

U. S. S. SPROSTON (DD 577)
FPO San Francisco 96601

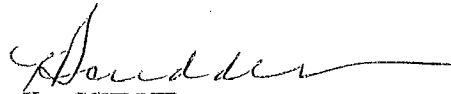
1966

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From: Commanding Officer, USS SPROSTON (DD 577)
To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-09B9)
Subj: USS SPROSTON (DD 577) Command History for 1966; forwarding of
Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12
Encl: (1) Chronology of Events
(2) Narrative History
(3) Ship's Roster (1 Jan 67)
(4) SPROSTON Family-Grams for 1966

1. Reference (a) promulgates instructions for the submission of histories by naval commands. In compliance with reference (a), subject history is forwarded herewith in enclosures (1) through (4).


H. SCUDDER

Copy to:
COMDESDIV 112 (w/encl)

ENCLOSURE (1)

USS SPROSTON (DD 577) Command History For 1966

Chronology of Events

- 27 Dec 65 Departed Pearl Harbor in company with USS RANGER (CVA 61),
USS ENGLAND (DLG 22) and USS CARPENTER (DD 825) for deployment
in the Western Pacific.
- 27 Dec - 9 Jan 66 Enroute Subic Bay, P.I.
- 9 Jan - 12 Jan 66 In port, Subic Bay, P.I.
- 13 Jan - 13 Feb 66 Underway in the South China Sea as a unit of Task
Group 77.4 (RANGER, ENGLAND and CARPENTER).
- 13 Feb - 22 Feb 66 In port, Subic Bay, P.I.
- 22 Feb - 26 Mar 66 Underway in the South China Sea as a unit of Task
Group 77.4.
- 26 Mar - 5 Apr 66 In port, Yokosuka, Japan.
- 5 Apr - 6 May 66 Underway in the South China Sea as a unit of Task
Group 77.4.
- 6 May - 17 May 66 In port, Hong Kong, B.C.C. as Station Ship (SOPA
Admin).
- 17 May - 20 May 66 Enroute, Subic Bay, P.I.
- 20 May - 25 May 66 In port, Subic Bay, P.I.
- 25 May - 29 May 66 Enroute, Yokosuka, Japan as a unit of Task Group
77.6 (USS KITTY HAWK (CVA 63), CARPENTER and ENGLAND).
- 29 May - 3 Jun 66 In port, Yokosuka, Japan.
- 3 Jun - 11 Jun 66 Enroute Pearl Harbor as a unit of Task Group 77.6.
- 11 Jun - 1 Aug 66 In port Pearl Harbor for leave and upkeep.
- 1 Aug - 4 Aug 66 Local Type Training.
- 4 Aug - 16 Aug 66 In port Pearl Harbor. Space capsule recovery
equipment installed.
- 16 Aug - 2 Sep 66 Underway for space capsule recovery mission
(APOLLO project).

ENCLOSURE (1)

ENCLOSURE (1)

USS SPROSTON (DD 577) Command History For 1966

Chronology of events Cont'd

- 2 Sep - 26 Sep 66 In port Pearl Harbor for upkeep.
- 6 Sep 66 Change of Command
- 26 Sep - 6 Oct 66 Drydocked at Pearl Harbor in (ARD 30).
- 7 Oct - 28 Oct 66 Tender availability, USS PRAIRIE (AD 15).
- 29 Oct - 9 Dec 66 Type Training in Pearl Harbor operating areas.
- 9 Dec - 31 Dec 66 Holiday leave and upkeep in Pearl Harbor.

ENCLOSURE (1)

ENCLOSURE (2)

USS SPROSTON (DD 577) Command History for 1966

Narrative History

USS SPROSTON (DD 577) is a 2100 ton "Fletcher" class destroyer home ported in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Administratively, she is a unit of Destroyer Flotilla 5, Destroyer Squadron 11, and Destroyer Division 112. During 1966 she has had two Commanding Officers, CDR Raymond L. HOFFMAN, USN, and as of 6 Sep 1966, CDR Harold SCUDDER, USN.

SPROSTON was designed and armed primarily for the mission of Anti-Submarine Warfare, but in the past year she has also been employed as a Rescue Destroyer and a Gunfire Support Ship. SPROSTON's operations during 1966 consisted basically of a WestPac deployment, an APOLLO recovery mission, and type training in preparation for her next deployment.

Just prior to the first of the year (27 Dec 65) SPROSTON deployed to WestPac as a unit of Task Group 77.4, an attack group composed of USS RANGER (CVA 61), USS ENGLAND (DLG 22), USS CARPENTER (DD 825) and SPROSTON. Although the "small boys" were often detached for special assignments, this was the SPROSTON's basic task group throughout her 5 1/2 month deployment. The first port of call for TG 77.4 was Subic Bay, Philippines. On the first day of the transit from Pearl Harbor, SPROSTON experienced engineering difficulties; the #5 spring bearing on the starboard shaft over heated and had to be replaced. A few days later the difficulty recurred and SPROSTON was detached to proceed independently to Subic Bay. She arrived January 9th. Inspection determined that the shaft itself was warped. The discrepancy was corrected by January 13th.

On the previous day TG 77.4 had gotten underway for Dixie Station to participate in "in country" support operations off the coast of South Vietnam. SPROSTON proceeded independently to join the group and arrived on station on January 16th. This first cruise, which lasted until 13 February, was to be the most eventful of the deployment for the SPROSTON.

Upon arrival at Dixie Station SPROSTON was assigned rescue destroyer and ASW screening duties with CARPENTER. ENGLAND, with her advanced Anti-Air Warfare capabilities, was employed some 20 miles from the formation on the threat axis.

On the evening of 18 January, an RA5C Vigilante returning from a reconnaissance mission crashed in a landing attempt on the RANGER. SPROSTON's pilot rescue detail searched the wreckage spotted by the other ships and helos from RANGER, but neither the pilot nor the navigator was found. The impact of the crash had completely demolished the plane, and the only trace of its occupants was part of a badly shattered flight helmet.

ENCLOSURE (2)

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USS SPROSTON (DD 577) Command History for 1966 Cont'd.

At 2300 on the 18th SPROSTON was detached to proceed to possible Shore bombardment assignment off Cape St Jacques at the mouth of the Saigon river. Arriving the following morning, SPROSTON was directed to proceed some 5 miles up the river to the inland side of Saigon harbor. Her mission was to protect a truck convoy which was traveling along a river road to Saigon. The ship waited at anchor for most of the day while the convoy passed, but was never called upon to fire.

That evening SPROSTON's spotters directed her to proceed to Phuoc Hui Bay just north of the mouth of the river. In the course of the night the ship fired 157 rounds of 5"/38 ammunition at Viet Cong base camps and assembly areas. The Air Spotter reported that the ship gave excellent coverage.

SPROSTON left the area the following morning to rejoin the carrier task group which had since moved north to Yankee Station in the Gulf of Tonkin. Carrier operations became routine rather quickly. On January 25th an A1 Skyhawk, a single seater crashed, fortunately the pilot had been able to eject and was recovered by a helo from the carrier.

On the following day SPROSTON was released for a few hours of ASW training with USS NICHOLAS (DD 449) and BUGARA (SS 331). This was the only opportunity the ship had for such training throughout the entire cruise. Water conditions in the area were characteristically poor, and the only benefit gained was an opportunity for the ships to assess their ASW capabilities in local waters.

SPROSTON rejoined TG 77.4 on the 27th of January for more routine flight operations. On the 5th of February she was again detached, this time for trawler surveillance and blocking. The trawler was a Russian Okean-Class vessel, the Gidrofon. It was believed to be gathering electronic and tactical intelligence from the carrier groups and tomcat station in the area. It was SPROSTON's mission to jam the radio frequencies which the trawler was thought to be monitoring and, if necessary, to shoulder the vessel to prevent interference with flight operations.

The week which the SPROSTON spent blocking the Gidrofon passed without significant incident. The trawler maneuvered on random courses through the Yankee Station area at speeds in the vicinity of 5 kts. Much badly needed topside maintenance was accomplished while operating at these slow speeds. Once during the period, SPROSTON was forced to lose contact with the trawler in order to refuel, but it was relocated with little effort. On 11 February SPROSTON was relieved by USS HITCHITE (ATF 104) and proceeded to rendezvous with TG 77.4. Rendezvous completed, the group headed for Subic Bay for an upkeep period.

Upon arrival in Subic Bay SPROSTON embarked two South Vietnamese Ensigns, who were to undergo a period of shipboard training on the

ENCLOSURE (2)

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USS SPROSTON (DD 577) Command History for 1966 Cont'd

next cruises. They were to prove very useful as interpreters during coastal shore bombardment operations.

The ships remained in Subic Bay from the 13th through the 22nd of February. This was, in many respects, typical of the ship's Westpac "inport" periods. The biggest concern of course, was to get the ship ready to go back "on the line". There was much repair work and preservation to be done in the brief periods the ship was inport. Destroyer tenders were available on all occasions, but these were overburdened with repair work; consequently, what they were able to accomplish was always less than desired. Naval Base Supply, Public Works, and repair facilities were always eager to help, but they too were receiving a greater volume of demands than they could handle. Tours, Service Clubs, and other recreational facilities were always available, but time, more often than not, limited the number of people that could take advantage of them. Slightly longer "inport" periods would have increased morale considerably, but the major problem of inadequate support facilities will be much more difficult to correct.

On 22 February TG 77.4 again got underway for Yankee Station. On the 25th SPROSTON and ENGLAND were detached to assist the USS MAHAN (DLG 11) in a search and rescue mission. No traces were found of the plane or its crew, and ships were returned to their respective task groups that evening.

On 28th February SPROSTON was again detached for an extended period of Naval Gunfire Support duty. She arrived in the Corps II area, off the coast of South Vietnam on 1 March, and stayed there on station until 20 March. During that period SPROSTON supported units of the US Army 1st Cavalry division and South Vietnamese Marines with the aid of various airborne and ground spotters. The ship maintained position approximately 2 miles from the coast awaiting calls on the spotter circuits. The missions fired varied from random harassment and interdiction fire to direct fire on Viet Cong troop concentrations. The high point of the ship's operations took place the evening of March 9th. During a 3 hour battle, SPROSTON's guns stopped a battalion strength Viet Cong attack against Republic of Vietnam Marine positions near Tam Quan.

In the 20 day period SPROSTON fired some 40 support missions; targets included 9 troop concentrations, 5 Viet Cong base camps, 10 Viet Cong assembly areas, Viet Cong rest camp, and numerous occasions of harassment and interdiction firing. In all, 1171 rounds of 5"/38 ammunition were expended. It was a very interesting and exciting period for the crew, but it was exhausting for all concerned.

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ENCLOSURE (2)

USS SPROSTON (DD 577) Command History for 1966 Cont'd

On 21 March SPROSTON rejoined TG 77.4, which then proceeded to Yokosuka, Japan. The group remained there from 26 March to 5 April, at which time it got underway for Dixie Station. This last patrol was quite uneventful for SPROSTON, for she spent the entire time working with RANGER. RANGER stayed at Dixie Station for approximately 2 weeks and on the 27th of April moved north to Yankee station. At this time, Yankee station had been moved into the Tonkin Gulf.

The highlight of the deployment, at least as far as the crew was concerned, came on 4 May when the ship was detached to proceed to Hong Kong. There had been considerable doubt as to whether or not the ship would see that port. During 10 days in Hong Kong SPROSTON carried out the duties of SOPA Admin. The task included such jobs as coordinating shore patrol, berthing and movie exchange between US ships which were visiting the port. There were no repair facilities available, so the crew received their first real rest and recreation period of the entire trip.

SPROSTON's departure from Hong Kong was delayed until the 17th of May because of a Typhoon between there and their next destination, Subic Bay. She remained in Subic from 20-25 May at which time she left with USS KITTY HAWK (CVA 63) and TG 77.6 for Yokosuka. KITTY HAWK was to accompany SPROSTON, CARPENTER, and ENGLAND for part of the transit from Yokosuka to Hawaii.

SPROSTON stayed in Yokosuka from 29 May to 3 June, at which time she and CARPENTER got underway for Pearl Harbor. KITTY HAWK overtook the slower group two days out of Yokosuka, and refueled them before continuing on her way to the west coast. SPROSTON and CARPENTER stopped briefly at the island of Midway on the 8th of June for more fuel and arrived in Pearl Harbor on the 11th.

The deployment as a whole had been a very vigorous and successful one for SPROSTON. The ship had spent 75% of her time underway, and with the exception of her late departure from Subic Bay after the transit, had never failed to meet an operational commitment.

SPROSTON spent the remainder of June and July in port in a well utilized leave and upkeep period.

Early in August, SPROSTON was chosen to participate in a Apollo Spacecraft recovery. This involved the installation of a recovery crane and considerable training before the actual launch date. The ship got underway on 16 August for Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands where she was to refuel before proceeding to recovery station. She arrived on the 22nd and departed 23 August for DD recovery station #5. The spacecraft was launched on the 24th and at 0638 on the 25th the ship observed it passing over head. It landed some 200 miles north of SPROSTON and was picked up by USS HORNET (CVS 12). SPROSTON again stopped at Kwajalein for fuel.

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ENCLOSURE (2)

USS SPROSTON (DD 577) Command History for 1966 Cont'd

and arrived back at Pearl Harbor on 2 September.

The period from 2 September to 28 October was devoted entirely to upkeep. From 2 through 26 September SPROSTON received repair services from the Repair Facility at the Submarine Base at Pearl Harbor. This was something of a "first", and the experience was beneficial to all concerned. This was followed by a ten day dry docking in (ARD 30). Again, SPROSTON felt more like a dolphin than a Destroyer, in that the (ARD 30) normally works almost exclusively with submarines. The period ended with SPROSTON returning to DD land via a three week availability with the destroyer tender USS PRAIRIE (AD 15) in Pearl Harbor.

From 31 October to 19 November SPROSTON underwent a rigorous schedule of type training in preparation for an Operational Readiness Inspection. In the two weeks which followed, further type training was held. The remainder of Year, 9-31 December 1966 was spent in port in a leave and upkeep.

In summary, 1966 was an extremely demanding year for SPROSTON - unquestionably the most taxing one the ship itself has been through in many years. More than 50% of the time was spent underway, and a full 6 months were spent away from home port.

It was a difficult year, but the variety of assignments made it a very interesting one.

The most significant period was the 5½ months spent in WestPac. During that time, the ship steamed over 55,000 miles, fired more than 1300 rounds from its main batteries, and replenished underway some 67 times, all without significant mechanical difficulty or personnel injury. This coupled with the fact that all operational commitments were met, made the deployment an unmitigated success.

Success was the key note on the SPROSTON throughout 1966; the demands were heavy, but the satisfaction that comes with a job "well done" was proportionately gratifying.

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