

her and yet maintain an air of quiet organization.

A USO Handshake tour brought singer/actor Cary Crosby and television's Bob Dornan aboard for a day. These men had a jam-packed day talking with many sailors, appearing on KISN and even taking a turn at the helm.

Following a hot and humid 28 days, Bann received another break from her Yankee Station duties. This time Bann sailors visited the exciting city of Hong Kong. Hong Kong, considered one of the best liberty ports in the world, is a cross-section of Western and Eastern cultures. Any item on the commercial market including yard goods, tailored suits, camera equipment, stereo sets, china, etc., from all over the world were available in Hong Kong at fantastically low prices. Bann men, seasoned to the haggling process of the East, obtained even lower prices on goods, and the ship began filling up with early Christmas presents.

But shopping wasn't the only thing Hong Kong offered. A tour into the New Territories offered a glimpse of Red China from the border and the far life of Asia could be observed. Tiger Balm Gardens found Bann camera men shooting roll after roll of film. It was evident to most why Hong Kong is known as one of the most picturesque cities in the world.

Motorized junks and Walla Wallas provided quite a ride even for seafaring Bann men. The round bottom, shallow draft boats would toss and pitch on every ripple, making it an art just to step from one Walla Walla to another.

A view from famed Victoria Peak opened the entire city to the sight of sailors. In the evening when the city's lights sparkled, the city resembled a gigantic kaleidoscope of neon lights. But in order to reach

the top of Victoria Peak, a sightseer experienced another thrill—ride on the Peak Tram.

The Peak Tram goes straight up and down the side of the mountain on a single set of rails. Suspended by a single cable, cars pass each other on the precarious incline at the only four-rail section located midway. As sailors watched the conductor walking at a 45-degree angle with the floor of the car, the question of the cable's strength naturally arose.

Hesitantly and with empty pockets, the men of Bennington departed Hong Kong, and the ship steamed for two days to Subic Bay. Due to a storm, the first day of liberty was spent at anchor. The following day, Sept. 29, found Ben tied up with yard workers busy performing upkeep work. Men with only one short line period to go began thinking more about their loved ones and home. So far, the cruise had been highly successful with no serious mishaps of any sort.

Safety became more than a subconscious thought as the ship started her last tour on Yankee. Time began to drag, letters poured toward the States. Suddenly, an announcement over the LMC, "free mail will close out at 2200." The end had arrived, and Bann could turn her bow north to Yokosuka.

Leaving the line on Oct. 20, Bann fought typhoon seas which swept waves across her flight deck. The task force slowed. The destroyers took a vicious pounding as big swells swamped their bridges and crashed over their smoke stacks. Four days of rain and wind were battled, but on the fifth day the ship tied up in Yokosuka.

Last-minute shopping filled Hangar Bay three with motorcycles. Office spaces, vodka and empty magazines were packed with overseas purchases. Rear

Admiral William J. Moran was relieved as COMSASWARRU 3, and the ship took on stores for the long journey home. The last official Yankee Station duty was completed on Oct. 26 when the Hornet relieved a weary but happy Bennington crew.

Heavy seas were forecast for the return trip to California, but this report was in error. A few general quarters drills were held, but the crew wasn't very enthusiastic. They were suffering "Channel Fever."

As daylight broke, Bann steamed into San Diego on Nov. 9. Quick work by the Air Group in off-loading enabled the ship to begin her final leg to Long Beach within two hours. The order of the day was a full-power run. Big Bann was doing more than 30 knots when the Captain found it necessary to take measures to slow in time for the first Long Beach breakwater.

Escorted by a water-plumed fireboat, the proud ship slowly maneuvered alongside a crowded Pier "E". The brows were dropped, and excited dependents clamored aboard to meet their sailors. The date: November 9, 1968. The event: COME. The mood: Relief and happiness.

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