

U.S.S. GEARING (DD710)
Care of the Fleet Post Office
New York, New York

At Sea
13 January 1961

Dear Friends of the GEARING:

This is "Familygram" number four of our South Atlantic AMITY cruise to Africa and South America.

Our last Familygram was mailed from Freetown, Sierra Leone on 21 December 1960. Before departing Freetown a 30 man Christmas Caroling Group was organized. The evening of 22 December the group sang for several of the government officials at their homes and were warmly received.

Our schedule was changed on 22 December so that GEARING and VOGELGESANG departed Freetown on the 23rd for Dakar, Senegal. Dakar is about 450 miles northwest of Freetown and we arrived in the Capital of the Republic of Senegal on Christmas eve. There were protestant and catholic services on board in Dakar Christmas eve and everyone was attempting to get into the Christmas spirit. The weatherman cooperated by having the temperature go down to 60°F (our coolest weather since we arrived in Africa).

Christmas morning saw Chaplain Davis (Lieutenant, Chaplain Corps) present an excellent service aboard GEARING for the protestant personnel. An English-speaking priest from Dakar came aboard the VOGELGESANG to conduct confession and mass. The Supply Department went all-out for Christmas dinner. All hands walked away from the mess deck well fed. Several of the men met French sailors and Senegalese Soldiers ashore 24 December and invited them aboard for Christmas dinner.

The ship received air mail twice in Dakar. As your "GEARING-MAN" has probably told you, our incoming mail service has not been very good during much of this cruise. This is due to the fact that there are no regular U.S. Navy or U.S. Air Force flights into this area and all air mail has to be routed through foreign airlines. The Fleet Post Office in New York has tried to ensure delivery of one shipment of mail in each port, but this has been difficult to accomplish. Several flights have been cancelled and a strike by AIR FRANCE pilots didn't help our already poor mail schedule. (We rendezvoused with COMSOLANT, RADM REED, in Bathurst and we hope that he will be able to take some action to improve the mail service). The ship has received parcel post via surface transportation twice since our arrival in Africa. I recommend you use air parcel post if you want to send a package to your "GEARING-MAN".

GEARING and VOGELGESANG departed Dakar 29 December and arrived in Conakry, Guinea on 30 December. Guinea obtained independence (from France) in 1958 and is one of the leaders of the "neutralist group" of nations in Africa. They have received considerable assistance from Russia, Communist China, Czechoslovakia and other iron curtain countries. Our reception in Conakry was not as warm as in other African cities visited. The government, while outwardly friendly, did not appear to make an effort to let visitors in the dock area, etc. Many iron curtain citizens were seen in the streets, in the hotels and clubs of Conakry. The combined GEARING - VOGELGESANG basketball team lost to the national team of Guinea in a very close game. Even at this sports event a lack of "western influence" was apparent.

The coach of the Guinea team was Hungarian and the basketball used by the local team was made in Poland.

We departed Conakry on 1 January 1961 heading for the Portuguese Colony of Cape Verde Islands. We arrived in Praia, the capital of the islands, on 6 January. The people of Praia were quite eager to make friends with Americans. The islands have belonged to Portugal since their discovery in 1460. The economy of the country is mostly agricultural. Main exports are coffee, tropical fruits, tobacco, sugar cane and sweet potatoes. The ship anchored out during our stay in Praia which resulted in only a few of the local citizens coming aboard to visit. Several of the crew (led by STOVER SKI) took an interesting hike into the mountains just outside of town. The government provided transportation for 75 men to take a four-hour tour of the island. The ship provided a box lunch for our tourists to eat while enjoying the scenic beauty of the island.

GEARING and VOGELGESANG departed Praia on 9 January and headed for the Coast of Africa. We arrived in Bathurst, Gambia the morning of 12 January. Bathurst is the capital of the British colony and protectorate of Gambia, and is about 100 miles southwest of Dakar, Senegal.

As you have probably read in your newspaper, our task force now consists of the landing ship dock HERMITAGE (RADM REED's flagship), the landing ship tank GRAHAM COUNTY, the oiler NESPELEN and the destroyers VOGELGESANG and GEARING. RADM Reed is Commander South Atlantic Force and Commander Task Force 88. Captain E. F. Porter (in GEARING) is Deputy, Commander South Atlantic Force.

As previously reported in the wire service dispatches, the task force has several hundred marines aboard the HERMITAGE and the GRAHAM COUNTY. These marines are also participating in the People-to-People program with amphibious demonstrations, parades, etc. Marines are normally carried by all landing ships. They will give demonstrations of amphibious landing to the new nations of Africa. Five marine helicopters aboard HERMITAGE will be utilized for air assault demonstrations, delivery of medicines and books to hospitals and schools in the interior and other worthwhile projects.

The American Embassy in Dakar, Senegal has the additional responsibility for Bathurst. The American Ambassador and his wife came down to meet the Task Force upon our arrival 12 January. GEARING had previously had the pleasure of rendering honors to Ambassador Villard when he came aboard in Dakar.

Many of the men received invitations to dinner from the European Community in Bathurst. The crew found the city to be small but one of the friendliest.

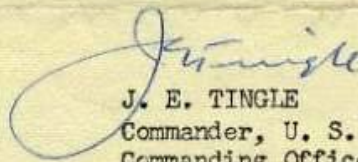
On 14 January 1961, the HERMITAGE and the GRAHAM COUNTY received orders to proceed to the Congo and report to the United Nations Command. The mission of the two ships was to provide transportation from the Congo for the troops of one African republic which decided to withdraw its forces from the present United Nations Operation. Prior to sailing, each ship transferred U.S. Marines to the two destroyers and the tanker in order to have more space available for the "troop lift" out of the Congo. GEARING received a marine First Lt. and 42 enlisted marines. They will stay aboard ship for an indefinite period. The marines have been integrated into the various berthing compartments and the watch bill with our men. The marines certainly are enthusiastic about being aboard a destroyer. We have received information that we will tentatively arrive in Charleston, S.C. about mid-April. Naturally this is subject to change, but I will advise you immediately if there is any deviation from the above date. GEARING should be assigned 30 days "leave and upkeep" after arrival

in Charleston. I hope most of the men will be able to take leave.

Our next scheduled port is Cotonou, Dahomey. We will be in Cotonou from 26 to 28 January. Dahomey is a former French colony and is now an independent republic and a member of the United Nations.

I hope all of you had a very pleasant holiday season. I wish we could send some of this pleasant weather to you - the present temperature is 81°F.

Best regards,



J. E. TINGLE
Commander, U. S. Navy
Commanding Officer