

MULLINNIX UNITAS GRAM Number IV

en route to Valparaiso, Chile

Hello again:

Since my last letter, a great deal of water has flowed under our bridge. In the few weeks past we have visited Montevideo, Uruguay; Puerto Belgrano, Argentina; and Punta Arenas, Chile. These three ports were a remarkable study in contrasts and similarities.

Montevideo is a city with a population of more than one million, better than twenty-five per cent of the total population of the entire country, which is the smallest republic in South America. This prosperous city was very pleasant to visit, with many similarities to American cities. The people were very friendly, and we thoroughly enjoyed our stay from 18 to 23 September. A real treat was the fact that we could drink their milk, our first fresh milk since leaving home.

Uruguay is perhaps the most stable and democratic of all the nations of South America. This stability is reflected in the well-being of the people. Almost every imposing building, and many apartments and homes, would be described to you with the closing phrase, "Owned by the State". Automobiles are expensive and are kept for many years. We saw many Model "T" Fords in display room condition. Model "A"'s were seen in great numbers.

One of the nicest things about such a cruise as this is the great meaning history is given by having actually been where the events took place. We passed very close to the watery grave of the German "pocket-battleship", ADMIRAL GRAF SPLE, whose scuttles off Montevideo in December of 1939 caused such jubilation in those dark days of the early part of World War II. The bottom is very muddy off Montevideo, and the wreck has now sunk completely out of sight.

Current history is also given much meaning when you feel the press of events affecting your actions. So was it with us in the days immediately preceding our scheduled sailing from Montevideo for operations at sea with Argentine and Uruguayan units prior to entry into Puerto Belgrano, Argentina's main naval base. The political crises afflicting Argentina put quite an element of doubt into our operations, but as it turned out, all went entirely as scheduled.

Puerto Belgrano is an artificial harbor used solely for military purposes near the city of Bahia Blanca. The thousands of workers here live in the town of Punta Alta ("High Point"). Our visit was extremely pleasant, as the Argentines were very friendly and hospitable to us. They are a proud people, and justly so, for their nation has a great historical tradition.



The weather is absolutely unbelievable. This region is famed for "Williwaws", violent storms which blow up on an hour's notice and reach wind velocities of hurricane force. Seldom are there sunny days, and swimming is virtually unheard-of. For instance, the water temperature is now about 40 degrees - in the Spring! We seem to have brought good weather with us this far.

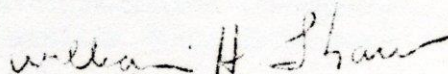
The names of some of the regions are quite picturesque. For instance, "Useless Bay" was one of the abortive passages attempted by Magellan. Other typical names are "Icy Reach", "Desolation Island" and "Madre de Dios Island". The scenery, especially at night, is most forbidding and imposing; great cliffs and mountains stand precipitously out of the water and reach, groping up to the gray sky; many peaks capped with snow and ice lend the proper chill to the wind.

This is an appropriate place to mention the importance of the average sailor in the success of such cruises as this. Some of our men have caused us to be particularly proud of them. For instance, Wayne Dorn, Seaman, ran in the 100-meter dash against a team which included 2 Olympic Stars and finished a close third. This was during our stay in Montevideo. During the same visit Robert Barnhiser was so courteous to a visitor that the visitor, a distinguished Uruguayan, wrote a personal letter to Rear Admiral TYREE, saying in effect, "Each of us can be more instrumental in winning friends than the professional diplomats". I fully agree, and I have been very pleased with the comments. Americans living in these countries have made comments about the very favorable impression given the South Americans by our men. You should feel proud: I do.

Since this letter covers such a vast part of our experiences, it is but a brief resume. Everyone is bearing up well thus far. We have used up most of the meat products, which we brought aboard in the U. S. A. We purchased beef in both Uruguay and Argentina. The biggest gripe I have heard is, "What! Steak again!"

This has been a most memorable and unforgettable passage for all of us. I will write again shortly.

Best regards,

  
WILLIAM H. SHAN  
Commander, U. S. Navy  
Commanding Officer