

CHAPTER 5 - Part 3 - San Francisco (Thanks to Fred Wilson for jogging some of the memories - underlined)

The past 18 months had seen a few changes occur.

1. The US Navy had complained that Endeavour's "Duck Egg" blue paintwork was hard to see down the ice, so prior to sailing for the 1966/67 season, the hull and superstructure were painted RN Grey, with the pennant numbers on the hull being shifted to the bow, but still painted black.
2. Upon arriving at Winter Quarters Bay during the 66/67 season, the XO, Lt Cdr Bernie Commons, wasn't too happy with the way that the Americans were securing the lines. He jumped down from the ship with one foot landing on perma-ice, which caused his heel to drive up into his ankle. He was taken to the sick-bay at McMurdo and then MEDEVAC'd on the first flight back to NZ. Lt K (Fred) Wilson took over as XO. Many years later I came across Bernie. He had a permanent limp and was driving the old tug Daldy on fishing trips. Lt Cdr J. Beauchamp took over as XO at the beginning of 1968.
3. During the 67 refit, the ship was again painted - this time a darker, US Navy grey. The pennant numbers were painted white with black shading - very USN.
4. Ammo dumping caused a few injuries. The ammo boxes weighed about 50kg each and caused back, shoulder and elbow problems to some of the crew. The aggravation to my lower back (injury from Pearl Harbor - Royalist 1965) intensified to such an extent that one day I bent over to check that the safe was locked and couldn't get back up again - I resembled a half open pocket knife. The W/T Office door was in two halves - like a stable door and I had the top half open. My yells for assistance were heard, the PO Medic (Tom Neve) was summoned and with a willing helper, put me in the vertical position. On posting back to HMNZS Wakefield later in 1968, the navy referred me to a chiropractor for possible treatment. Treatment was never successful and has resulted in arthritis in the sacroiliac joints and lower spine, fusing the vertebrae together. I am now two and half inches shorter. Having been a 5 foot 8 and half inch giant, I am now a 5 foot 6 inch short arse.
5. Broadcast WVR had become on-line radioteletype for the frigates only. Broadcast WV became WV for CW two hours on and two hours off and WVA for off-line RATT every other two hours on and two hours off. (WV 0800-1000, WVA 1000-1200, etc)

The last six months had been quite busy:

Received 2,800 messages

Transmitted 362 naval messages

Transmitted 150 private radio telegrams, 28 interflora telegrams to the value of \$71.00

Carried out 40 radio telephone calls

Established communications and passed traffic to:

ZLBC Campbell Island ZLHL Lyttelton Harbour Board NAAO USCGC Glacier

ZLB Awarua Radio ZLQ Scott Base NGD McMurdo Station

OXVW Magga Dan ZLE Port Wireless Auckland ZLW Radfones Wellington

NIQC USCGC Burton Island NLKL USCGC Westwind CKN Vancouver

ZLO Irirangi CFH Halifax GXO Mauritius

VHK Canberra VHN Darwin ZLD Auckland Radio

ZLEA Mt Victoria, Auckland

On the 4th March 1968, the ship arrived back in Auckland. I had expected to be posted off but was told that I was staying on for the trip. 12 junior ratings from different branches straight from training joined the ship, including ORDN Rex Edwards and OSG Colin Newport. Tom Logan the dentist also joined for the trip.

The rest of March was spent preparing the ship for the trip to San Francisco and painting the upper deck and hull light grey again!

NZ Wines and lamb were stowed onboard for a cocktail party to be showcased by the NZ Consulate-General in San Francisco, along with representatives from the NZ Meat and Wine industries (they flew up).

Endeavour was to carry out several tasks on her trip to San Francisco and back. One of them was to drop charges over the stern at set times on the trip up so that they could be monitored back in NZ by the Naval Research Laboratory in Devonport (changed to Defence Scientific Establishment). In 1967, the Naval Research Lab had participated in a major joint trial with several US naval laboratories. Hudson Lab, USN Under Sea Center and several others. The work collected information on long range under sea sound transmission exploiting the so called SOFAR channel, much like VHF ducting in the upper atmosphere. So the passage to SF provided an excellent opportunity to stop at specified intervals taking measurements using an instrument called a velocimeter. This determined the axis of the SOFAR channel. The ship also ran a depth sounder and every 4 hours made bathythermograph observations. The crew went over to NRL for a talk on how they monitor the Pacific for underwater sounds and we listened to recordings of whale song and dolphin chatter. Very interesting. One of their scientists, George Crook, joined the ship for the deployment. George provided the information on SOFAR.

Explosives charges were to be dropped off at Rarotonga and Western Samoa.

The all important cocktail party at Treasure Island, San Francisco.

Ammunition for the NZ Army in Viet Nam was to be picked up from the Naval Weapon Station, Concord, California. Ammo was primarily 105mm for the RNZ Artillery Howitzers.

Soundings were to be undertaken off the Tokelaus.

Changing of the White Ensign at Nuie.

The ship was looking immaculate - tiddly as.. We had painted the decks a "forest green" mixed with sand in a 44 gallon drum (no, not one of the ones to make alcohol). The drum was then cautiously tipped over onto the decks at various intervals with a L/Sea using a squeegee to disperse the paint in all directions and then us "scrubbers" would use long handled scrubbers to spread the paint evenly over the decks - my plastic sandals developed a green overcoat. After we had sailed from Auckland away from COMAUCK's eyes, the upper deck was made into recreation spaces. A 9-hole deck golf course was painted on the boat deck and deck quoits on the focsle. Deck golf was played with old hockey sticks and Fred recalls that the balls were made of wood with a lead pellet hammered into the base for added stability. The lead came from the supply reserved for the lugless joining shackle and Fred Hansen (the Buffer) was not amused. The quoits were made from rope. One of the starboard, fuel cargo tanks was turned into a salt water swimming pool and the EMs rigged a floodlight inside. A Pacific cruise was coming up and we were getting paid for it..

We sailed from the Naval Base on the 8th April and went to the explosives anchorage off Motuihe to take on the explosive charges for the Cook Islands and Western Samoa. Finally departed NZ 9th April. We sailed through and into the eye of Cyclone Bola, just east of Great Barrier Island that had devastated the East Coast and Wellington later that morning and led to the foundering of the ferry Wahine (10 April 1968). My father had been promoted to Captain and was Orderly Officer at Army Headquarters that night. He was responsible for organising trucks, food, drink and blankets for the survivors.

Cruising speed throughout the voyage was about 9 knots. Plenty of flying fish committed suicide on the trip. Some managed to fly right over the tank deck and some didn't. The ship also came across a female humpback whale and its calf and kept pace with them at a respectable distance for about half an hour.

Crossed the International Date Line and on the 15th April we arrived at Rarotonga and offloaded the explosives. I first visited Rarotonga in 1966 - the population was about 600. The main buildings in Avarua were Burns Philp Traders and the NZ Government bond store which only sold alcohol to non-islanders. Muri Lagoon on the eastern side of the island with pristine beaches and orange trees galore and the only building there was the ex-pats sailing club. Population on Rarotonga is now about 9,000 and the beach at Muri Lagoon is just hotel after hotel after hotel....



Muri Lagoon before the tourist rush. At low tide you can wade out to that small island.

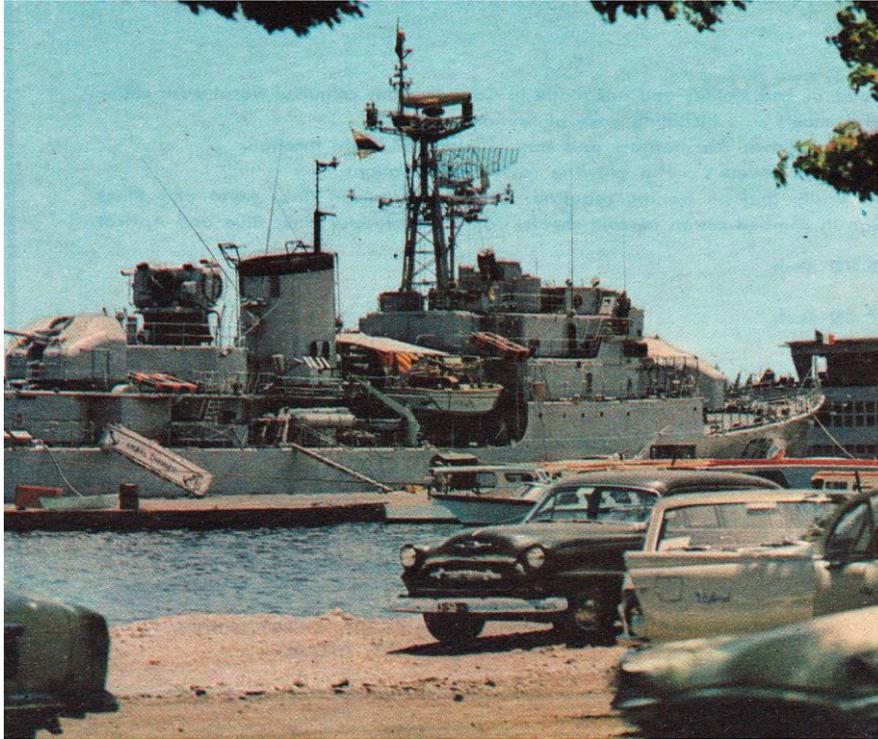
Sailed the same day for Papeete, Tahiti. Arrived at Papeete 18th April and berthed over at the town. An enthusiastic welcome was given by lithesome, nubile young women who gave us loin-stirring dances accompanied by young men beating a fast rhythm on empty kerosene tins. Not sure if the french frigate **FNS Amiral Charner** was our host ship but they proved to be good run ashore oppos and I was able to use my school boy French again. Went on to harbour skeds with Irirangi - did this up the islands if going alongside or anchored off for more than 24 hours. Our soccer team (of which I was a member) played the French Foreign Legion and got thrashed. I don't think it helped that they hosted us before the match with red wine.



Note the Deck Quoit marking on the focsle



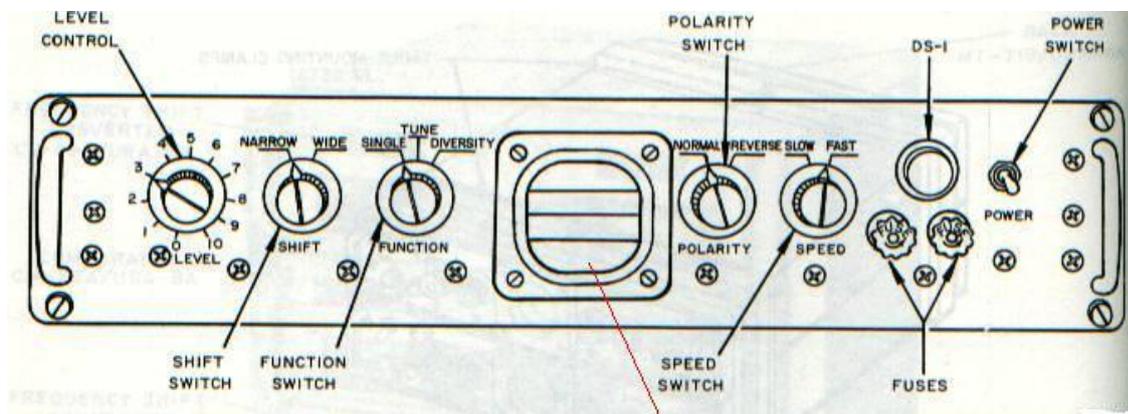
One of the main streets, Papeete



FNS Amiral Charner - a Commandant Riviere class frigate. Pic taken out of a local paper.

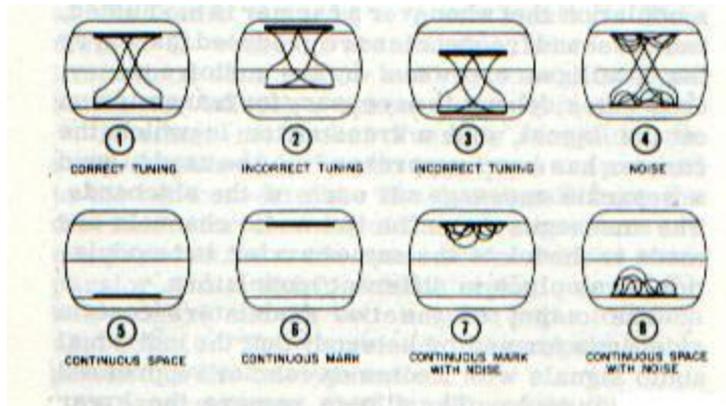
Departed Papeete 20th April.

The radioteletype broadcast from Irirangi had become marginal, so I shifted to the CW broadcast from Honolulu NPM. Broadcast Hotel single operator skeds. Traffic started at 25 wpm and built up to 28 wpm especially for long messages like news reports. I said to the XO that a couple of hours a day for ORDN Rex Edwards would be beneficial to improving his morse reading skills. He approved and Rex joined me for a couple of days for one sked only each day. I was also monitoring the signal strength of the Canadian navy off-line radioteletype broadcast EAR (frequencies and sked times were in RNCP 3) from CKN Aldergrove, BC, to see when it was good enough to change over from Honolulu and after a couple of days, determined that it was. Endeavour's radioteletype comparator/convertor AN/URA-17 was different to AN/URA-8B in some of the other units in the RNZN as part of the RATT 2 system.



AN/URA-17 Comparator-convertor

Scope



Monitor oscilloscope patterns for frequency-shift converter AN/URA-17

On the Function switch to the Diversity position, I had a B40 using one of the wire aerials and a receiver on one of the AN/URC-32 transmitter/receiver with a whip. Unfortunately, in heavy seas when the ship used to heel from one side to the other, neither whips nor horizontal wires were good enough to counteract the doppler effect. You could hear and see the signal starting to drop in strength like a train coming to you faintly from the left, roaring past and then fading off to the right and then reversing as the ship heeled back again.

Initially there was a bit of confusion as the Canadians had a Canadian Forces Ship (similar to a Royal Fleet Auxiliary) named Endeavour and in those days, ships' prefixes such as HMNZS, HMCS, HMAS, CFS, RFA, etc weren't used - only ships' names. The Canadian authorities sent a signal to RCN, USN and RNZN authorities requesting them to use ships' prefixes in order to avoid confusion.

Arrived San Francisco about 5th May.

Prior to entering San Francisco, 2182 kHz (International Distress and Calling MF) (which was remoted to the Bridge at sea) was used to call the Port authorities along with a 2 MHz voice frequency for US Navy Harbour Control. We passed under the Golden Gate Bridge and headed to Treasure Island, where we were met by a naval tug which gently guided us into our berth. There were about six destroyers berthed at T.I. - all were part of the 12th Naval District USN Reserve fleet and each ship had a small, permanent, USN crew on board.



Treasure Island was reclaimed land at Yerba Buena Island built for the 1939 San Francisco Exposition. The San Francisco - Oakland Bridge went through Yerba Buena island and the berths on Treasure Island can be seen on the right.



Closed down on the Canadian broadcast and the naval communication centre at Treasure Island took communications guard for us. Murray Purves and myself did Duty Communicator (day on/day off).

We stayed at Treasure Island for about 10 days which allowed the crew to go ashore and sample the delights of San Francisco, using the excellent bus service that connected the city to Treasure Island. A former US marine, who had been stationed at Paekakariki, Wellington, during WWII, had arranged for the ships company to be picked up by a navy bus and taken on a tour across the Golden Gate bridge, through a Californian redwood forest, then a hippy commune (lots of nude bodies) before ending up at the ex-marine's restaurant where he had put on a lavish spread. He said that this was in payment for the great hospitality that he had been shown in NZ.

Colin MacDonald and I went to the city on one occasion and found an Irish Bar, named Harrington's . It was only a small bar but very cosy - conducive to staying for a pint or two. I went back there in 1984 and the bar hadn't changed - even sat on the same bar stool.



Harrington's

The USN said that we could have free tickets to Disneyland in Los Angeles. Unfortunately, it was about 400 miles away and free transport and accommodation weren't included. Four of the ships company hired a car and drove down to take advantage of the tickets.

Visited the usual tourist attractions - Fisherman's Wharf, Nob Hill and rode on the cable cars. The main streets had been dug up as part of the underground section of the Bay Area Rapid Transit Rail system, leaving big holes and you could see the workmen down below. Passenger services began in 1972.

We finally left Treasure Island and I had asked the Commcen at T.I. to route our traffic through to the Naval Communications Centre at Naval Weapon Station, Concord, maintaining watch on Harbour Control for the passage up the Sacramento River. The ship proceeded up the river, where we passed a lot of WWII Liberty ships waiting to be sold/dismantled. Arrived at the Naval Weapon Station, Concord, Port Chicago to take on the ammunition which was loaded into one of the empty fuel cargo tanks. No 5 tank on the starboard side, three back from the XO's cabin and only one away from the Junior Rates Mess... The ship had 8 fuel cargo tanks - 4 starboard and 4 port and were numbered like every thing navy - odd to starboard and even to port.

See pic below.

We berthed alongside that narrow jetty in the foreground. The other wharves just above that weren't there then. The naval base, including the commcen, was about two km off to the right and there was an excellent EM's Club there - saw colour TV for the first time. Went back to San Francisco for one last visit and the fare was \$1.20 each way. Fred Wilson recalls seeing hippies outside the main gate protesting against the Vietnam War with signs saying "Freedom was born and died in Port Chicago." They had begun the vigil in 1966 which continued into the 70's.



Sailed for Pearl Harbor about 17th May and arrived on the 26th May, met by **HMNZS Otago**. I had set watch on the Canadian broadcast EAR (Single op skeds) on sailing from NWS Concord, closed down on arrival Pearl Harbor, who took communications guard and Murray and I did Duty Communicator. We were allocated a berth on our own away from other ships in case the ammunition on board decided to blow up. Once again I enjoyed the regular arrival of the mobile canteen in Pearl. The chocolate milks and tuna sandwiches were to die for. I remember that when Royalist first arrived in Pearl in 1965, there was one mobile canteen that used to do the whole fleet, but after a couple of days, there was one canteen allocated for Royalist's own use. The duty quartermaster used to pipe "Wingding is now alongside" and there would be a stampede down the gangway.

A USN Radioman 2nd Class (LRD) came over to visit. He was the sparker on another Patapsco Class tanker and was impressed with Endeavour's Wireless Office. The office on his ship was where our chart room was, immediately aft of the Bridge. Shouted him lunch, a tot and a beer and he went on his way rejoicing.

We stayed in Pearl for a couple of days, and I visited the EM's Club once. Most of us were devoid of funds after San Francisco. NZ had devalued its currency prior to the changeover to decimal in 1967 and the government had pulled the strings on spending. Consequently, our allowances were virtually non-existent. Embarked two NZ scientists who were going to carry out research on the populace of the Tokelaus. The ship sailed for the Tokelaus about 28th May and I set watch again on Broadcast EAR and was able to maintain that until WVA became usable a couple of days out from Fakaofa.

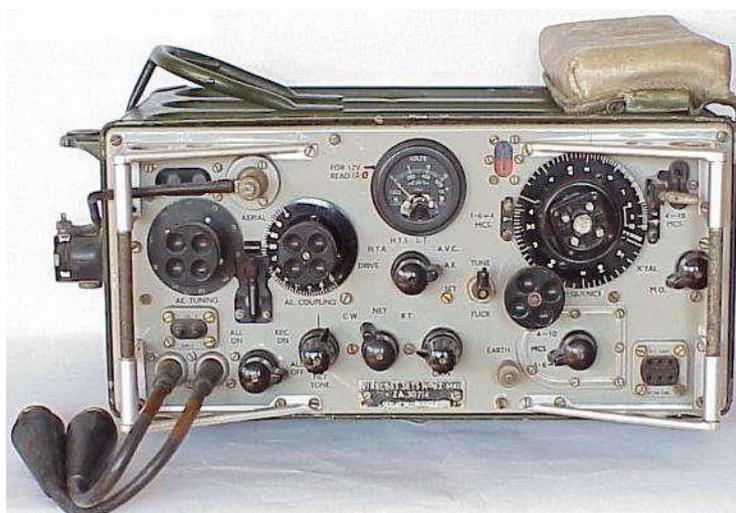
Whilst on passage, the stokers had rigged hoses over the tank deck in order to continuously pump sea water over it to keep the temperatures down to avoid the ammunition from detonating.

The ship arrived off Fakaofa Reef (Tokelaus) on the 5th June. Visited the three atolls that make up the Tokelaun Group, to enable the scientists to do their thing.

7 June 1968 – arrived at Nukunono

8-9 June 1968 – at sea on sounding operations

10 June 1968 – departed Nukunono & arrived at Atafu in the afternoon. Went ashore briefly at Atafu between skeds to stretch the legs and met a NZ Ministry of Works engineer who was building a storm shelter out of concrete blocks. He had a land crab which he kept on a long piece of string. The crab climbed up the coconut trees and cut the stems of the coconuts so that they would fall to the ground. They had an antiquated CW radio set on Atafu and their radio operator said that it wasn't working. George Crook went ashore to have a look and found that the battery had been drained due to the operator hooking up a light to it and reading comics all night. They needed a radio and operator to cover the period whilst the battery was being recharged. Rex Handcock took the 622 ashore and stayed on the island until we picked him, our radio and the scientists up three days later.



Type 622

13 June 1968 – departed for Apia

15 June 1968 – arrived at Apia and offloaded the explosives. Went on to harbour skeds. The village closest to the harbour off to the left, invited the ships' company to a feast. They supplied the Bully Beef and boiled bananas and we supplied the tins of baked beans. Aggie Grey's hotel was off to the right where you could get fairly cheap beer and relax. On the way back through a vegetated area, you ran the gauntlet of **Fa'afafines** who offered to "blow one up". The area was known locally as the minefield, from which one kept well clear of.

17 June 1968 – departed Apia for Niue

19 June 1968 – arrived Nuie. The ship's rugby team played the locals - can't remember the score.



The only ones I remember in the back row are L/Sea Hardy in the striped jersey and OSG Colin Newport, far right.

Kneeling left to right - ASG Murray Purves, ???, POME Gil Pickens, L/Wtr Blue Simmonds, ME1 Rule and PRD Rex Handcock.

Prior to sailing on the 20th, the White Ensign was changed to the NZ White Ensign.

26 June 1968 – came alongside at Calliope Wharf.

Went on leave and drafted off 31 July 1968. Endeavour would be the last ship that I would serve on using the old RATT 2 system. My next sea draft would be in 1970 when I posted to an ICS fitted frigate which had the new-fangled RATT Outfit RWA. Endeavour has been a milestone in my career and heartfelt thanks go to George Hill and Rex Handcock for giving me free rein.

More to follow...