



USS NASSAU (LHA-4)

FPO NEW YORK 09557

IN REPLY REFER TO:
30 September 1980

Dear Family and Friends of NASSAU,

During these last six weeks since relieving Rear Admiral Kearns, I have been busy learning about NASSAU and getting a grasp of the technical aspects of the shipyard work going on all through the ship. It's time now for me to give you a brief report on my first impressions and bring you up to date on how we stand today and what I expect to see happening in the months ahead.

First let me say that no ship in which I've served has ever impressed me as much as has NASSAU in these first weeks. Her capabilities and the professionalism of her crew are indeed overwhelming. Those of you reading this who have followed NASSAU's progress since commissioning already know of her reputation. For those of you who have only recently joined the "family", I feel certain that you will be as impressed in the months ahead as I have been.

The 15th of October will mark the mid-point of our stay in the Norfolk Naval Shipyard. As of today, I see excellent progress in almost all of the jobs assigned both to the shipyard and to the crew. The modification to the berthing spaces to provide for more individual privacy will be essentially completed in the next 30 days. The huge job of modifying our Engineering propulsion system will be completed by the first of December. The extensive modification throughout the ship that will give us an Aircraft Carrier's capabilities for the repair and support of helicopters and verticle take-off and landing (VSTOL) jets will continue past the holiday season but will be wrapped up easily by the first of March. In short, I don't see any reason at this point to be concerned about extension in the shipyard. My prediction is that we'll be ready for sea trials in late February and will be ready to move back to the Naval Base piers on March 15th.

While the schedule after this yard period will not be fully "set in concrete" until January, the following is what I think we can expect:

15 March - 15 April: Inport for training and loadout. Possibility of short underway periods for ammo and fuel loading and for equipment checkouts. No family separation.

15 April - 15 May: Workday (Mon-Fri) underway training in the local area. Inport on weekends.

15 May - 15 June: Continue underway training in Engineering and Gunnery/Missile systems.

15 June - 15 July: Some underway training with inport periods scheduled for maintenance and inspections.

Mid July - early Sept: Five or Six weeks in the Caribbean for Refresher Training (Guantanamo Bay, Cuba) and Gunfire Support Qualification.

Oct-Dec: Short duration cruises for training and for support of USMC training objectives. In homeport for the holidays.

Jan. '82: Overseas deployment (approximately 5 months)

Getting back to the present, my relieving of Rear Admiral Kearns is not the only change in NASSAU. On October 1st Master Chief Petty Officer Haisten will be giving up his position as Master Chief of the Command and moving on to shore duty in Florida. I have designated Senior Chief Walsh as NASSAU's next Senior Enlisted Advisor. Senior Chief Walsh will continue Master Chief Haisten's practice of helping me stay tuned to NASSAU's families by working closely with our Ombudsman and the Enlisted Wives Club. Here, too, we're seeing changes. Mrs. Harriet Riddle has informed me that she must give up her Ombudsman position in the near future in anticipation of her husband's transfer. Mrs. Riddle's service to NASSAU families goes back to the days when the pre-commissioning crew first started to gather. She'll be sorely missed. Both Anita Williams (tel. 489-1978) and Linda Louk (tel. 466-1718) will continue to be available should you need the assistance of someone trained to cut red tape and willing to act as a liaison between you and me or whoever it is that can take action to help you solve a problem.

Although this letter is addressed to a wide range of both family and friends, some of you reading it are wives who are either living in the Norfolk/Virginia Beach area or will be moving here soon. Let me shift gears for a moment and talk to just that group. Do you know about the NASSAU Wives Club? With the summer now behind us a new year of activities is about to get underway, designed to enlarge each members circle of friends. Each meeting includes business (with Christmas plans about to occupy most of the attention) and a social hour. The next meeting will take place at the Ship and Shore Club (Naval Base) October 16th at 7 P.M. The election and installation of officers for 1981 is scheduled for that night. If you're not currently on the mailing list, contact Terri Rhodes at 428-9066 (after 6 P.M.) for details. I'll be at this October meeting to conduct the installation and hope to meet you. Refreshments--free baby sitting--a warm reception--a good time.

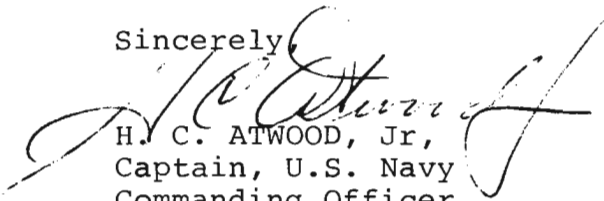
While I don't know very many of you yet, I hope that as questions arise or if there are problems that you feel should be brought to my attention, you will feel free to write to me. If you'll mark the envelope "personal" your letter will come to me directly (unopened) without being delayed by any administrative processing. Your letter should be sent to:

Capt. H. C. Atwood, Jr.
USS NASSAU (LHA 4)
FPO, New York 09557

Personal

In the meantime we'll be trying to stay in touch with you. Your copy of the NASSAU Newsletter (which used to be called a "Familygram") will be coming to you the first week in November. My next letter should be in your hands early in December. By that time Christmas will be just around the corner and our stay in the shipyard nearing the end.

Sincerely,


H. C. ATWOOD, Jr,
Captain, U.S. Navy
Commanding Officer