



Jennifer Raywood gives her boyfriend, Jason Haag, a welcome-home hug after he and the rest of the crew of the USCGC Tahoma returned from a 48-day law-enforcement patrol on Wednesday.

Welcome Tahoma

By Elizabeth Kenny

Portsmouth Herald, 18 December 2003

PORTSMOUTH NAVAL SHIPYARD - Instead of ribbons and bows, some early Christmas presents on Wednesday came wrapped in delighted squeals and family hugs when the Coast Guard Cutter Tahoma docked after a 48-day law-enforcement patrol, reuniting families and loved ones.

"I'm ecstatic, excited, happy, overjoyed" said Lesley Treece through a glowing smile as she stood with her two children on the pier, scanning the 270-foot cutter for her husband, Benjamin Treece, whom they hadn't seen in nearly two months.

"There he is!" Lesley shouted as she spotted Benjamin and stood on her toes to wave to him.

The wind and approaching storm didn't discourage the more than a dozen family members who had gathered to greet their loved ones.

The 100-member crew began their East-Coast cruise in October, and along the way they picked up migrants trying to illegally enter the U.S. from Cuba and confiscated \$60,000 in illegal money from a ship near the Bahamas. The crew also conducted training during the voyage.

The Tahoma's commanding officer, Anne Ewalt, said the trip also included battling 25-foot waves off the coast of Delaware and saving lives at sea.

"One group of (migrants) were on a small raft and had nothing but a paddle," said Ewalt, referring to a boat headed from Cuba that the cutter picked up and brought to the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Florida. "After a week of that, in truth, they're happy to see us."

Ewalt said the crew did a phenomenal job at sea, but all agreed that it's good to be home.

"I'm excited to be back in New England," said Jonathan Rice, a New Hampshire native.

Shawn Whiteside, who is assigned to the Coast Guard cutter Campbell - also home-ported at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard - stood on the pier waiting for his new wife to step off.

"I'm going to say, 'Hey baby, you look good,' " he said, laughing.

Then, taking a more serious tone, Whiteside said that since August, three months after they were married, he has seen his wife, Loraleigh, for only 20 days.

"It's hard, but we keep going," he added.

Many others said they, too, felt the strain of missing a loved one.

Rosanel Acosta kept pushing the "play" button over and over again just to hear the voice of her husband, Jose, while he was at sea.

Rosanel was waiting on the pier with Miguel, their 6-year-old son.

"It will be good to have him back by the holidays," she said. "We don't have any family here, so it can get lonely."

Rosanel is a few months pregnant, which gave Miguel a chance to offer his father the gift of some news.

Miguel said, "The first thing I'm going to tell him is, 'Daddy, if you were still wondering if you were getting a boy or a girl, well, it's a boy!'"