

USS KASKASKIA (AO-27)

Fleet Post Office

New York, New York

OPERATION OF KASKASKIA; MARCH 1965

Dear KASKASKIA Family:

Our last KASKASKIAGRAM came to you from Naples: Since then we've had far from a lazy month although we've spent most of our time just fueling around. (Pardon).

We departed Naples on the twelfth after a two week stay. As we steamed south, the weather deteriorated, and judging from our two months' experience with this fickle Mediterranean weather, we assumed we were steaming into a violent storm. However, the weather proved to be not too severe, and we took this good omen as a sign that spring and the end of the stormy season had arrived. In the past three weeks, the total time we've had waves breaking over the decks has been less than a day. This is a gloriously welcome change.

From the fourteenth until the twenty seventh, when we entered Brindisi, we spent most of our time fueling, and quite a feat of fueling it was! We fueled forty three ships, the greater part of them in four days, and pumped some 4,559,940 gallons of petroleum products to our customer ships. If all this oil were placed in an ordinary garden hose, the hose would be long enough to go around the world with enough hose left over to reach both the North and South Poles from Jacksonville. In addition to fueling we handled 50 tons of deck cargo that were distributed simultaneously to ships that came alongside for fuel.

On the fifteenth, we accomplished a possible naval first: we rearmed the ammunition ship, USS GREAT SITKIN (AE-17) and were simultaneously refueled by her, completely reversing the missions of the two ships.

Although our rearming of the GREAT SITKIN was in earnest...we gave her nearly a ton of 40MM saluting ammunition...however the refueling was a tongue in cheek affair. She transferred a one quart bottle of black oil to us on the phone/distance line, the oil was ceremoniously poured into our number four port wing tank by LT Long and Chief Kovacic and scrupulously observed by both Commanding Officers. The event was duly noted and a report of it will appear in a forthcoming issue of "All Hands" magazine.

Two days later, we pulled into Augusta Bay, Sicily, for a fuel lift and a fleet conference. We moored to a buoy at 0800, and at 1100 received a message that we would have a surprise administrative inspection in four hours. The Commander, Service Force SIXTH Fleet and his team of inspectors came aboard at 1500, gave us a thorough going over, and departed. The affair smacked vaguely of one of the Mediterranean storms. Brrr! The results of the inspection are public now and all hands and all departments made an excellent showing. The following day, most of the fleet steamed off and we shifted berths to the fueling piers. While we were filling up with oil, we had a ship's picnic at the athletic field of the Italian Naval Base in Augusta Bay. The afternoon was spent in football, softball, soccer, eating, spectating, and other athletic endeavors. Our football game at Augusta Bay had an international flavor. We were joined by a dozen or so Italian sailors who, although they had never played the game before, picked it up quite rapidly and even developed a style of their own. After the first two plays, when the ball carrier was tackled con gusto, the Italians introduced a rugby style lateral pass into their plays. The ball carrier about to be tackled would pass the ball to his nearest paisano, and the ball passed from hand to hand like a hot potato.

We may have started a football fad at Augusta Bay, but we doubt that American style football will ever replace soccer there. The highlight of the afternoon, the five hundred meter footrace around an oval track was won by First Division's own Woodrow "Cut Across" Edwards, Jr. It seems that "Cut Across" had been in races all his life but had never won a race until the afternoon of our picnic when he devised an ingenious strategem. He stayed with the pack for the first two hundred meters, and then cut across the infield to finish ahead of everyone. Devilishly clever, that "Cut Across"...no?

We left Augusta Bay on the nineteenth and nursing our aches, pains, bruises and tired bodies steamed north through the Strait of Messina and past the volcanic island of Stromboli. We hoped to see the volcano erupting, but we discovered to our disappointment that the volcano is apparently turned off until the tourist season begins in May.

We pumped off most of our fuel during the next three hectic days, and then returned to Augusta Bay for another fuel lift and another picnic. During our brief stay, we were visited by a group of our Italian football friends. Italian sailors Barusco, Petrungaro, De Marchi, Favelli, Brandi, Toniolo, Rea, Speciani, Iaccarino, Bina, Massetani, Panico, Di Carlo, and Ciancarelli toured KASKASKIA while we took aboard fuel. Of the fourteen, only one had ever been aboard a ship. Our second Augusta Bay picnic was as much fun as the first, and "Cut Across" Edwards won a five hundred meter race this time without cutting across. The highlight of this picnic was the "sandbox tournament". The kings of the sandbox were Theodore Nemic, SK3, Julian D. Royal, SN, and Maurice Kemble, EM3.

Again nursing sore muscles, etc we left August Bay on the twenty-fifth with a full load, (of fuel that is) low in the water but steady as a rock.

The next day we fueled the SIXTH Fleet flagship, USS SPRINGFIELD. The SPRINGFIELD was to act as a target for some Italian torpedo boats and destroyers that evening, and during the refueling, it was decided that we would act as a decoy for the SPRINGFIELD. We took over the SPRINGFIELD's plan of intended movement which had been announced to the Italians, and at 2200 were attacked by the Italians. We were attacked and sunk by mistake, but the SPRINGFIELD, which was darkened and hiding in our shadow took off to attack the torpedo boats. She lobbed star shells over the Italian ships, and the exercise terminated with the SPRINGFIELD alone remaining afloat.

We and the Italians picked ourselves up off the bottom and steamed into Brindisi the next day.

Brindisi is a small, quiet town on the top of the heel of the Italian boot. The town is on the east coast of Italy on the Adriatic Sea. It is an agricultural town, quite different from the industrial centers we are used to seeing in the Mediterranean. Ten minutes from the fleet landing, one can see long rows of grape vines and olive trees, and men guiding horse drawn plows. This area of Italy, known as the Mezzogiorno, is becoming industrialized: One can see from the harbor an oil refining complex larger than the city of Brindisi itself. The complex itself employs 14,000 Italians.

We were the first ship in Brindisi in six months and consequently received quite a welcome.

At each port the Commanding Officer calls on the national and local officials and dignitaries and in Brindisi was so well received that he wrote the following comments to the Commander SIXTH Fleet: (1) In meeting with Commandante Bartoli and his officers, I was particularly impressed with their affability and desire to please us.

(2) The Commandante arranged a joint tour for Italian and American enlisted men; extended use of a water barge, a garbage barge and two tugs at no charge; provided crane and lighterage service at no charge, and in general provided the most friendly and reasonable assistance we have experienced to date. (3) The friendly cooperative attitude of the Italian Naval Authorities here is also prevalent among the civilian inhabitants and officials. (4) In addition to the above, Colonel Robert Brooks, of the U. S. Air Force Base, Brindisi was most helpful in providing bus transportation. (5) There is an obvious mutual liking and respect between local Americans including the military and local populace. It was a pleasure to see and participate in this healthy aspect of good community relations. (6) I speak for my officers and crew when I say that we would be most happy to return to Brindisi and renew our friendship with these wonderful people. (Note: The Naval Headquarters Brindisi are located in an ancient castle complete with moat and drawbridge.)

About 30 miles inland from Brindisi on the road to Taranto is the ancient city of Oria which sits on the top of a plateau. Topping the city is a medieval castle (no moat) in good repair - in fact it is occupied by several families. Part of the castle is a museum with artifacts dating back to 100 - 200 B.C. Near the castle is a church built in 200 A. D. and restored in 1022 A. D. The exterior of the church is weather worn but the interior is beautiful and filled with many works of art dating back to its construction. Between the castle and the church, the Captain and his wife, the Executive Officer and LT Long found an orphanage built about 1260 and they decided to send a group there in two days with the remainder of our Project HandClasp material donated by the students of Southside Junior High School, Jacksonville, Florida.

They were very happy to LT Carl Long, our Chief Engineer, Keel, Fass, and Thomas who drove out to visit them as our people-to-people task group. To our knowledge they had never been visited by any American Navy groups before and one of the sisters wrote the following note to us: (Exact copy)

"We have is 75 children orfan or ---. Many are in Roma studiare. Are orphans are poor -- they live solely of public beneficesse - they pray for the benefactores our hous is very old (700) and humid - we are been constraint to make the reparations because it is to rain upon us - it is cost most - it is all so pay - if you woold like to leave some generous remembrance, our littl children shal pray for you and your health and peace and prosperity or your family." "We thank you very much for your grateful visit. Please thankful the studients of Southside Junior High Jacksonville, Florida, for their kind and generously contributiones." "Remember us often always write us" - "We wishes you a very glad rest" - "And God Bless you long" - "I ken't speak English but I write it a littl."

We departed Brindisi on the thirtieth and spent the day fueling. We received a message during the fueling directing us to deliver a propeller for the USS DUPONT to Naples instead of going to Corfu as had been planned. We set course for Malta to pick up the propeller and spent the first of April enrout.

We arrived at Valletta, Malta, on the morning of the second for an hour's stay to load the DUPONT's propeller. The entrance to the harbor is a bit hair-raising. The gap between the sea walls is not as wide as KASKASKIA is long, and there is shoal water just inside the entrance. Getting inside involves two violent turns; no easy task for KASKASKIA since she is not noted for her easy handling. Nevertheless, Captain Ward negotiated the tortuous entrance twice in two hours without tugs...it was too rough for them to leave the harbor.

We then set course north through the Strait of Messina to Naples upon our departure from Valletta, arriving at the Italian port the next day. We off loaded the propeller and loaded aboard fleet freight for our next replenishment, leaving Naples that afternoon. We steamed south through the Strait of Messina to meet the group again south of Corsica and refuel them again. The fueling was a complete success, marked by record breaking and near record breaking times by all ships in the task group.

Admiral King, Commander of the task group sent the following message:

1. Gold group continues to set new records in underway replenishment. In furtherance of our record breaking five hour and 54 minute major replenishment on 30 March (LOGREP 4-65). The underway replenishments today have been outstanding in all respects. 2. Your group has set new standards of excellence. Records by type; SWAMERI LA 9 minutes total, LITTLE ROCK 6 minutes, and RICKETTS 4 minutes. This is 54 seconds better than RICKETTS record. Heartiest congratulations on your record busting group. Extend "Well Done" to all. 3. Such records are not set without an oiler that takes great pride in her work. KASKASKIA is such a ship.

After this extensive replenishment we found ourselves dry and set course south through the Strait of Messina to Crete to fill up with oil again. We've steamed through the Straits of Messina with such regularity in the past few weeks that the natives have dubbed us the "Messina Express."

We are now in Crete, loading fuel and gathering scuttlebutt about Rhodes, the Greek port we are schedule to visit later this week.

MONTH	BOX SCORE	
	SHIPS FUELED	GALLONS DELIVERED
January	11	3,316,362
February	16	2,749,068
March	50	5,593,392
TOTAL	107	11,658,822

The following article is a rerun of one written some years ago by LCDR J. E. Guffey, USNR, and speaks for itself.

U. S. Aid to the USSR During World War II

During World War II we sent the Soviets 7,000 tanks, 14,000 planes, 3,000 tractors, 135,000 machine guns, one billion dollars worth of heavy machinery, and 100 merchant ships. They also signed receipts for 8,000 anti-aircraft guns, 2,000 railroad locomotives, 10,000 freight cars, 300,000 tons of explosives, 200 torpedo boats, and 100 submarine chasers.

Trucks: 400,000 of these, 8,000 marine diesel engines and 100,000 railroad wheels and axles in case of rolling stock breakdowns. Oh yes, jeeps, - 50,000 of these amazing four-wheeled ruffians. 500,000 tons of rails and 600,000 tons of chemical products, including much medicine to keep the Soviets alive was also sent. Add to this 35,000 motorcycles, 400,000 field telephones and 150 million yards of cotton and woolens. The Soviets complained that the trucks and jeeps needed rubber, so with rubber rationed in the U. S. Uncle Sam sent 17,000,000 tires. They also wanted telephone wires to go with the field telephones, so 1,250,000 miles of the wire was sent.

Their soldiers were without boots, so we -- who were busy with our own war efforts -- shipped 15,000,000 pair.

This by all means is not a complete inventory; however it is interesting to note that almost everything was shipped from eastern U. S. ports to Great Britain and, from there, along the Northern route to Murmansk. The German U-boats and JU-88's used to wait for these slow moving, heavy laden ships near North Cape, Norway. This is latitude 71 North and there was no other way to Murmansk.



The Germans picked off the rusty freighters at leisure. At that time a person in the water could survive for three minutes, so when a ship was sunk, destroyers looked for survivors at a high speed.

During World War II, the total bill for the items the United States sent to the Soviet Union amounted to \$11,141,470,000, or about 171 dollars apiece for every working American today: This is considered the greatest bad debt of all time.

For other interesting figures, amplifying information, and a study of Capitalism, the writer recommends each reader to read "A Study of Communism", by J. Edgar Hoover.

KASKASKIA offers her congratulations to the following personnel for passing the examination for advancement to the next higher rate.

Personnel advance in March

WOLFE, David, QMSN  
PURVIS, Lloyd, SMSN  
DOUGLAS, Howard, SN  
NELSEY, Michael, SN

Personnel to be advanced in 16 May

BECKWITH, William to RD2  
BIBIKO, Alexander to RM3  
COLUCCI, Michael to EM2  
CRISCUOLO, Edward to SH3  
DESHLER, Charles to BT3  
GRIMSLEY, James to SH3  
KIMBLE, Maurice to EM2  
KISTELWICZ, William to MM2  
MAY, Bradley to SK3  
NOVROSKY, Richard to DK3  
PARKER, Franklin to EM3  
PLANANI, Gerald to IC2  
REEVES, James to SM3  
SHORT, Virgil to BT2  
TOOMEY, Michael to QM2  
TUCKER, Cyril to DC3  
UPPAIN, Gary to SPM3  
VOGEL, Frederick to SM3  
WESTFALL, William to SFP3  
WILLIAMS, George to SFP3  
WILLIAMS, Carl to MM1  
WRIGHT, Norman to YN3

Personnel to be advanced 16 June

TING, Ronnie to MM2  
REINIS, Robert to MM2  
SNOW, John to SPM2  
STRICKLAND, Cecil RD3

Personnel to be advanced 16 July

BOZIMIA, Stanley to BM3  
BROWN, Roy to RD1  
FAISON, Andrew to BT3  
HESSENAUER, Carroll to EM2  
HILL, Thomas to BT3

Personnel to be advanced 16 August

BRAUN, James to BM2

Personnel to be advanced 16 September

ROYAL, Julian to PN3  
WILDER, William to BM3

KASKASKIA also offers her congratulations to Willie G. Evans, SH2 for completing his High School GED diploma through the United States Armed Forces Institute (USAFI).

"Happy Birthday" to the following men who had birthdays in March.

DECKWITH, William  
BOWERS, Brent  
COLE, George  
DYE, Robert  
DOLNICH, Stephen  
HAWN, Alvon

JAMES, Inkle  
MARTIN, Gary  
MILLER, Kenneth  
NEAL, Michael  
PETTY, "J" "D"

SHUMAN, Whitaker  
STEWART, Stephen  
TRANTER, Robert  
WELCHER, Steven  
WILLIAMS, Irving

Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. John A. Connolly on the birth of their son - John Kelly Connolly. Also congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. James M. Reeves on the addition to their family, a baby boy - Tracy DeWayne. It is noted here that the above two children both boys were born within a few days of each other. The fathers are both signalmen and in the same division. Our congratulations also go to Rupert K. Thomas, SM, who was one of the winners of the 1964 Freedom Foundation letter writing contest on the theme "My Vote: Freedom's Privilege". Thomas is scheduled to receive \$50.00 and the George Washington Honor Medal. Seaman Thomas emphasized in his winning letter the importance of voting, how Americans must not, through apathy, neglect to exercise this privilege.

#### MEET THE DEPARTMENT....ENGINEERING

The five hundred and fifty-three feet of KASKASKIA come to life when a Fireman (Snipe) in front of the ship's boilers performs the simple ritual of lighting a match and applying it to a torch, inserting the torch into a boiler and a moment later, reporting "Fire in the hole, number one boiler." This is the first step in generating the steam which runs the pumps, generates the electricity, makes the fresh water. Pumps off the cargo...and incidentally turns the ship's engines and propellers.

The Engineering Department is made up of five divisions: "B", Boilers; "M", Machinery; "A", Auxiliaries; "E", Electrical; and "R", Repair.

The divisions' care, feeding, and performance are the responsibility of the Engineering Officer, Lieutenant Carl H. Long, Jr. LT Long is from North Andover, Massachusetts. Since his naval career started in March 1943, LT Long has seen duty on the USS HASKELL (APA-117), USS SUSSIX (AK-213), USS TONAWANDA (AN-89), USS DIABLO (SS-479), and USS DOGFISH (SS-350). He was serving in DOGFISH when he received his commission as Ensign in 1957. He was then ordered to duty as squadron engineer with Escort Squadron 18, then employed in manning the North Atlantic extension of the Dew Line. He was transferred in 1960 to the Sub Board of Inspection and Survey, Pearl Harbor. Serving there until ordered to KASKASKIA in May 1963. LT Long is married to the former Catherine (Kay) A. Curtis of Lawrence, Mass. They have two daughters, Gail and Susan and a son, Carl. The Longs reside in Atlantic Beach, Fla.

Main Propulsion Assistant and "M" and "B" Division Officer is Lieutenant (Junior Grade) William P. Schultz. LT Schultz, all 6 feet and 6 inches of him hails from Sisterville, West Virginia. He enlisted in the Navy in September, 1949, and attained the rate of Chief Engineman before he was commissioned Ensign in September, 1963. He has served in a number of ships, including the USS VERDIN (AMS-38), USS COURSER (MSC-0-6), and USS CALCATERRA (DER-390). LT Schultz reported aboard KASKASKIA in February, 1964, when he took over duties as MPA. LT Schultz is married to the former Winifred Y. Millard of Chicago, Illinois. They have two daughters, Carol and Margaret and a son Daniel. The Schultz's reside in Jacksonville, Florida.

KASKASKIA's Damage Control Assistant and "R" Division Officer is Ensign John B. Axton. ENS Axton was born in Walters, Oklahoma, but grew up in Jacksonville. He graduated from Parson High School in Jacksonville, where he was the first four letter man in the school's history.

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He graduated from Oklahoma City University in 1963, and was commissioned Ensign after graduation from OCS in February, 1964. He reported aboard KASKASKIA in May 1964 and assumed duties as DCA in July. ENS Axton is married to the former Martha Lou Krausse of Enid, Oklahoma.

"A" Division Officer is Ensign Philip M. Cooke. ENS Cooke was born in Springfield, Ohio, but, like Ensign Axton, grew up in Jacksonville. He graduated from Florida State University in 1963 and was commissioned Ensign after graduation from OCS in June of 1964. He reported aboard KASKASKIA in July of that year.

The Leading Chief of "M" Division is Master Chief Machinist Mate Benjamin G. Kersey, Jr. Chief Kersey reported aboard KASKASKIA in February 1965 after serving recruiter duty in the Tampa, Florida, area. Chief Kersey has over 20 years in the Navy so he's considered one of the "old timers". His wife Betty and three children reside in Tampa, Florida.

KASKASKIA's Leading Chief of "R" Division is Damage Control Chief Thomas Kovacic. He came aboard in April 1964. Chief Kovacic and wife Irene reside in Jacksonville, Florida.

Chief Machinist Mate Bobby L. Mitchell, Leading Chief of "A" Division reported in April 1963, after serving aboard the SARATOGA (CVA-60). Chief Mitchell and wife Clara make their home in Jacksonville Beach, Florida.

The Leading Chief of "E" Division is Chief Electricians' Mate Fay R. Mullinax whose wife Evelyn and three children reside in Jacksonville Beach, Florida. Chief Mullinax has been aboard the KASKASKIA since September 1963, after serving aboard the USS SWANGRI LA.

Arthur J. Knisbell, Machinist Mate Chief reported aboard the KASKASKIA in December 1961, after a tour of duty aboard the USS NEPTUNE (ARC-2) out of Norfolk, Virginia. Chief Knisbell, wife Shirley and three children reside in Mayport, Florida.

The Engineering Department has made one promise to all hands - when the ship leaves the last port of call and heads for Mayport - the throttles will be ready to go "wide open" as soon as the Captain says "GO"!

*and I will say so!!*

CAPT SEZ: It appears that your scribe has covered our operations quite thoroughly and anything I might add would be redundant.

My wife, Helen, and I have enjoyed ourselves immensely and I guess have conducted ourselves like any other American tourists - ahing and oching and taking movies of everything we see. And I further suppose we will show these movies to many a captive audience, who finding no escape will enjoy a good snooze while I ramble on ad infinitum about the wonders of the Mediterranean.

I would like to interpose a thought at this point. In case you've been wondering about the orphans from Oria - we were unable to furnish transportation to bring them to the ship for a visit and so I am asking or rather I encourage you to drop them a line and let them know that you read the sister's letter and are thinking of them. She, receiving these letters, will gather the entire group of girls and read the letters to them - and believe me this is a big thing in their young lonely lives - just hearing from people in our country who are families of the KASKASKIA. This also will encourage them in their studies and create a desire to write to you in English over the years; it will motivate their geography studies to look up ~~in~~ an atlas where the various people live who write to them - you too can look up where they live too.

This could be an Italian - American pen pal group.

If you wish to participate the address is: Scintille D'Amore, Istituto S. Benedetto, Oria (Brindisi, Italy, C C. Postale 26/3687. I believe it is one of the best types of international relationships. Don't you agree?

And now to thank you for your wonderful and encouraging letters:

Mr. and Mrs. Lester Pope of Trenton, New Jersey; Mr. James Field, Jr. of Medford, Mass., who sent us a large parcel of bibles - thank you sir; Captain Wright, the U. S. Atlantic Fleet and Force Chaplain; Mr. and Mrs. John Hilenski, who wrote a most entertaining letter complete with marginal comments and satirical back pages; Miss L. M. Capili of Chicago, Illinois; Mr. H. C. Beck of Richmond Hill, New York; LT B. H. Edelson currently stationed on the island of San Salvador, where Columbus first landed and thereby discovered America; Mr. and Mrs. Allen Latham Jr. of Jamaica Plain, Mass., who is very busy developing a new simplified centrifuge to be used in the research for blood for long time storage. When completed in the near future his new machine will make this form of processing available to many groups throughout the country and world for that matter - you are to be congratulated on the wonderful work you are doing to assist the medical world. Yes, I would very much like to see the set up you have at home to enable you to design and complete your shop work on your project; CDR Bill Kaiser, the inveterate liberty hound of the Navy's air arm; Mrs. M. Greska of Chicago, Illinois; Mr. Asa E. Phillips, my good Navy League friend of Boston; Mr. Leo LeBregue of Laconia, New Hampshire, on Lake Winnepesanki where some of the best land locked salmon in the world are caught; CDR and Mrs. Charles Nagle of Alexandria, Va. - Charles is on congressional liaison duty and I'd like to have him meet our next writer who is Congressman James R. Grover Jr. a classmate and friend of long standing who conjured up a long forgotten nickname and many fond memories; and to Dr. and Mrs. Marc Old,

my biology prof at college whose wherabouts I did not know but with whom I have once again made contact.

I believe I have included all of you who have written through March. If I have omitted anyone - give me a blast - but please forgive.

I will secure this familygram by saying that your men of the KASKASKIA have made many friends for our country among these fine peoples in the Mediterranean; they have established and maintained high standards of excellence in carrying out this ship's as well as the Navy's mission, and they have up to this date, made an accumulative number of over 3,000 logged liberties and have received not one single SIXTH Fleet Shore Patrol report. This could mean some of them didn't get caught but I prefer to believe it's because they are setting unusually high standards of good conduct and performance ashore as well as afloat. Do you agree?

With warm personal regards to you all and may God Bless.

*Charles W. Ward*

Charles W. WARD  
CAPT, U.S. Navy