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USS SOMERS (DD-947)
SHIP'S HISTORY FOR 1965

1965

SOMERS bid farewell to families and friends on 5 January 1965 and steamed westward for her fourth WESTPAC deployment since commissioning. Leaving San Diego with COMDESRON SEVEN embarked, SOMERS began a turbulent Pacific passage in company with units of DESRON SEVEN, DESRON FIFTEEN, and the USS CANBERRA. After a two-day sojourn in Pearl Harbor and a brief fueling stop at Midway, SOMERS, USS BOYD, and CANBERRA proceeded as a unit to Yokosuka, Japan, remaining there for four days prior to moving south.

In early February SOMERS arrived in Subic Bay, Philippines, whereupon COMDESRON SEVEN shifted his flag to the USS TOWERS and the two ships commenced a week of special training in preparation for their first SEVENTH FLEET assignment.

With the exception of a single 36-hour stopover in Subic Bay, the next two months were spent in continuous operations in Southeast Asian waters. The greater part of February found SOMERS escorting the attack carriers CORAL SEA, RANGER, and HANCOCK as they conducted air strikes against the communists in Vietnam. At the end of February SOMERS assumed duties as Yankee Station SAI picket in the Tonkin Gulf. In the course of these operations SOMERS also participated in the early stages of the Market Time operations before that name was formally adopted to describe the surveillance of coastal junk activity.

The long weeks of patrol ended at last on 4 April when SOMERS again put in to Subic Bay for further training, necessary repairs, and the welcome opportunity for all hands to relax and enjoy the diversions of being a tourist. The Annual Awards Presentation Ceremony was held on the anniversary of SOMERS commissioning in April 1959, and Radarman Second Class Robert A. Long, USN, was presented the Mrs. Charles E. Wilson Trophy as he was declared "SOMERS Sailor of the Year."

The best was yet to come, however, for the 17th through 24th of that month were spent in Hong Kong, SOMERS' principal liberty port-of-call for the cruise. All SOMERS men enjoyed a memorable respite from the rigorous operational demands of the previous two months, and at the same time established a fine record as good will ambassadors as SOMERS was presented the Good Conduct Ashore Award by the Servicemen's Guides Association of Hong Kong.

From Hong Kong SOMERS proceeded south for more Market Time operations until 7-12 May when she aided in supporting the Marine landings at Chu Lai. Also at this time SOMERS again became COMDESRON SEVEN flagship. The Chu Lai operation offered SOMERS a prelude of things to come as she received several alerts for gunfire support ashore although she did not receive the order to fire. The operation was highlighted by the opportunity to exchange visits with the South Vietnamese Navy ship DONG DA. In addition, SOMERS provided habitability support for the U.S. Naval advisers to the local junk division. Moving south to resume Market Time duties after Chu Lai, SOMERS had several more occasions to play host to our Vietnamese comrades in arms as she plied the coastal waters of the South China Sea.

On 21 May SOMERS fired her first shots in anger in support of the South Vietnamese Army units at Phan Thiet. This was the second gunfire support mission by a U. S. Navy ship in the Vietnam conflict. SOMERS action aborted a Viet Cong attack on a Government District Headquarters, and was credited with 12 Viet Cong dead and 30 wounded. During the firing a severe casualty brought tragedy when the barrel of Mount 51 exploded, killing Jimmy C. Stinnett, Seaman, USN, on the AA station. CDR Jackson E. Vereen, then commanding officer of SOMERS, was awarded posthumously the Navy Commendation Medal with Combat "V" in January 1966 for his courage and leadership during this action.

SOMERS returned to Subic Bay on 27 May for repairs and re-gunning of the five-inch mounts. From there she proceeded to Yokosuka to make final preparations for returning to the states. Then on 16 June, Captain Vereen was hospitalized in Japan for treatment of a brain tumor. LCDR Tyrone G. Martin, SOMERS' Executive Officer assumed command. On 18 June, within three hours of SOMERS' scheduled departure for the states, she was extended in SEVENTH FLEET for an indefinite period and ordered to return to South Vietnamese waters.

On 22 June, profound shock and grief enveloped SOMERS upon learning of the death of Captain Vereen in Tachikawa AFB hospital. The same day, while steaming at 22 knots, a serious casualty to the blowdown piping in 1A boiler resulted in a narrow escape by the occupants of the fireroom and necessitated SOMERS' returning immediately to Yokosuka for repairs.

On 26 June, CDR Herbert E. Reichert reported aboard and relieved LCDR Martin of command. Then on 1 July, despite the sudden setbacks and disappointments of recent weeks, SOMERS was back on the line in the South China Sea for another three weeks of operations with the carriers CORAL SEA and INDEPENDENCE and more SAR patrol.

SOMERS returned to Yokosuka on 27 July where COMDESRON SEVEN shifted his flag to the USS HALSEY. SOMERS, HALSEY, and USS BOYD were underway for the states on 30 July, arriving back in San Diego on 12 August.

After a month long leave and upkeep period, SOMERS was underway on 13 September to participate in a weapons demonstration for leaders of the SEATO nations. SOMERS displayed her proficiency in high speed shallow water depth charge drops, hedgehog launching, and shore bombardment. Later that month LTJG Harold M. Eubanks, SOMERS' Damage Control Assistant, was presented the Secretary of the Navy Achievement Award for his skill and ingenuity in effecting vital repairs during the ship's deployment.

The month of October was spent providing services as submarine target vessel and as ASW School ship. SOMERS also visited the Naval Shipyard at Hunter's Point, San Francisco, where she underwent inclining experiments in anticipation of her impending conversion to a DDG.

In November SOMERS completed an INSURV inspection while alongside a tender in San Diego for extensive boiler repairs.

During December SOMERS was berthed in San Diego while her crew took advantage

of holiday leave. It was a peaceful Christmas Season in which all men of SOMERS could look back with a deep sense of accomplishment and pride upon an unforgettably eventful year.

For her competitive effort during the year 1965, SOMERS was recipient of the following awards:

Battle Efficiency "E" for Destroyer Squadron SEVEN

Operations "E" Fifth consecutive award

ASW "A"

Nomination for "Ship of the Year Award" as the best ship in Cruiser-Destroyer Flotilla SEVEN.