

# PRECOMMISSIONING DETAIL

## THE NIGHT BEFORE DELIVERY

BY CDR R. R. HOUCK

'Twas the night before Christmas when all through the trailers, not a creature was stirring not even the sailors.

Fenders were hung on the pier with care, in hopes that the JARVIS soon would be there.

The Ensigns were nestled all snug in their beds, while visions of silver bars danced in their heads.

And Captain in his cabin and I in my plankowner's cap had just warmed our brains for a long editing rap,

When out in the lot there arose such a clatter I sprang from my desk to see what was the matter.

Away to the window I flew like a flash, tore open the shutters and threw up in the trash.

The rain on the crest of the pali aloft, through the beam of the sun caused a rainbow so soft.

When what to my wondering eyes should appear, but a rescue party and 80 fat reindeer, with a little old driver so gnarly and hard I knew in a moment it must be the Coast Guard.

More rapid than eagles his caribou they came, and he piped and he yelled and called them by name

On Dasher, on Dancer, on Prancer and Vixen, on Comet, on Cupid, on Donner and Blitzen, to the top of the state, in the midst of the winter, all to bring some folks their late Christmas dinner.

From the cutter BEAR he departed and formed up his team, with a surgeon and guides and snow all abeam.

So up to Point Barrow the search party they flew, with a big herd of reindeer and David Jarvis, too.

And then in a twinkling I heard near the stove, the clawing and screeching of every little hoove.

As I drew in my head and was turning around, into the hut David Jarvis came with abound.

He was dressed all in fur from his head to his toes, and his brass was all tarnished with sleets and snows.

A bundle of food he had brought in a pack, and he looked like a big dog and that is a fact.

His eyes — how they twinkled, his dimples — how hairy, his cheeks were like roses, his nose like a berry.

His young little mouth was drawn up like a bow, and the beard on his chin was all covered with snow.

The rump of a deer he held out in his hand and the whalers devoured it as if it were canned.

They had a small taste just to warm-up their belly, then finished the rest, right down to the jelly.

He was handsome and dashing, a typical Coastie, and we knew he was the best and the one with the mosty.

A wink of his eye and a twist of his head soon gave me to know I had gotten my bread.

He spoke not a word but went straight to his work, and filled all the whalers then turned with a jerk.

And laying his finger aside of his nose, and giving a nod back aboard BEAR he rose.

He sprang to his ship, to his crew gave a whistle, and away they all sailed like the down on a thistle.

But I heard him exclaim ere he drove out of sight

Happy Christmas to all and to all a get a ship . . .

