

USS WILLIAM H. BATES (SSN 680)

FLEET POST OFFICE

NEW YORK, NEW YORK 09501

14 October 1976

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Degner,

On 5 May USS WILLIAM H. BATES left the United States to join the SIXTH Fleet in the Mediterranean. Your son was a member of BATES' crew for all of the extended deployment which followed.

While away from our home port of Groton, Ct., the ship sailed over 31,000 miles in five and one half months. Underway periods were up to 30 days in length between port calls which included Bizerte, Tunisia; Augusta Bay, Sicily; La Spezia, Italy; La Maddalena, Sardinia (where the ship conducted a 4 week refit alongside a deployed submarine tender); Naples, Italy; and Rosyth, Scotland.

The ship operated independently and with other air, surface and submarine units of the U.S. Atlantic and SIXTH Fleets. Prior to our final port call, BATES also participated in a large NATO exercise, TEAMWORK 76, in the North Atlantic.

The primary purpose of this letter is to emphasize two points. The first of these is the importance of the U.S. SIXTH Fleet's presence in the Mediterranean. In the face of the most rapidly growing fleet the world has ever known, that of the Soviet Union, the stabilizing influence of the SIXTH Fleet was evident to each of us. Partly because of the nature and success of BATES' operations, I believe Neal agrees that the obvious personal sacrifices required in this extended deployment are justified and that the ship was thoroughly challenged and profitably employed throughout. I certainly feel that way, and it is important to me that this thought be shared with you in view of the impact Neal's absence must have had on you while we were gone.

Secondly, I would like to comment on your son's performance during the deployment. Neal was a key contributor to what was obviously a team effort. The ship was individually commended for success in its operations by every operational commander under whom it performed:

Admiral David H. BAGLEY; Commander in Chief, U.S. Naval Forces Europe: "Please relay to each (member of BATES') crew of solid professionals my personal well done."

Vice Admiral Harry D. TRAIN, II; Commander SIXTH Fleet: "BATES' outstanding performance and spectacular success in every task assigned have made yours one of the finest submarine deployments to date."

Vice Admiral Joe WILLIAMS, Jr.; Commander Submarine Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet: "(BATES') efforts ...reflect great credit upon the Submarine Force. Please extend my congratulations to all hands for a job well done."

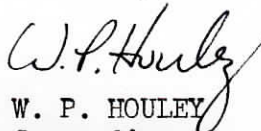
Vice Admiral John J. SHANAHAN, Jr.; Commander SECOND Fleet: "(BATES') performance ...was characteristically responsive and professional...."

Rear Admiral J. H. NICHOLSON; Commander Submarine Group EIGHT: "In your unique Med deployment, ...(BATES') fine crew achieved outstanding successes in all tasks.... (BATES') success in these operations set a standard of professionalism that will be hard to match. My sincere congratulations and appreciation to all hands for top level performance. BATES produces."

Neal has faced a continuing series of leadership challenges throughout his tour in BATES. This situation did not change during this deployment. In every case he has remained even tempered while maintaining the highest standards of personal and professional conduct. I have great respect for Neal and consider him one of the ship's key leaders.

We are all pleased that our ship is tentatively slated to be in home port for the Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year Holiday periods. I hope that these important family holidays will bring you the happiness and reward which you and your son richly deserve.

Sincerely,


W. P. HOULEY
Commanding

USS WILLIAM H. BATES (SSN680)
Phone Tree

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