

## GERALD R. FORD (CVN-78)

As the year comes to end and 2023 has now parted,  
We reflect at the beginning upon where it all started.  
The Ford and her crew unsure of their worth,  
Needed to prove herself, first time since her birth.  
Long enough was the Ford waiting in rest,  
Now is the year to put her to test.  
CQs and "employment" it had done in the past,  
No longer than 2 months had salt hit her mast.  
To show the sailors, the ship, and all of the nation,  
She started slow to corroborate prior proclamation.  
A weeklong carrier qual to check equipment and gear,  
Success now achieved, the final exam grew more near.  
COMPUTEX was next, assess the ship and the crew,  
All performed superbly, certified through and through.  
The proper exam, a deployment undertake,  
Six month to ascertain if a difference they'd make.  
Trained and ready crew and vessel became one,  
The world was now watching, it's now begun.  
How would she perform, would she falter and fail,  
Would she stagger and stumble soon after she set sail?  
She was so young, no history of her own,  
She needed inspiration for the skills she would hone.  
Across the Atlantic she steamed like a train,  
Through weather and weaves, she showed no sign of strain.  
Through channel and strait, she arrived in Norway,  
The same waters sailed by Vikings of long yesterdays.  
The high North and the Arctic with King Boreas Rex,  
Steady and true, she sailed never vexed.  
The Strait of Gibraltar, gateway to the Med,  
More history from here, more lies straight ahead.  
The Greeks and the Turks, the history abounds,  
Ionian, Aegean, the Ford made her rounds.  
Port calls and flight Ops, interoperable training,  
She flourished at all, no need for explaining.  
One last port visit before we head home,  
To Marseille we attempted, before the call on the phone.  
Four hours to pier side, our services needed,  
Make haste further east, the voices they pleaded.  
Uncertainty abounds, quarrels and factions,  
No longer for training, the Ford springs to action.

Coiled and ready to strike any moment,  
Deterrence the mission we show our opponent.  
Extend and ready, the crew will remain,  
No port call in the future the sip will attain.  
For tangible testing is now taking place,  
Unsure of the enemies the Ford will now face.  
A six month deployment turned seven and eight,  
Three extensions so far have been part of her fate.  
As the ball drops in Times Square, toasts will be made,  
A new year begins, the old year will fade.  
But the Ford will sail on, her might will abide,  
Her sailors stand ready, the Ford will not hide.  
2023 was her test, passed as she did,  
Critics were silenced, doubts are now rid  
And the Ford, she sails on, mighty and strong,  
Her presence alone stop those who do wrong.  
She learned from the seas upon which she sailed,  
New history she makes, her purpose availed.  
No longer a question, her mission perceived,  
Sealed and delivered, the message received.  
The biggest, the baddest, the Ford and her crew,  
The best in the world, all along we all knew.  
Continued dominance, her maiden voyage goes on,  
Her path ever changing upon each new dawn.  
She learned from the past, the sailors of yore,  
How to sail, how to fight, how else to do more.  
But her story's her own, to create and to tell,  
Defending our freedom, she will always excel.  
As the year turns over, she will make our way home,  
Unless we are needed, then again we will roam.  
To the places required for our ship then to be,  
With aircraft, sailors, precision, democracy.  
Until the job is complete, we will fight and defend,  
Wherever a need, a helping hand we will lend.  
Until we sail west, the Ford will remain,  
Ready to serve, it is now ascertained,  
So sleep well all you weary, and know that you're safe,  
For a new year's among us, and the Ford keeps the pace.