

OPS

NARRATIVE OF EVENTS OF USS SOMERS
(DDG-34)

1 JANUARY TO 31 DECEMBER 1972

SOMERS welcomed in the New Year of 1972 in floating dry dock ~~At the~~ Long Beach Naval Shipyard. Two days later, SOMERS was underway once again, steaming to Long Beach Naval Station.

Her Shipyard overhaul behind her now, it was time to work back to fighting trim. The first step was a trip to Seal Beach and the Naval Weapons Station to on-load a full allowance of five inch ammunition, torpedoes, missiles and ASROC. After load-out, three days were spent at the SACS pier where sensitivity checks were run on the ship's sonar equipment which is utilized in detection of submarines.

On 10 January, the ship took part in Missile System Qualification Tests with the USS JOUETT (DLG-29) in operations areas off the Southern California Coast. SOMERS completed her part of the exercises and systems checks in half of the normal allotted time. Included in the four-day period was a gun shoot, as well as various drills at General Quarters. In preparation for Refresher Training, a pre-training battle problem was run to determine the ship's battle readiness under simulated battle conditions.

The remainder of January was spent in port (Long Beach) readying for that uniquely challenging period in a combatant vessel's life--Refresher Training. Two weeks of intense activity ensued as minor discrepancies and last minute preparations were made to weather the storm that always marks the arrival of the Fleet Training Group. The last day of January saw the Super-SOMERS arriving at Pier #2, San Diego Naval Station, to begin REFTRA.

The Training Readiness Evaluation was conducted during the first week. Equipment check-off lists were executed, and all was made ready for the next six weeks of intensive training. On the Eighth of February, the first of three battle problems was run. The volume and variety of training evolutions that followed were extensive. For example, a vertical replenishment, an underway replenishment with the USS CACAPON (AO-52), and a manila highline with the USS OSBORNE (DD-846) were conducted in three consecutive days. These particular evolutions constituted SOMERS' introduction to the seamanship phase of REFTRA.

Time was available, however, on 20 February to observe SOMERS' fourth birthday as (DDG-34) since her conversion from (DD-947) in 1968. A party with cake and ice cream was held in the evening in the crew's dining hall to celebrate the event.

Enclosure (2)

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it was BACK AGAIN to the rigors of REFTRA. The Engin-
EERS UNDERWENT CONTINUOUS casualty control and damage control
drills. THE Operations Department personnel were taken through
THEIR PACES as equipment tests, communications, plotting and
ELECTRONIC warfare EXERCISES were conducted. Weapons Department
PERSONNEL fired GUNS, missiles, torpedoes and exercised at myriad
DECK EVOLUTION STATIONS. The Supply Department was called upon
to FEED the crew UNDER battle conditions on two occasions and to
PROVIDE continuous SPARE-parts support. During the month of
February, SOMERS OPERATED with the USS EVERSOLE (DD-789) in a
number OF dual ship ANTI-submarine warfare exercises.

WITH the advent of March, SOMERS was still engaged in
operations with the Fleet Training Group. On the first, the
crew exercised at General Quarters while conducting Shore Bom-
bardment at San Clemente in an effort to qualify her single
five inch/fifty-four gun mount. By late afternoon, the quali-
fication was obtained, and the ship was ready for employment as
a naval gunfire support ship. Later in the week, after communica-
tion drills with the USS EVERSOLE (DD-789), a midterm battle
problem indicated there was room for improvement, and the second
half of REFTRA was underway.

On the 8th of March, more firing was in order. This time,
the ship fired at a surface target: an inflatable balloon. Sub-
jected to intensive surface bursts, the riddled balloon became
another testament to the effectiveness of SOMERS' long gun.

As REFTRA drew to a close, only two hurdles stood between
the ship and her homeport. The first was a run through the
Pacific Missile Range which SOMERS cleared with ease. Firing
three missiles from her TARTER battery, the Super-SOMERS scored
three hits for three shots on the jet target drone. One of the
hits was a direct hit with a non-explosive telemetry missile--
a rare feat indeed! Then only one obstacle remained--the final
battle problem. Fully drilled after six weeks of training, the
ship and her crew completed the battle problem with flying colors
and returned to Long Beach for a brief respite from the whirl-
wind activity.

A week later, the Nuclear Weapons Training Center boarded
SOMERS to conduct a Nuclear Weapons Acceptance Inspection. Again,
preparation and hard work paid off and the ship took one more
step toward one-hundred percent qualification for deployment as
she demonstrated her capability to carry Nuclear Weapons.

The last operation period before deployment was from 27-31
March: a fleet exercise called COMPTUEX which was designed to
test the ship's operations in a multi-ship environment. Opera-
ting with other Long Beach destroyers, the ship fired two more
missiles, a torpedo, and over two hundred rounds from her five-
inch gun.

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month of APRIL Brought with it a renewed offensive in VIETNAM and news of our early deployment. The SOMERS, along WITH SOME of her SISTER ships, was placed on a forty-eight-hour STANDBY, and on FRIDAY, the 8th, the order came, "Deploy the 10th." With training qualifications behind her, it was only a MATTER of a few MINUTE errands and a few hurried goodbyes to loved ones before SAILING at 0800 hours, 10 April, for Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, the FIRST stop on her journey to combat operations in the Western Pacific.

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the rest of APRIL, the days of transit were occupied by EXERCISES at General Quarters and Condition III watch standing STATIONS. Gun firings were conducted among the three ships in the TASK unit. The TASK unit was comprised of SOMERS, the USS BERKELEY (DDG-15) and the USS HULL (DD-945). Commander Destroyer Squadron NINETEEN was in command of the task unit. Between Pearl Harbor and Guam, an UNDERWAY replenishment with the USS HASSAYAMPA (AO-145) provided a PREVIEW of more UNREPS to come.

The 19th of APRIL, the day that never happened, put the Super-SOMERS across the International Dateline and into the "Realm of the Golden Dragon." Six days later the ship moored briefly at Pier Echo, Naval Station Guam, to take on fuel before continuing her transit to the west. The end of April saw the ship inport Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines, awaiting further orders.

The next day it was underway once again. SOMERS was ordered to rendezvous with the USS SARATOGA (CV-60). SARATOGA was enroute to the Tonkin Gulf from the Indian Ocean, and an Equator crossing was anticipated. The Shellbacks on board were temporarily disappointed, however, when the southward track was ended by an overnight fuel stop in Singapore with the ship at the Man-O-War Anchorage. At 0249 on the 5th, it was off to find the big carrier again, and this time SOMERS was to cross the magic line at 106-03° E longitude at 1254 on the 5th of May. The ceremony was replete with pleas for mercy from slimy polliwogs, but mercy was in short supply.

The next day SOMERS met SARATOGA and escorted her back to Subic Bay. Upon arriving at Subic Bay, the ship remained overnight in a six-ship nest alongside the USS SAMUEL GOMPERS (AD-37). The following day, SOMERS was underway for the first real work of the deployment: three weeks of plane guard operations. SOMERS' Yankee Station comrades were the USS KITTY HAWK (CVA-64) and the USS MIDWAY (CVA-41). Happily, the stint as rescue destroyer was uneventful in terms of pilot rescue; and the ship's duties were primarily as an anti-aircraft defense mutual support ship. Numerous gun firings, boat evolutions, fuel underway replenishments and drills at General Quarters were accomplished during this period

? the 26th of JUNE SOMERS was on her way to the Naval GUNFIRE Support LINE OFF the coast of the Republic of Viet Nam FOR HER first gunLINE Tour. Originally anticipating duty further SOUTH AND change IN ORDERS sent SOMERS further north off the mouth of THE Qua Viet river in the vicinity of Quang Tri. SOMERS tour on THE Gunline coincided with the seige of that city and activity was ? H. It was DURING this period that the first hostile fire from SHORE batteries was received by SOMERS. On 31 May, seven rounds of enemy fire were received and again on 1 June, another six rounds were received. After this initial excitement, the pace became pretty routine. Time was shared between unloading numerous rounds ON target AND taking aboard more rounds from ammunition ships. After a rigorous tour at sea, SOMERS put her bow east and headed FOR Subic Bay And a much welcomed week inport. This first inport period was relatively quiet and provided a good opportunity for minor repairs and general upkeep. On the last day inport, SOMERS welcomed three midshipmen first class aboard for their indoctrination cruise. SOMERS was underway the following morning for anti-submarine WAAfare operations with the USS TICONDEROGA (CVS-14) in the South Tonkin Gulf.

The tempo of operations was somewhat similar to plane-guarding for one of the bigger attack carriers; except for a somewhat easier load on the engineers due to the slower speeds necessary to launch and recover TICO's propellar type ASW aircraft. A lot of excitement was generated when about dark on 21 June the words "man overboard" put SOMERS' lifeboat detail into action. Two men were recovered who had fallen from the deck of the TICONDEROGA. Both men were apparently unhurt and returned by helo to their ship a few minutes later. June ended with a triple UNREP from the USS MARS (AFS-1) for stores, the USS VEGA (AF-59) for additional stores, and the USS CHIPOLA (AO-63) for fuel.

It looked like the Fourth of July would be an inport holiday for the ship as she escorted TICONDEROGA back to Subic Bay on 2 July. Such was not to be the case, however. After arriving late on the 3rd, SOMERS left early the next morning for a date with the nuclear-powered Guided Missile Cruiser USS LONG BEACH (CLGN-9). SOMERS' role was to provide close perimeter anti-air protection for the LONG BEACH's operations at South Talos Station. Training and various drills were conducted while the ship maintained an alert Condition III status.

After a week on South Talos Station, SOMERS rendezvoused with the USS SANTA BARBARA (AE-28) for a full ammunition on-load. SOMERS was then assigned to join Task Unit 70.8.9 at Point Angela for naval gunfire support operations. The Super-SOMERS spent the next week off the coast of Viet Nam in support of allied troops in and around the city of Quang Tri. Soon, however, it was back to carrier escort duties. Once again the familiar stern of the USS KITTY HAWK (CVA-63) loomed in SOMERS' view. For the next sixteen days, work became routine. Much needed top-side preservation was conducted and General Quarters and other drills kept the men of SOMERS highly trained to perform the variety of tasks that were

DEMANDED of destroyers in the South China Sea.

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13th of August saw the ship in company with the KITTY HAWK STEAMING to Subic BAY for a period of inport time after forty-nine DAYS at sea. Arriving on the 5th, the ship stayed inport almost ten days while work on the five-inch gun and the engineering PLANT WAS CONDUCTED. It was a busy time for all hands, but time was well found by All to take advantage of the various recreational opportunities in and around Subic. Soon, however, it was back TO the business at hand; and on 14 August, SOMERS sailed past ? → Great Island bound for the gunline. Her stay on the gunline was short-lived, however, due to an urgent need for her services elsewhere. Quickly becoming the most experienced plane-guard destroyer in WESTPAC, the ship joined her old friend, the USS SARATOGA (CV-60), once again. The hard work that was becoming expected began anew.

The 23rd of August brought a relief for SARATOGA in the form of the KITTY HAWK. SOMERS stayed, relieving the HAWK's old escort, the USS WORDEN (DLG-18). Escort duty continued uninterrupted for another week.

New orders came on the 29th to report back to the gunline. Arriving in the early evening, SOMERS settled down to the business at hand with various missions ranging from "Call for Fire" to "Harrassment and Interdiction" firing on a variety of targets.

Deterioration of the weather on the 2nd of September made it necessary to leave the gunline briefly for storm evasion maneuvers. The formation of ships grew as up and down the coast ships were forced to leave station and head south. Eventually, the task group grew to fourteen ships and the operation was reminiscent of the formations of an earlier era. The storm passed quickly, and the next day happy news was received. The ship was to detach and proceed to Sasebo, Japan, for a week inport.

Sasebo was the first foreign port--other than Subic Bay--that SOMERS had visited since reporting for duty in the Western Pacific. All hands took maximum advantage of liberty time to get a close look at their first real foreign port-of-call. To assist the crew in their touring venture, the ship's special services group organized tours to Nagasaki, Unzen National Forest and Karatsu where a unique look at Japanese culture was offered. Japan was also an excellent stop for all the camera and stereo enthusiasts to stock up on quality equipment at special prices.

Lines were cast off once again on the 15th of September when SOMERS headed south for operations on Yankee Station. The USS MIDWAY (CVA-41) made use of the SOMERS' services as plane-guard; but only briefly, for at midnight the same day, SOMERS was ordered to the gunline. This was SOMERS' last tour on the gunline; and although it was only for a week, it proved to be one of the most demanding. Gunfire from SOMERS was accurate and dependable

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four-hundred rounds delivered on target during the last
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? the cruise ^{DRAWING} coming to a close there was one last combat assignment. Late September saw the ship operating again with LONG BEACH off the northern coast of the Republic of Viet Nam on ? Positive Identification and Radar Zone Station. SOMERS' primary duties consisted of air surveillance and close-in air defence for the cruiser. About a week later, the USS TRUXTON (DESRONS) arrived on station to relieve LONG BEACH. SOMERS remained on station until 11 October; at which time she was relieved by the USS EVERSOLE (DD-789). With her last duties properly discharged, it was time to head home. The ship pointed her bow in the direction of the first homeward-bound stop--the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong. The last UNREP conducted in the Western Pacific was held with the USS KANSAS CITY (AOR-3) on the 12th of October.

A two day transit saw the ship to Hong Kong and the first and last true liberty port during the seven month deployment. No repair work, other than normal maintenance, was undertaken during the week inport. SOMERSMEN devoted themselves fully to the task at hand--enjoying Hong Kong and looking forward to a swift transit to the States. On the 20th, the ship was underway from bouy #1, Naval Mooring Area, Hong Kong Harbor, enroute to Long Beach, California, via Subic Bay, Guam and Pearl Harbor. Her companions for the voyage home were two other members of Destroyer Squadron NINETEEN--the USS EVERSOLE (DD-789) and the USS OZBORNE (DD-846); as well as the USS BERKELEY (DDG-15) and the USS JOHN S. MC CAIN (DDG-36).

The State-side transit was noteworthy only in its sameness. The days passed slowly and no amount of ship handling drills, General Quarters, and cook-outs seemed to make them pass any quicker.

The big day finally arrived; and on 9 November, the familiar skyline of our homeport was visible for the first time in seven months. A warm welcome home was on tap; and after the festivities had quieted down, a pride in a job "well done" was the prevailing spirit.

The remaining months of 1972 were uneventful in terms of underway time. Until the middle of December, time was allotted simply to taking advantage of being home. However, even a veteran of a long deployment must earn her daily bread, and a two-day period at sea was scheduled on the 12th and 13th of December to conduct test firings of two ASROC missiles and a torpedo.

The year ended with SOMERS observing a holiday leave and up-keep period in her berth at Long Beach Naval Station, Pier 15. It had been a busy year with well over half of the year spent away from home. The USS SOMERS (DDG-34) had once again lived

? er nickNAMED ONE "SUPER".

? Was later LEARNed that the Super-SOMERS was awarded the
T. ? Commander's for excellence awards for the competitive
YB ? ing in OCTOBER, 1972, in areas of Operations, Gunnery,
MI ?, and Engineering.