

U. S. S. AUSTIN (LPD-4)

FLEET POST OFFICE
NEW YORK 09501

In reply refer to:

LPD4:TEM:rr

5000

Ser: 698

31 OCT 1967


From: Commanding Officer, USS AUSTIN (LPD-4)
To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-09B9)

Subj: Command History for 1965 through October 1967

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12 OP-09B9 Ser 4152909B9 dtd 8 Nov 1966
(b) Your ltr OP-09B91SH/jw Ser 3553P09B9 dtd 18 Oct 1967

Encl: (1) Command History for 1965 through October 1967

1. In accordance with references (a) and (b), enclosure (1) is herewith submitted.
2. Due to the relative newness of the AUSTIN and the fact that your files may not include a Command History of the AUSTIN for the year 1965, a consolidated History covering the time from the Ship's commissioning on 6 February 1965 up to 27 October 1967 has been prepared and forwarded in lieu of the Command History for year 1966 requested by reference (b).
3. All future Command Histories will be prepared and forwarded in accordance with instructions contained in reference (a).


R. A. HOFFMAN
By direction

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SHIP'S HISTORY - USS AUSTIN (LPD-4)

1963-1967

United States Ship AUSTIN (LPD-4) is the fourth ship of her type the first of her class and the third of the Fleet to bear the name. She is named for the city of Austin, Texas, which commemorates Stephen Fuller Austin, American colonizer and statesman. Her keel was laid at the New York Naval Shipyard, Brooklyn, on 4 February 1963. AUSTIN was christened 27 June 1964. Her sponsor was Miss Lynda Bird Johnson, the daughter of the 36th President of the United States, representing the city of Austin, Texas. Miss Luci Baines Johnson was her lady in waiting. The Christening address was delivered by Admiral H. P. Smith, USN, Commander in Chief Atlantic and U. S. Atlantic Fleet.

AUSTIN was commissioned 6 February 1965. The Commissioning Address was delivered by the Honorable Ralph W. Yarborough, Senior Senator of Texas. Other dignitaries present were Vice Admiral J. S. McCain, USN, Commander Amphibious Force, U. S. Atlantic Fleet and Commander E. A. Tucker, USN (Retired), representative of the city of Austin, Texas. Captain William H. Shaw, USN, assumed command of the AUSTIN on 6 February 1965.

AUSTIN remained at the New York Shipyard until May 1965 completing her various final trials and inspections. She arrived at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard on 26 May 1965 to complete outfitting. During September and October 1965, AUSTIN was engaged in refresher training and a shake-down cruise in the area of Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, as well as making a dependent's cruise for the servicemen and their dependents stationed at Guantanamo Bay, to Montego Bay, Jamaica.

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After leaving Cuba, the AUSTIN made a port of call at Corpus Christi, Texas, where several thousand citizens of Corpus Christi and surrounding areas visited the Ship. It was during this time that AUSTIN was presented with the beautiful Silver Punch Bowl Service which is now on display in the Wardroom. Guests of honor at the presentation were U.S. Senator R. W. Yarborough, Congressman J. J. Pickle, Austin Mayor L. E. Palmer, and Corpus Christi Mayor McSuer Fierman.

Upon leaving Corpus Christi, AUSTIN embarked twenty-five Navy Leaguers from the city of Austin whom we hosted on a cruise to Norfolk, Virginia.

From November 1965 through April 1966, the AUSTIN engaged in local independent steaming and amphibious exercise to maintain her operational readiness and, on 5 May 1966, she entered the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard for a period of two months to undergo needed repairs and alterations.

After leaving the yard and a brief stop in Norfolk and Port Everglades, Florida, AUSTIN headed south to Vieques Island where she spent about two weeks accomplishing standardization trials to determine the maneuvering characteristics of the AUSTIN class LPD.

It was then on to the scenic islands of St. Thomas and San Juan and from there to Port Hains, Dominican Republic, to assist in the withdrawal of units of the Inter-American Peace Force. Scheduled for a two and one-half day withdrawal period, AUSTIN demonstrated LPD flexibility by completing the task in a little over five hours by using a Mediterranean moor and loading over the lowered stern gate. After disembarking the units of IAPE at Sunny Point, North Carolina, on 9 August, AUSTIN proceeded to Norfolk to off-load fuel and ammunition.

On 21 August, she returned to the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard for further adjustments to the main propulsion plant.

During the time spent in the shipyard, the men and officers of the USS AUSTIN used that time to attend various schools.

After leaving the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard on 3 November 1966, the AUSTIN returned to its home port of Norfolk where it was refueled and loaded ammunition. The AUSTIN then took a short cruise to test some equipment which was again done in a record time of two days instead of the scheduled five.

Returned to port, the AUSTIN prepared for its Change of Command and to receive its new Captain, Robert W. Stecher. The Change of Command Ceremony took place on 25 November 1966 at which time Captain Stecher relieved Captain Shaw as the AUSTIN's Commanding Officer. Present at the Change of Command Ceremony was RADM W. P. Mack, COMPHIBGRU 2, and friends of both Captains.

On 27 November 1966 COMCRUDESFLT 10, RADM L. J. O'Brien, Jr. ^{estie} broke his flag in AUSTIN for the LANTFLEX 66, during which the AUSTIN was the flag ship for the "enemy" forces. A short one day stop was made at St. Thomas during the exercise, to provide the men time to relax and do some shopping. The AUSTIN returned to port on 15 December for its holiday leave period.

AUSTIN spent from December 1966 to April 1967 keeping the ship on a readiness condition for an extended deployment to the Caribbean during the summer. Operations were held at Onslow Bay Operations Area and the Virginia Capes Area. During this time the AUSTIN was the host ship to many reserve cruises. One cruise provided training for 175 men and officers from the forty Reserve Units of six districts.

On 30 January 1967, the AUSTIN suffered a great loss when Commander S. G. Cooper, USN, Executive Officer, was killed in an automobile accident.

Because he played such a great part in the promotion of the AUSTIN's internal relations, the ship's entertainment system was named WSGC in his memory.

On 24 February 1967, the AUSTIN was privileged to be picked as the host ship for the 25th Anniversary of the Amphibious Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet. During this occasion Miss Anita Bryant visited the ship, she helped serve the crew chow, and presented RD2 [REDACTED] with a Good Conduct Medal.

On 15 April 1967, the AUSTIN departed for Morehead City, North Carolina to embark Units of Battalion Landing Team 2/2 commencing her first long deployment as part of the Caribbean Ready Force CARIB 1-67. The ensuing four months were busy active ones for the ship, with the AUSTIN participating in numerous amphibious landings and training exercises. The most noteworthy of these was CLOVEHITCH III, a large scale amphibious operation involving the combined efforts of the Navy, Marine Corps, Army, and Air Force. The exercise took place in late April 1967 and initiated a long and profitable cruise for the AUSTIN. Other highlights of the cruise included port visits to Ponce and San Juan, Puerto Rico, Curacao, St. Thomas, Panama, and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

On 25 June 1967, while participating in Exercise HOLYSTONE as part of Task Group 44.9, the AUSTIN was visited by the Commander Amphibious Forces Atlantic, Vice Admiral Lloyd Mustin who observed the ship during a combat off-load conducted off the Island of Vieques.

Throughout the deployment, the AUSTIN demonstrated its great flexibility and particularly distinguished itself by proving its ability to carry and maintain an operational helicopter detachment during an extended deployment.

AUSTIN's stay in the Caribbean was capped by Exercise SHORT FUSE, an operation conducted on 11 and 12 August 1967 and designed to test the quick-reaction capabilities of the Caribbean Ready Force.

On 17 and 18 August 1967, the AUSTIN, at Morehead City, debarked its detachment of helicopters, vehicles, and nearly 500 Marines, and on 19 August 1967, the ship arrived in Norfolk, Virginia its home port.

On 26 August 1967, the AUSTIN suffered the second tragic loss of one of its officers when Lieutenant Commander G. R. Shimmons was killed in an automobile accident.

On 28 September 1967, the AUSTIN hosted a tour of the ship by students from the Armed Forces Staff and Command School and the Naval War College.

On 27 October 1967, Captain William H. Hoover relieved Captain Robert W. Stecher as the AUSTIN's Commanding Officer.

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

U. S. S. AUSTIN (LPD-4)

C/O FLEET POST OFFICE

NEW YORK, NEW YORK 09501

IN REPLY REFER TO

LPD4:TEM:bg

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Ser: 133

1 March 1968

OCT-DEC 1967

From: Commanding Officer, USS AUSTIN (LPD-4)

To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-09B9)

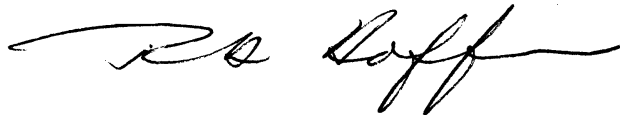
Subj: Command History for 28 October 1967 through 31 December 1967

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12 CH-1 dtd 11 Sept 1967

(b) AUSTIN ltr ser 698 of 31 Oct 1967

Encl: (1) Command History for 28 October 1967 through 31 December 1967

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosure (1) is herewith submitted.
2. Enclosure (1) and reference (b) represent the complete 1967 Command History for USS AUSTIN (LPD-4).



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R. A. HOFFMAN
By direction

COMMAND HISTORY FOR 28 OCTOBER THROUGH 31 DECEMBER 1967

On 28 October 1967, the day after Captain William H. HOOVER assumed his duties as Commanding Officer of the USS AUSTIN (LPD-4), he and his crew found themselves busily involved making preparations for the APOLLO 4 (AS-501) unmanned missile shot scheduled for 9 November 1967.

Although a Pacific Ocean recovery was planned, the AUSTIN along with four other ships organized to form Task Force 140 under the command of Rear Admiral Thomas A. Christopher, was deployed in the Atlantic to serve as a backup or contingency recovery force for a possible Atlantic splash-down of the APOLLO 4 spacecraft should there be an early mission abort or other unforeseen circumstances.

In addition to a possible capsule recovery, the AUSTIN had the mission of recovering two camera cassettes and the first stage booster. The film in these camera cassettes was very important since it was a photographic record of the separation of the first and second stage boosters of the Saturn V rocket.

On 4 November 1967, five SH3A "Sea King" helicopters and their crewmen of Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron ELEVEN from Quonset Point, Rhode Island and members of Underwater Demolition Team TWENTY-ONE from Little Creek, Virginia were embarked aboard the AUSTIN to assist her in her mission as the Atlantic Fleet primary recovery ship.

On 6 November 1967, the AUSTIN along with embarked helicopters, UDT personnel, and NASA representative departed Norfolk for her assigned station some 400 miles East of Cape Kennedy along the Apollo launch

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vehicle ground track. While en route, various drills and communications exercise designed to simulate actual launch conditions were conducted to prepare the AUSTIN for the part she was to play in the first flight of the Apollo series using the Saturn V launch vehicle.

AUSTIN's participation in the actual launch on 9 November 1967 was highly successful with the whole mission from beginning to end proceeding almost exactly on schedule. Both camera cassettes were recovered by helicopters about 45 minutes after the launch and returned immediately to the AUSTIN. AUSTIN's day-long search through the impact area also netted her several large pieces of debris from the first stage booster rocket later identified as fairing from ullage rocket motors and pieces of spray foam. At 2032Z on 9 November 1967 8 hours and 32 minutes after launch, the AUSTIN terminated her search of the impact area and departed for Norfolk, Virginia arriving there on 11 November.

From 13-16 November, the AUSTIN was again underway conducting Amtrac training exercises with marines from Camp Lejeune off Onlow Beach, North Carolina.

The remainder of 1967 was spent in a leave and upkeep period. Men were sent to various technical schools available in the Norfolk area, and leave during the Christmas holidays was granted for many of the AUSTIN's crew.

Enclosure (1)