Storekeepers manage inventories of repair parts and general supplies that support ships, squadrons, and shore-based activities. They procure, receive, store and issue material and repair components. They utilize financial accounting and database systems to perform inventory and financial management functions.

S-1 Division has been working very hard on the end of fiscal year and preparing for upcoming deployment. Bravo Zulu S-1 DLR custodian SK2 (SW) Huizar for a job well done for getting a no carcass charges for two years in a row and also, Bravo Zulu to SKC(SW)Canonizado on his four years reenlistment. ■

S-2 DIVISION

By CS1 (SW) Resus



CS2(SW) Marco was born in Ohio. He joined the Navy in Dec 1997 he has been in the Navy for seven and a half years. He spent his first tour on board the USS Hewitt DDG(966) were he was the DCPO, JOD and Cook on Watch, from there on he went to Naval Medical Center San Diego were he was in charge of the burial at sea program for the whole West Coast. He then went back to sea duty onboard the USS Duluth. Onboard the ship he is part of the VBSS Team, DCPO, Baker and Watch Captain. He is also active with the children's reading program at Fullerton elementary school. His long term goal is to stay in the Navy and make Master Chief before he retires.



EMFN William J. Kolitagane was born in the Island of Fiji on May 21 1974. He joined the Navy on Feb '04. Barely been in the Navy for less than a year he already have shown the potential of becoming a good leader in the making. He loves playing physical sports like rugby, soccer and volleyball. His long term goal is to take advantage of the opportunity of going back to College, to excell on every challenges and to become a Naval Officer in the near future.



S-3 DIVISION

By DK2 (SW) Han

Sales Division transferred another \$20,000 of ship's store profits to the ship's Morale Welfare and Recreation Fund. Every end of accounting period on 31 Jan, 31 May and 30 Sep,

Sales Team transfers ship's store profits to the Commanding Officer for ship's MWR. These funds are used for the \$50 voucher that is given to each crew member every month, the Gym equipments, Ship's Picnic and Command Sponsored Events. The \$12,000 worth of prizes that will be given away during Duluth's Pre-Deployment Christmas Party are the result of every crew onboard patronizing and buying merchandise in the ship's store and vending machines. Thanks for supporting our MWR.

S-6 DIVISION



Postal clerks operate Navy post offices. Their work is similar to that of civilians who work for the U.S. Postal Service. PCs supervise, organize, and establish or disestablish a Navy post office. They sort and distribute all official and personal mail, manage money order and stamp inventories, and maintain financial and inventory reports.

The duties performed by PCs include: Managing and operating Navy Post Offices, ashore and afloat, sorting and distributing all classes of mail and parcel post, processing and dispatching mail, directing the routing and transportation of mail.

S-4 DIVISION

Article and photo provided by DK2 (SW) Han



Disbursing Clerks maintain personal pay records of military personnel, determine military pay entitlements and deductions, audit pay records, and determine official travel entitlements. DKs also prepare the financial/accounting reports related to individual pay and travel transactions and operate associated accounting systems.

The duties performed by DKs include: maintaining payroll and accounting databases for disbursement and collection of government funds; performing travel claim accounting; preparing financial reports; serving as cashiers to pay government funds; acting as collection agents of money owed to U.S. Treasury by Navy personnel. maintaining and auditing automated teller machines onboard ships; providing pay and entitlement information to individual Navy members. ■



OE DIVISION

By ET3 (SW) Lee

Contrary to popular belief, the toughest job in the Navy isn't getting a ship underway or troubleshooting uncooperative radars. It isn't maintaining electronics at peak condition, rather, it goes to the family and friends who prepared and supported each individual member of the OE division. Words cannot express the appreciation and thanks we, the men of OE division have for our families and friends for supporting us this past year!

As we head off into the Pacific, our first difficult task has been the huge swells rocking the ship. All the hard work and dedication this past year gearing up for WESTPAC has paid off!

For the families and friends, you can expect us coming home safely just as we departed. Furthermore, you can feel proud and certain that the mighty men of OE division will do you proud as we represent the United States in foreign nations.

Lastly, a huge congratulation goes out to our newly frocked FC1(SW) Darjany and ET2(SW) Spotswood for advancing! These two gentlemen have been cornerstones to the vast success of OE division! BRAVO ZULU!

DULUTH GATHERINGS

Our first Picnic gathering was a success. If we missed you at this one. There are more to come: Activities and Fun for all. **If your Sailor is away this is for you!**

Gatherings filled with fun activities, meet new friends, kids meet new playmates, support each other during this time of Deployment.

Meet The Ombudsman!

Our next Gathering is in January. Invitation for all to come and have some fun and meet new friends.

What: Care packages assembly for all of the Duluth Sailors

Where: Murphy Canyon Chapel

When: January 8th, 2005 at 1:00 pm

Location: 3200 Santo Road, Murphy Canyon, CA

Since it is an expense to send these packages, we are asking for a small donation to help send these packages to our Duluth Sailors. Please come and enjoy this time together. We know you have a sailor on the Duluth, show them how much you care and are thinking about them. Any questions about this event please contact Gena Teel at 619-258-8810. We hope to see you there!



P-1 DIVISION

ENS Dreyer, Division Officer

We're on our way and P-1 is off to a great start with a flawless light off and four days, and counting, of steaming without a hitch (knock on wood). These last couple of days we've been taking bigger swells than we normally encounter in the Southern California Operation Area and the ship has been taking some heavy rolls. Fortunately, you don't feel much of the Ocean all the way down in the Pit.

Some happenings around and about P-1 division: MM2 Ferris was frocked Second Class Petty Officer prior to deployment and has been every bit the model of a Second Class. Fireman Villa has been seen around the ship working on his ESWS qualification and was recently qualified BTOW along with MM3 Brown. MM3 Rubio also qualified MMOW. New additions from USS SACRAMENTO, Petty Officer's Mendoza and 'Birddog' Labrador, have been exceeding expectations and are quickly getting qualified. Third Class Mendoza looks to get his Fireman Upper Level while Third Class Labrador looks good for Machinist Mate Lower Level. Congratulations guys!

Petty Officer Ries has been putting the extra few centimeters of his middle right digit to use fishing tools out of the bilge and writing emails to his new bride Monica Ries. Also tying the knot before deployment was Fireman Gaud. Congratulations Jesus and Iliana Gaud!

Everyone in the Engineering Department aboard USS DULUTH was happy to hear that Ricky Brown III is finally right where he ought to be- at home with his mother. The DULUTH family can breathe easy; all reports indicate young Rick Brown III looks to be a very promising Machinist Mate.

Everything's going as well as it could now and everyone in P-1 would like to thank our family and friends for their love and support.

1ST DIVISION

By ENS Amerine, Division Officer

Things have been pretty busy around 1st Division with deployment preparations, but now that we are on our way, we can actually take some time to relax. It's a long way to the Persian Gulf, and we are making the most of this time by training, catching up on qualifications, and keeping in touch with all of you! We would like to give well-deserved congratulations to BM2 John Ruiz-Guerrero for recently earning his ESWS pin. It takes a tremendous amount of time and knowledge to achieve this qualification, testifying to BM2 Ruiz-Guerrero's efforts towards being a successful sailor. A hearty "Welcome Aboard!" goes out to the new Seamen of 1st Division: SN Gray, SN Johnson, SN Marcaida, SN Rist, SN Dressler, SN Penn, and SN Saquipulla. We look forward to befriending and working with the newest sailors aboard the DULUTH. All of us in 1st Division would like to wish all of our loved ones a safe and happy holiday season and we will be thinking of all of you as we continue on with our voyage.

2ND DIVISION

ENS Nunez, Division Officer

2nd Division continues to achieve its goals allowing nothing to stand in our way. Over the last few weeks we've worked very hard preparing for deployment including the loading of Marine Service Support Group 15, preserving spaces, acquiring supplies and many other demanding tasks. Everything was successfully completed and we're ready to carry out our mission. The men of 2nd Division send our best regards to our loved ones back home and we hope to here from you all soon. Be safe out there and please don't forget us.

A hearty "Welcome Aboard!" goes out to the new Seamen of 2nd Division: SN Rector, SN Williams, SN Trujillo, SN Cascas, SN Iracheta, and SN Vasquez. We look forward to molding and working with these sailors aboard the DULUTH. We also want to congratulate our newly frocked personnel BM1 Ross and BM3 Richmond. Good job to those guys.

REPAIR DIVISION

By MRFA Salis

The Repair Division of the USS Duluth has numerous tasks that we collectively complete to ensure that the ships' mission is a success. With the recent increase in turnover of the crew, training seems to be the order of the day. Training and instruction are vital to the safety of the crew as well as the ship. "R" Division personnel have the added responsibility of training all hands in proper fire fighting techniques, flooding control, as well as chemical, biological, and radiological defense. The personnel of "R" Division are comprised of Machinery Repairmen, Hull Technicians, and Damage Controlmen. In preparation for our upcoming deployment, all tasks left uncompleted must be finished in their entirety to ensure our vessel is operating to her utmost efficiency. Some tasks require round the clock efforts to complete.

Our newest member of the HT shop, HT1 Auffenkamp, made an emergency repair to a steam line in number two main machinery room, securing a potentially dangerous steam leak. In addition to our daily duties, training requires a moderate portion of our schedule as well. DC3 Cheesbrough and DCFN Medinasanchez have been assigned the task of training our newest members of the ships' company in Main Space fire fighting techniques. Each division contributes in numerous ways to keep the USS Duluth in excellent working condition to spite her age. In helping one another, we ensure teamwork to achieve even the most difficult of goals.

Thank you for all of your support and understanding, and rest assured that Repair Division will strive to perfect and protect all hands at all times.

DULUTH GATOR GRAM

Volume 3, Issue 2 of 2

December 2004

WEAPONS DIVISION

DIVISION OFFICER: LTJG McINNIS

Happy Holidays from everyone in weapons division. We, in Weapons Division, are all very excited about this upcoming deployment which includes mess deck karaoke nights, movies and popcorn on the mess decks and possibly a few steel beach picnics/beer days? Unfortunately, Weapons Division has recently lost three individuals to transfers. However, we have picked up two sailors to help out with ammunition and working with the gun mounts which exist for the ship's defense.

Bravo Zulus go out to GM2 Lynch and GM1 Bates for earning their ESWS qualification. Ensign McInnis has been advanced to LTJG and GM3 Mullen has been advanced to GM2. GMSN Newlin has recently graduated from the Navy's Armed Sentry School and GM2 Mullen has graduated, recently, from the Navy's Surface Rescue Swimmer School. We would like to say fare winds and following seas to our departed shipmates. GM2 Lynch is on his way to shore duty in Everett, Washington. GM1 Bates unfortunately had to leave for medical reasons. We wish him luck in his last year until his retirement. GM3 Fosco decided to get out of the Navy and go back to his wife and son in Chicago, Illinois. SN Vaughn has left the ship and we wish him all the success in whatever happens.

All in all, it has been a very busy, yet successful past couple of months for Weapons Division on board the Duluth. We are very excited as to what is in store for our division and the rest of the command as we head in to our upcoming deployment.

P-2 Division

By ENS Daly, Division Officer

Over the past few weeks the men of P-2 Division have been working around the clock to prepare #2 Main Machinery Room for a six month deployment. A lot of people do not realize how much maintenance and work go into such an event. The boiler, Main Engine, two turbine generators(which power the whole ship) and all associated equipment have to run for six straight months, 24 weeks, 168 days, and 4032 hours. While the rest of the ship were able to have a stand-down or tropical hour leave period, the men of P-2 opened, inspected, preserved and hydro-tested the entire boiler to ensure it would be ready for what was to come, WESTPAC 2005.

P-2 Division would like to extend a warm welcome to MMC Welch and MM3 Bagely, who came to us right before WESTPAC for some extra manpower. We would also like to wish MM2 Castillo a happy and healthy retirement as he moves back to Texas with his family, the USS Duluth and the United States Navy appreciate his 20 years of dedicated service and wish him and his family a happy retirement.

WESTPAC got off very smoothly, starting with the light off of the main engines. Once again the men of P-2, had to go a little above and beyond their duties and light off(start) #2 boiler early Sunday morning. Following a great light-off, it was time to say good-bye and the mighty warship, USS Duluth hit the high seas. Sometimes no news is good news for the men who sail below, as they stand watch and work endless hours to make sure all equipment is running as smoothly as possible so the USS Duluth could continue to complete its mission for the United States Navy. "Ships that can no longer steam are not a weapon, they are

AUXILIARY **DIVISION**

By ENS Corcoran, Division Officer

WESTPAC 2004 has gotten off to a busy start! Auxiliary division was recently notified that they were to partake in the Division in the Spotlight Program. Copious amounts of time have been sacrificed in order to prepare the division's spaces, uniforms, and training logs for this event. So far, the evaluation has proven successful due to the enormous effort of the division's 14 personnel. Members of the division spend their rare free time furthering their indepth qualifications, working out at the gym, and occasionally participating in shipboard karaoke. Recent highlights include the promotion of both Daniel Flynn and Daniel McCloud to Engineman Second Class as well as MM2 Jose Munoz receiving his Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist (ESWS) pin. Although only underway for a little while, the members of Auxiliary division miss their family and friends and wish them the best for the upcoming holidays.

A Message from Admin...

<https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/address/index.jsp>

The above World Wide Web address is link to DEERS website where you can update your INFO (i.e. Address and Phone number). Saves you time going to PSD. However, this website does not give you an option to ENROLL Dependents. You will still need to go to a DEERS Facility in order to add dependents and provide documentations.

**Always update your info when you transfer or a
change of address occurs.**

Greetings from **E-Division!**

ENS Thompson, Division Officer

The last few months have been hectic for Duluth and the division. We have completed all of our training exercises and now we are on our way. The training was tough and exhausting, but it paid off. E-Division is ready for deployment. The last few weeks have been filled with numerous tasks to be completed prior to setting sail. The division completed all of the jobs aiding in Duluth's readiness for the upcoming deployment.

Leaving for deployment was hard for the division as we all leave behind family and friends. Our thoughts are with our loved ones as we travel the ocean blue. In the meantime, everyone is trying to keep busy and look forward to the future port visits. Between standing watch and trying to relax, get some sleep, and work on qualifications the deployments should go by quickly. The next 6 months will be over and done with before we know it and we'll return home safely.

Congratulations goes out to all of the new Third Class Petty Officers in E-Division as well as the rest of those who moved up in rank on Duluth. EM3 Rodriguez, EM3 Barraza, EM3 Abella, EM3 Kolitagande, and EM3 Saunders deserve a big hand for all of their hard work.

Stay tuned f
Division. news from E



A DIFFERENT CHRISTMAS POEM

Submitted by ET1 (SW) Teel

The embers glowed softly, and in their dim light,
I gazed round the room and I cherished the sight.

My wife was asleep, her head on my chest,
my daughter beside me, angelic in rest.

Outside the snow fell, a blanket of white,
transforming the yard to a winter delight.

The sparkling lights in the tree I believe,
Completed the magic that was Christmas Eve.

My eyelids were heavy, my breathing was deep,
Secure and surrounded by love I would sleep.
In perfect contentment, or so it would seem,
so I slumbered, perhaps I started to dream.

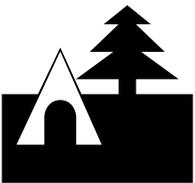
The sound wasn't loud, and it wasn't too near,
but I opened my eyes when it tickled my ear.

Perhaps just a cough, I didn't quite know,
then the sure sound of footsteps outside in the
snow.

My soul gave a tremble, I struggled to hear,
and I crept to the door just to see who was near.
Standing out in the cold and the dark of the night,
a lone figure stood his face weary and tight.

A soldier, I puzzled, some twenty years old,
Perhaps a Marine, huddled here in the cold.

Alone in the dark, he looked up and smiled,
Standing watch over me, and my wife and my child.



Continued -



"What are you doing?" I asked without fear,
"Come in this moment, it's freezing out here!
Put down your pack, brush the snow from your
sleeve,
you should be at home on a cold Christmas Eve!"

For barely a moment I saw his eyes shift,
Away from the cold and the snow blown in
drifts...

To the window that danced with a warm fire's
light

then he sighed and he said "Its really all right,
I'm out here by choice. I'm here every night."

"It's my duty to stand at the front of the line
that separates you from the darkest of times.

No one had to ask or beg or implore me,
I'm proud to stand here like my fathers before me.

My Gramps died at 'Pearl on a day in December,
" Then he sighed, "That's a Christmas
'Gram always remembers."

My dad stood his watch in the jungles of 'Nam',
and now it is my turn and so, here I am.

I've not seen my own son in more than a while,
but my wife sends me pictures, he's sure got her
smile.

Then he bent and he carefully pulled from his bag,
the red, white, and blue... an American flag.

Continued from pg. 3 – Different Christmas poem

"I can live through the cold and the
being alone,

Away from my family, my house and my
home.

I can stand at my post through the rain and
the sleet;

I can sleep in a fighting hole with little to
eat.

I can carry the weight of killing another,
Or lay down my life with my sister and
brother.

Who stand at the front against any and all,
To ensure for all time that this flag will not
fall."

"So go back inside," he said, "harbor no
fright,
your family is waiting and I'll be all right."

"But isn't there something I can do, at the
least,

"Give you money," I asked, "or prepare you
a feast?"

It seems all too little for all that you've done,
for being away from your wife and your
son."

Then his eye welled a tear that held no
regret,

"Just tell us you love us, and never forget.

To fight for our rights back at home while
we're gone,

to stand your own watch, no matter how
long.

For when we come home, either standing or
dead,

to know you remember we fought and we
bled.

THE SANDS OF CHRISTMAS

Submitted by BM2 Mason

I had no Christmas spirit when I breathed a weary sigh,

And looked across the table where the bills were piled
too high.

The laundry wasn't finished and the car I had to fix,
My stocks were down another point, the Dolphins lost
by six.

And so with only minutes till my son got home from
school,

I gave up on the drudgery and grabbed a wooden stool.
The burdens that I carried were about all I could take,
And so I flipped the TV on to catch a little break.

I came upon a desert scene in shades of tan and rust,
No snowflakes hung upon the wind, just clouds of
swirling dust.

And where the reindeer should have stood before a
laden sleigh,

Eight hummers ran a column right behind an M1A.

A group of boys walked past the tank, not one was past
his teens,
Their eyes were hard as polished flint, their faces drawn
and lean.

They walked the street in armor with their rifles
shouldered tight,
Their dearest wish for Christmas, just to have a silent
night.

Other soldiers gathered, hunkered down against the
wind,
To share a scrap of mail and dreams of going home
again.

There wasn't much at all to put their lonely hearts at
ease,
They had no Christmas turkey, just a pack of MRE's.

They didn't have a garland or a stocking I could see,
They didn't need an ornament-- they lacked a Christmas
Tree.

They didn't have a present even though it was tradition,
The only boxes I could see were labeled "ammunition".

The Sands of Christmas - Continued

There's nothing wrong, my little son, for safe we sleep
tonight,
Our heroes stand on foreign land to give us all the
right,
To worry about the things in life that really mean
nothing at all,
Instead of wondering each day if we will be the next to
fall.

He looked at me as children do and said it's always
right,
To thank the ones who help us and perhaps that we
should write.
And so we pushed aside the bills and sat to draft a
note,
To thank the many far from home, and this is what we
wrote.

God bless you all and keep you safe, and speed your
way back home.
Remember that we love you so, and that you're not
alone.
The gift you give, you share with all, a present every
day,
You give the gift of liberty and that we can't repay.

CALLING ALL **SCRAPBOOKERS!**

**Bring your family photos and come scrap
with us!**

January 13th from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
At Leslie Eriksens house in Santee.

RSVP to Leslie at:

Pebbles@hisurfer.net <<mailto:Pebbles@hisurfer.net>>

and she will send you directions. 



WEBSITES AND OTHER INFORMATION RESOURCES FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

Marine Corps/Navy/Army/Air Forces Times

www.militarycity.com

Military Information Site

www.homestead.com/katydo/milinfo.html

Military Health Insurance

www.tricare.osd.mil/

American Red Cross

www.redcross.org

Military Spouse Web Site

www.cinhouse.com

Military Child Education Coalition

www.militarychild.org

Federal Children's Scholarship Fund

www.fedscholarship.org

Crafts and children's activities

<http://family.go.com/crafts>

DOD site – Military Base Sites Packages

www.dmdc.osd.mil

VA Educational Benefits

www.GIBILL.va.gov

Navy One Source

www.navyonesource.com

Fleet & Family Support Center

www.cnrsw.navy.mil/fsc

Chaplain's Column

By LT. Cameron, Command Chaplain

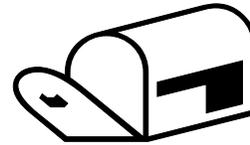
“We make a living by what we get – we make a life by what we give.”

“Andrew Carnegie is considered by most historians to be one of the richest and most ruthless of the ‘robber barons’ who flourished at the beginning of the twentieth century. His lasting legacy, however, is as *a man who gave.*”

Some 2,505 libraries bear his name, and they are only a small part of his philanthropic effort. In his later years, Carnegie once demanded of his accountants, “How much have I given away so far?” The accountants knew down to the last dollar; “\$324,657,399 to be exact.” Carnegie blinked and gulped when he heard the figure. And then he recovered from his own astonishment to exclaim, “Good heavens, where did I get all that money?” Statues are not sculpted in honor of misers. Monuments are not erected in memory of those who have a reputation for stinginess. Names of honor are not given to those who hoard. One of the best ways to make it into the annals of history, as well as into the goodwill of others, is to be a person noted for generosity.” God’s Little Devotional Book for Leaders

The holiday season (sometimes) has a way of stimulating our generosity to the extent of compulsive spending beyond our means. May our lives be characterized by a lifestyle of generosity, not by a holiday season. May we always give our best year-round; the gift of peace, kindness, joy, faith, friendship, spirituality, unconditional love, faithfulness, and self control, for these extend beyond a ‘holiday season’ into the very fibers of who we are in relationship with others.

God’s Grace be with you throughout the new year.



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The United States Postal Service is offering free packing materials to Spouses and families of military members who are deployed overseas. To take advantage of this service call: 1-800-610-8734 and press 1 for English & then 0 for an operator and they will send you the free packing materials. These products are to be used to mail care packages to service members. Call the number and within seconds you will talk to a United States Postal worker who will take the name and address of your family member and send to them a box of materials for FREE that should be arriving in 10 days. Included are 5 large boxes (12x12x8), 5 small boxes (7x7x5), tape, customs forms, and mailing labels for all.



Happy Holidays!

*From Sailors and Marines
onboard USS DULUTH (LPD 6)*