

Life On U.S. Picket Ship Not Easy In Cold South

In October each year an American ship calls at Dunedin and makes it the home port for the summer. We see the sailors, many visit the ship and learn of its work as a weather picket station, working in conjunction with Operation "Deepfreeze."

But what is life like as they sit in the ocean for three weeks at a time, taking weather readings and relaying the information back to "Deepfreeze" headquarters in Christchurch?

To find out, a Daily Times reporter and photographer joined the U.S.S. Calcaterra on a 21-day picket.

As the Calcaterra sailed down the Victoria Channel on December 15, I looked back at Dunedin and felt I might have made a mistake in joining the ship.

All one heard when they

... To Remember But Not Repeat

Staff Reporter

A three-week tour on the weather picket ship U.S.S. Calcaterra was an experience to remember, but not one to repeat.

Certainly there were bright spots, seeing icebergs for the first time, Campbell Island, a ride in a whale boat 500 miles from land, Christmas at the Bellany Islands, but they did not compensate for the daily boredom that increased as one became familiar with the ship and its routine.

There is no privacy aboard ship and when the men are off duty they can only sit in the long mess decks or lie in the long rows of bunks. Nowhere can they have time to themselves to sit and think.

I admire them and thank them for their hospitality, but I don't envy them.

Crushed to Death

Sydney.—A father of four was crushed to death, when a trench collapsed at Coogee, an eastern suburb. He was Theodore Gallouzis (48), of Glebe.

returned from picket was of high seas, storms and damage to the ship. But it was too late.

We had been delayed 60 minutes in leaving while spare parts were unloaded from the railway yards and brought to the ship.

At 9.30 they were unpacked and I saw America as I had heard of it.

A small part for a computer had been ordered from Christchurch. It was supposed to be about the size of a box of chocolates. But a complete new set was sent, weighing about 600lb. And then it was the wrong model.

All the same, if that is the way they treat equipment orders, someone should order a new anchor. They may get a whole ship.

That would be a splendid idea. The Calcaterra was built in 1943 and expected to do only one trip across the Atlantic as a destroyer escort.

Looking at it that first day, it was hard to imagine it riding the legendary storms.

As soon as we were out of the channel we started rolling. Not very much, but with the calm sea it was disconcerting.

Films were shown at night.

DECEMBER 16

We spent four hours at Campbell Island this afternoon, and it was comforting not having to worry about the ground dropping 6in just as you were going to take a step.

The Island was not as barren as I expected, although all the shrubs are about 18in high. The colours were beautiful as we sailed up Perseverance Harbour and I could almost understand people living there.

It was wonderfully quiet after the city and even a welcome change from the whirling of air conditioning fans and the drumming of the ship's engines.

The living conditions are comfortable with central heating, carpets, billiards table and a good library. They even have a bar, something which is missing on the ship.

As tourists, we were taken

to see the sea elephants and sea lions—huge ugly creatures wallowing in holes in the ground and roaring and burping, annoyed at being disturbed. All were candidates for the title of "King Halitosis."

When we returned to the ship we heard one of the officers had been transferred to Vietnam. He will take command of a ship—quite an achievement for a chap of 26.

He will be transferred to the other picket the Thomas

J. Gary, which we are relieving on picket station, on Thursday.

The sea was rough at night and the ship really rolled. They say she has taken some 58 degree rolls, but no-one will say what it needs to capsize. Chairs moved quietly across the wardroom and returned to almost the same place. It's a weird sight to see an empty chair move about 20ft. You keep looking for pink elephants.

(Continued tomorrow.)

Life On U.S. Picket Ship Not Easy In Cold South

In October each year an American ship calls at Dunedin and makes it the home port for the summer. We see the sailors, many visit the ship and learn of its work as a weather picket station, working in conjunction with Operation "Deepfreeze."

But what is life like as they sit in the ocean for three weeks at a time, taking weather readings and relaying the information back to "Deepfreeze" headquarters in Christchurch?

To find out, a Daily Times reporter and photographer joined the U.S.S. Calcaterra on a 21-day picket.

As the Calcaterra sailed down the Victoria Channel on December 15, I looked back at Dunedin and felt I might have made a mistake in joining the ship.

All one heard when they

returned from picket was of high seas, storms and damage to the ship. But it was too late.

We had been delayed 60 minutes in leaving while spare parts were unloaded from the railway yards and brought to the ship.

At 9.30 they were unpacked and I saw America as I had heard of it.

A small part for a computer had been ordered from Christchurch. It was supposed to be about the size of a box of chocolates. But a complete new set was sent, weighing about 600lb. And then it was the wrong model.

All the same, if that is the way they treat equipment orders, someone should order a new anchor. They may get a whole ship.

That would be a splendid idea. The Calcaterra was built in 1943 and expected to do only one trip across the Atlantic as a destroyer escort.

Looking at it that first day, it was hard to imagine it riding the legendary storms.

As soon as we were out of the channel we started rolling. Not very much, but with the calm sea it was disconcerting.

Films were shown at night.

DECEMBER 16

We spent four hours at Campbell Island this afternoon, and it was comforting not having to worry about the ground dropping 6in just as you were going to take a step.

The Island was not as barren as I expected, although all the shrubs are about 18in high. The colours were beautiful as we sailed up Perseverance Harbour and I could almost understand people living there.

It was wonderfully quiet after the city and even a welcome change from the whirling of air conditioning fans and the drumming of the ship's engines.

The living conditions are comfortable with central heating, carpets, billiards table and a good library. They even have a bar, something which is missing on the ship.

As tourists, we were taken

to see the sea elephants and sea lions—huge ugly creatures wallowing in hollows in the ground and roaring and burping, annoyed at being disturbed. All were candidates for the title of "King Halitosis."

When we returned to the ship we heard one of the officers had been transferred to Vietnam. He will take command of a ship—quite an achievement for a chap of 26.

He will be transferred to the other picket the Thomas

J. Gary, which we are relieving on picket station, on Thursday.

The sea was rough at night and the ship really rolled. They say she has taken some 58 degree rolls, but no-one will say what it needs to capsize. Chairs moved quietly across the wardroom and returned to almost the same place. It's a weird sight to see an empty chair move about 20ft. You keep looking for pink elephants.

(Continued tomorrow.)

... To Remember But Not Repeat

Staff Reporter

A three-week tour on the weather picket ship U.S.S. Calcaterra was an experience to remember, but not one to repeat.

Certainly there were bright spots, seeing icebergs for the first time, Campbell Island, a ride in a whale boat 500 miles from land, Christmas at the Bellany Islands, but they did not compensate for the daily boredom that increased as one became familiar with the ship and its routine.

There is no privacy aboard ship and when the men are off duty they can only sit in the long mess decks or lie in the long rows of bunks. Nowhere can they have time to themselves to sit and think.

I admire them and thank them for their hospitality, but I don't envy them.

Crushed to Death

Sydney.—A father of four was crushed to death, when a trench collapsed at Coogee, an eastern suburb. He was Theodore Gallouzis (48), of Glebe.