

family day cruise

friends, dependents get first tastes of life

One thousand, seven-hundred, sixty-two friends, relatives and dependents of the men and officers of Bennington jammed the ship during the one-day Dependent's Day Cruise on Friday, July 11.

A continuous stream of colorful people flooded aboard via the two bows from 0600 until 0815 when the stragglers were hustled into the hangar bays and cranes lifted off the bows.

During the nine-hour cruise, the people were shifted around in three groups, enabling them to watch the three air shows and flight demonstrations. The island was jammed with people, it normally took anywhere from 20 to 45 minutes for personnel topside to find their way below.

The galley was serving the noon meal from 0900-1500, and both lines were in operation most of that time. They served grilled steak, hamburger and hot dogs, along with corn, Italian baked beans, brownies and ice cream. The guests were served in three shifts, according to the color of the guest cards.

Friday afternoon, the guests observed an anti-submarine air warfare exercise near Santa Catalina Island, involving two S-2s, an E-1B and an SH-3A helicopter. A simulated exercise in underway replenishment was accomplished next with the destroyer, O'Brien and later on they witnessed live demonstrations of the firepower available on Benn's port side from her two five-inch, 38-caliber guns.

According to head count, 1,332 guests were brought aboard by the enlisted men, and 430 were brought aboard by the officers. Last year, the total number of guests for the same cruise was approximately 1,200.

