

U. S. S. SPRINGFIELD (CLG-7)

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TO THE FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF SPRINGFIELDERS:

In this, my first SPRINGFIELDGRAM, I would like to introduce myself, Captain James B. HILDRETH, and say I am very happy to have this opportunity of writing personally to SPRINGFIELD families.

With the ship away from the States for about three years at a time, I am sure you must at times become anxious about the welfare of your "SPRINGFIELD Man" and be interested in his work and the many fascinating places he is seeing throughout the Mediterranean countries which the ship annually visits. In this and future letters, I will be writing to you about the SPRINGFIELD, for I know that you are proud of her--as we are--and are interested in her various activities.

The SPRINGFIELD recently returned from a two month cruise to ports in the eastern Mediterranean, including the somewhat mystical city of Istanbul, Turkey, where, as the ship transited the straits of the Dardanelles, we could see the mainland of Europe on the one hand and Asia on the other.

Many of our men saw for the first time the intriguing Moslem mosques with their distinctive minarets, the Grand Oriental Bazaar of Istanbul where in 4,000 tightly packed shops, items of nearly any description can be purchased. And most men returned from their liberty ashore with various water pipes, meerschaum pipes, fezzes, and typical Turkish puzzle rings.

From there, we went on to the beautiful and ancient city of Athens, Greece, where one could not miss the impressive ruins of the Acropolis and its Parthenon, the temple to Athena. Here the men had their first introduction to Greek mythology.

Our next port, Beirut, Lebanon, is a rapidly growing city of a mixed French-Arab culture, where there is also a large American Community. Tours offered the men--as they are in all cities visited--took them to the hugh ruins of early Roman-Phoenician civilization in nearby Byblos and Baalbeck. Tasting the fine Lebanese food specialities was a real treat for our touring sailors. In addition, about 80 SPRINGFIELD men took the special two-day tour to the Holy Land.

Besides the organized tours to places of interest in each city, the men are offered recreational activities in athletic games with local teams or with other ships in company with us. And the services of a USO or Fleet Canteen set up by the local American community are always available for the men for entertainment, information, and snacks while on liberty.

But while SPRINGFIELD serves in a goodwill function among the Mediterranean countries as Flagship for the Commander of the U. S. SIXTH Fleet, much of her time is also spent in operations at sea with other ships of our fleet or Allied Nations. In fact, the Flagship has just completed a bilateral operation with the Spanish Armed Forces.

So while we do have the unrivalled chance to visit many ports and countries and come to know many cultures and peoples, we are also a unit of American sea power in this part of the world and have a function to perform in our defense system. We enjoy ourselves while "on the beach" but there is always hard work underway again at sea. And we are underway 70% of the time.

Because of SPRINGFIELD's important mission in this part of the world she will not be able to be in the States for the approaching Christmas season. The ship will be spending the holidays in its homeport of Villefranche-sur-Mer, a small quaint town on the French Riviera.

Many men will take the opportunity of a special low-price commercial flight to their hometown over the holidays, but for those who remain in SPRINGFIELD, we will have sumptuous and extra-special Christmas Day meal--as we did for Thanksgiving Day--and special liberty ashore will be granted the men.

As in previous years, many men will be afforded the chance to spend an evening or enjoy a meal with a French family in the USO Holiday Home Hospitality program. French families, as well as many British and American families residing on the Riviera, have asked that they be permitted to extend invitations to sailors for lunch or dinner during the holidays. While our men may be unable to be with their own families over the important Christmas holidays, they nevertheless will be able to join others at their home; particularly important during this season. It is also a chance to make friends with the French people on the Riviera who are our hosts.

I will be writing you in future SPRINGFIELDGRAMS and am always happy to hear from the families of SPRINGFIELD men. May the coming holiday season be a meaningful and joyful one for you.

*And the
best in the
New Year!*

Sincerely,

J. B. Hildreth
J. B. HILDRETH
Captain, U. S. Navy
Commanding