

FIRST IN FIFTY YEARS....

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For the first time in half a century the Midshipmen Summer Cruise headed for a port in South America south of the Equator.

True, in 1940, all plans had been completed for the Summer Practice Cruise to take such a trip but Italy attacked France in June 1940. The squadron was already in the vicinity of the Bahamas, heading south, when the news came over the air and plans to take them so far from home waters were promptly canceled.

Under more favorable auspices, the 1953 Midshipmen Practice Squadron sailed for South American shores on June 8. This squadron consisted of 28 warships with more than 1850 Naval Academy and 1300 Naval R.O.T.C. Midshipmen aboard.

Rear Admiral E. T. Wooldridge, USN, Cruise Commander in the USS MISSOURI, led the Practice Squadron to southern waters. A few miles off the Brazilian coast, the squadron separated. Under the command of Rear Admiral E. T. Wooldridge, the battleships WISCONSIN and MISSOURI, tankers AUCILLA and SABINE, submarine GRENADIER and ten destroyer types proceeded to Rio de Janeiro for an eight-day good-will visit arriving on the morning of June 27. The Santos element, under the command of Rear Admiral R.F. Stout, USN, in the heavy cruiser U.S.S. MACON, included the cruiser ALBANY, carrier SAIPAN, tanker CHIPOLA and ten destroyer-type vessels.

The 28 ships left the Brazilian ports on July 5 enroute for the Caribbean. The Wisconsin and six other warships visited Trinidad, British West Indies, their second port-of-call, from July 22 to 25 with Captain Robert J. Foley, USN, Commanding Officer of the U.S.S. WISCONSIN, as senior officer of the group. The remainder of the Practice Squadron, separated into smaller operating groups, visited Colon, Panama; Cartagena and Barranquilla, Colombia; Willemstad, Curacao; and Barbados, British West Indies, during the same period.

The entire Practice Squadron then proceeded to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for final gunnery exercises which concluded the 1953 Midshipmen Cruise on August 4, disembarking the midshipmen in Norfolk, Virginia.