

Sailing the Atlantic is something one does not forget. We missed any truly rough weather. The entire crossing as I recall was clear and windy. The sort of whitecaps and ocean color gave an unusual feeling of emotional liberty and cleared the mind. When I say we had no rough weather I mean we had eight to ten foot seas at all times. As rough as it got means an occasional wave washing over the fantail or breaking over the bow. Generally clear skies sometimes providing a harmony of contrasting clouds to the whitecaps. The days succeeded each other rapidly due to their near identical face.

We cleared Gibraltar at night so no big deal. By the time we got into the Mediterranean we started getting messages on the ship's closed circuit television about the doings in Beirut. The things we heard made it sound like a war was going on or about to break out. At first we didn't care, but after a day or two we started to believe we'd get into some sort of action. The guys talked about the effectiveness of the Exocet missiles and the crumby defenses we had for that sort of attack. The first time we went to condition three was when we steamed by Libya. It was a year after we downed a couple of their jets. So the coastal navigation boundaries didn't get too wide we steamed by there a mile or two than Libya liked. We tested the line for a day or so with no incident. The crew got to play war and went to general quarters, the fear was schizophrenic with the news we had on Beirut and the fantastic scuttlebutt the crew was inclined to engage in. Nothing happened.

Greece was to be our reward after changing the guard, or as we changed the station with the prior carrier group. Everybody looked forward to spending some of the pay they had collected. That little dream never came to pass. Due to the turmoil in Beirut we had to station the ship in the Mediterranean and steam around until we found out we were need to evacuate American citizens or perform some other service. We stayed out long enough that the usual underway replenishments of fuel were now supplemented with high line transfers of supplies, food mostly. This all meant that nearly the whole crew had to turn to practically everyday for extra work parties. A ship such as the Vreeland refuels every two to three days so the engineering hands were constantly dogged out between unreps, highlines, and engineering duties that piled up with extra demands on their time. It was no fun at all, except in a sick masochistic way. The sailors were physically taxed to the maximum and you can truly understand how verb lay got it's connotation in naval life. If you get three or four hours sleep daily for three or four days running you hardly

man stations or report, but truly lay to whatever station your duties are at. So when they announce so-and-so lay here or there that is basically the condition the poor soul arrives in. Pain seems to be replaced with another sensation when you are overworked in this manner and it isn't an exhilaration by any means. I think a sort of mental void forms as you are constantly exhausted in this manner. If the ship's rocking you naturally learn how to use the momentum of the rocking to pry you from your bunk.

The Mediterranean is a calm sea. We didn't encounter a storm the entire time we were on station out there. It got hot enough in the fireroom and 140F was seen frequently. Down in engineering we had no idea what was going on the month or so we cruised around the Med, but the area we placed under surveillance all sound good for liberty. We sailed in the Aegean the Tyrrhenian, and it all looks the same on the water. We couldn't pull in, the guys mumbled that the captain was a duty grabber trying to impress the commodore or