

Cruise Narrative

"The use of travel is to regulate the imagination by reality, so instead of thinking what things are, to see what they are."

Historians tell us that there have been three events in our time that have had a profound effect on our lives; the discovery of fire, the invention of the printing press and the harnessing of nuclear energy. To these a fourth may now be added...USS YANCEY's Mediterranean cruise, 1963.

May 7th became the zenith of months of preparation, anxiety and, most of all, hard work by all the crew. The YANCEY, under command of Captain C.B. HIBBEN, left her home port of Norfolk, Virginia, proceeding to Morehead City, North Carolina. It was here that the accompaniment of Marines and equipment was loaded. Memories of this short stop include the constant rush, and little sleep. BLT 1/6 was now a part of us.

On 9 May the ship made its way into the Atlantic for the twelve day crossing to Rota, Spain, our first stop. Rota is always on the go. Everyone is either happy to get there or anxious to leave. It was here that the YANCEY, as a part of Amphibious Squadron TWELVE, relieved Amphibious Squadron SIX and became a member of the United States SIXTH Fleet.

Passing through the Straits of Gibraltar, the YANCEY set course for Alcudia Bay in the Balearic Islands south of Spain where our first amphibious landing was staged. On 27 May we steamed to Palermo, Sicily. The first liberty call on Italian soil began at 1600, 29 May, at Palermo.

Amphibious Squadron TWELVE set to the sea again on 3 June, this time for a stop at Souda Bay, Crete. Souda Bay was quiet. From Crete we travelled to Kavalla, southern Greece, and spent the better part of two weeks at hard work. The Marines left the YANCEY and "ran through the bushes where even the Greeks wouldn't go".

On 22 June the anchor dropped off of Rhodes, Greece. Rhodes was a welcome sight after the weeks at sea, underway replenishments, and the landings. Four days were spent in Rhodes and two days at sea with the YANCEY anchored at Piraeus, Greece, better known then as Athens, our destination. Athens....lots to see, very hot weather, time spent shopping and on the beach. Many of the crew will remember Athens as one of our best liberty ports.

On 5 July we departed Athens for Pilos, Greece and two weeks of intensive training. Pilos....up early, work hard, swim call, and a beach party.

With the Straits of Messina at our backs, Naples was at our 'doorstep'. We braved the treacherous bay and saw Naples for 7 days. Rome and Pompeii were visited along with trips to the Isle of Capri.

Two days journey and we were in Livorno, Italy, an industrial city to the north. Livorno was a base of departure for Genoa, Florence, Rome, and the beach. On 10 August the YANCEY sailed to Porto Scudo, Sardinia for amphibious landings. Here were spent 10 hot days in making the YANCEY an extra sharp units. They paid many rewards in the future Operational Readiness Inspection.

Cannes was a short distance to the north; we arrived there on 23 August. Tours were taken to Nice, Monaco, Monte Carlo, the Maritime Alps and...Paris. Cannes...pretty girls, beautiful scenery, and high prices.

We exchanged Francs for Pesetas and dropped anchor at Barcelona, Spain, on 31 August. There were many attractions in Barcelona...Bullfights, dancers and a millenium of shops for the souvenir hunters.

Catania, Sicily, was the last liberty port. On 20 September, following two weeks of Operations at Aranci Bay, Sardinia, the YANCEY moored within sight of Mount Etna. It was here that our People to People program promoted good will through educational material given to the San Giuseppi Orphanage.

Steaming from Catania the YANCEY wove through the maze of islands to Turkey to participate in Operation SOUTH-TRAP 63 with United Nations Forces.

The last days of September found us heading for Rota, the last stop on foreign soil. Back again to the refueling station to be relieved by Amphibious Squadron TWO. The YANCEY bid farewell to Rita on 6 October and steamed for Morehead City, North Carolina.

On the morning of 15 October the process was reversed. Farewell to BLT 1/6 and their cargo. On Thursday, 17 October, the YANCEY returned to Norfolk, home again.