Twenty - Two Years

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Publishing data

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http://www.navsource.org/archives/11/02108.htm

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USS NEW ORLEANS (LPH-11): Underway off the Coast of San Diego, California,
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To my shipmates that served our country
and those that are serving now.

As with all my books:
To ***Patricia Lynne*** the love of a lifetime.
I'm sorry I'm not the man you deserved.
I did and do love you more than you knew or know.
You will "Always And All Ways" be in my heart.

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Preface

I entered the Navy November 1954, three days after my seventeenth birthday. I was young and dumb, some people would say nothing has changed, that is with regards to my mental acuity; I'm definitely older and by some standards, perhaps ancient. It's been many years since I retired, effective July 1, 1969, as a Chief Warrant Officer, W4, when I was forty-two. I served two tours, the first for four years and the second was for eighteen. Between tours one and two, I attempted civilian life and failed. For me, the Navy proved to be the best course, pardon the pun.

Of my 22 years, plus a few months of service, I spent roughly 14 years on shipboard duty, nearly four years of overseas shore duty, i.e., Gitmo, and four years on shore duty in San Diego. I spent about four and a half years aboard Hartley, which was my longest tour of duty at any station.

Growing up in a lower middleclass family, possibly on the bottom ragged edge of it, I began worrying about the future and how I could survive, i.e., on my own. I think around the time I was thirteen, maybe even earlier, my dad had a heart attack. I would have the same problem, but there were things modern medicine learned that saved me. I wondered how I would survive if my father died; my mom was a stay at home parent. So, I also worried how she'd get by. I knew that her brother, a millionaire, which at the time was like a billionaire today, in the diamond business, would likely help her. Our family was for the most part close.

Not wanting to be a burden and desiring security, I enlisted when I was sixteen with my mother and father's permission. I think my dad felt good about it, he probably in his own way worried about me if something happened to him. My enlistment was considered a "Kiddie Cruise" because when you entered the Navy you were under eighteen and would be released just before turning twenty-one. I just found out the program is no longer in existence. I joined the Navy because it would provide me with the necessary security I craved. Turned out when I married, I didn't have to worry about having a job and health care for my family.

Since I started writing this at eighty-two, approaching eighty-three and forty years have elapsed, my recollection may possibly be a slight bit off, I'll do my best not to exaggerate too much, but after all is said and done, I'm a sailor and this is a sea story. Besides, we tend to remember the happy moments better than the unhappy ones and like to exaggerate them a bit.

I'm sure that the conversations I refer to are not exactly as they occurred, that is word for word, but I can assure you their context is accurate.

It is my intention, along with reflecting on my service, to present the lessons I've learned, some of the funny things that made my life exceptionally good, and a few of my major life events.

While there were failures, some, perhaps most, were because of me and a few because of others, I would still rate my overall service as high. Despite the setbacks, I managed to survive and to flourish. Except for one time, I was always promoted when I became eligible.

I think, I had, or have, at least a couple of things going for me. I'm a quick learner and I don't have to be beaten over the head to get a message. I don't dwell on the negative for more than a day or two. I also found I have a good ability to learn from textbooks. I think I'm observant and wonder why things happen.

During my service I read a lot. I completed at least 17 courses both technical and academic. I obtain my GED and one year of college credit through examinations, as well as completing correspondent courses. In addition, attended many technical, administrative, and management schools, which included firefighting, damage control, various engineering, and human resources courses.

Reflecting on past decisions, I realize I made three really positive ones. Joining the Navy, the first time. Reenlisting after I tried civilian life. And most important of all, was marrying Pat.

The best complement I received was from one of my chief's. He said, "If I had to go to war, I would go to war with you."

Addendum: I was asked at a job interview, "What was the most difficult job you did?"

I thought about it, then answered, "I suppose I could say that providing utility services for laboratories and communication systems for the recovery of the Apollo–Soyuz capsule and crew. Or managing 150 jobs for a school district over the summer with 32 additional

temporary staff. Actually, those jobs weren't difficult, they were exciting and challenging and I enjoyed doing them. At the end of these jobs, if done correctly, you feel a sense of accomplishment and you get recognition. The real difficult job is doing the routine day-to-day stuff that makes the system work. Rarely do you feel a sense of accomplishment and even more rarely do you get any recognition. I've heard the saying, '*Take care of the little things and the big things will take care of themselves.'* It's a quote by Emily Dickinson."

So, you're asking yourself, "Why is he telling us this?" Well, I'll tell you. Like me most of us lead a routine life. We take care of our family. Spend a lot of time working, when we'd rather be home or doing something else, like playing golf, fishing, or just vegging. And like all of us, from time-to-time exciting events happen and some we would rather not have happened; that's life. My story isn't about heroics or people that become famous. It's about ordinary people which at times are funny, extraordinary, and most of all human. What my hope is that the lessons I learned, you can learn from or use to validate your own experience.

'Appendix a' is a short list of navy terms, some of which I use throughout the book. I'll attempt to ensure that any naval terms I use are included in the list.

I also want to point out, in the military the date is stated as day, month, year—01011901 or 01Jan1901 is January 1, 1901. Time is based on a 24 hour clock starting at midnight, 2400. Noon is 1200. When I speak of people or me being a chief, first, second, and third class, I've left off Petty Officer in many cases.

Prologue

Somewhere in the middle of the night I open my eyes; they quickly adjusted to the red glow of the ship's nightlights. We're on our way to Key West, Florida, to provide the Navy Sonar School's students with some shipboard training. Our sonar is state of the art. I'm in a small compartment, with other senior petty officers—first and second class. The sounds of the ship's machinery and propeller, pushing her through the water is steady, rhythmic, and soothing, in a way, like a lullaby. Along with the gentle roll of a calm sea, it normally makes it easy to sleep, not to night.

Lying there I'm thinking about my future, which appears to be on a path to nowhere. I'm an Electrician's Mates first class, with just a few months over five years of active service. I also had two years of Naval Reserve service. Although my reserve time made me eligible, I was unable to participate in the chief's advancement exam. I don't remember exactly why, but I know it was for some petty stuff and jealousy. So, I felt I was doomed to be a first class the remainder of my time in the Navy, should I decide to make a career of it; I would have eight years when I finished this enlistment. I had tried to be a civilian once before but failed. Nobody's fault but my own.

Like now, I had no life. I was single, no girlfriend and no prospects in view. I thought I would never get married, not because I didn't want to but rather, I felt I was lacking and something was missing in me. I would just die alone.

I had gotten out of the Navy, November 1958, I had just turned twenty-one, then spent the next two years and a month floundering about. I was never able to establish any kind of long term relationship. I did date a few times but couldn't establish a connection. I'm sure it was me. The one girl, Joyce, I was in love with, or lusted after, was smart and absolutely beautiful, I managed to drive her away, with my stupid behavior. I know that now.

My only successful achievement during that period was to become a welder for the Brooklyn Naval Shipyard. It was an apprenticeship program, which when completed would lead to a position; government trades paid well. I was failing at college; I took more work than I could handle, while working full time. Two additional things transpired during this period. I had a nose operation, primarily for

cosmetic reasons, however, it turned out to be very health beneficial. It also improve my self-esteem.

Initially, after leaving the service, I shared an apartment with a shipmate I served with on the USS Pursuit. After my friend, moved in with his girlfriend, I moved in with my mom. The second thing that happened was the ship I was working on had a fire. Unfortunately, people died and the damage was extensive, in the high millions. It caused me to think about going back into the Navy.

I felt like life was just passing me by, when I received a letter from the Navy telling me that if I reenlisted it would be as a first class. Just before I was released, I had taken the first class exam. Considering all that was going on and my failures, I jumped at the opportunity and signed up.

My thoughts shifted to, "How did I get here?" I considered that most of my, pre-navy, life was spent growing up in Brooklyn, on East 2nd street. I lived there until I joined the Navy when I was sixteen. My home was located in a neighborhood of blue collar workers. While it wasn't a tough neighborhood, it wasn't affluent either. My dad, like the rest of the men, worked forty or more hours to support their families. We all live day-to-day. I don't remember a single family living in the apartment complex having a second car. Most cars were used by all drivers in the family. There were no organized activities for children, like little league, so our play was invented, done on the streets, or a vacant dirt lot.

I suppose my story starts with my birth and family. Of course, I was there but I don't remember anything about it. I was born and raised in Brooklyn, NY, to Perry and Ida Stuart. I had two older sisters. My oldest sister died when she was eighteen or nineteen and I was around ten. I remember she was very loving toward me. Even today, I tear up thinking of her. I can still see an image of her in the hospital bed. My other sister is a bit; I'll leave that to the imagination. All I'll say is if we never meet again, it will be too soon. My dad died when I was seventeen, while I was attending Electrician's Mate school at Great Lakes Naval Training Center.

I think I enlisted because I was failing in school—I could barely read—and didn't have any expectations for the future; I was going nowhere fast. I suppose, my thoughts were that the Navy would feed and take care of me. And provide me with some spending money. I guess my

mom and dad had similar thoughts, so they readily gave their permission. My father probably thought it was the best thing for me. As it turned out, it was.

Chapter 1 – Enlisted, Boot Camp, and Electrician's Mate (EM) School

November 1954 – March 1955

I was about five feet ten inches tall, or short, and weighed in at around one-hundred-fourteen pounds; I was a skinny seventeen year old kid. Three days past my birthday, I was on my way to boot camp in Bainbridge, Maryland. The Navy Recruit Training Center was located several miles north of Chesapeake Bay. That was over sixty years ago, so I may not have all the facts correctly documented, however I will attempt to be accurate.

When I arrived at boot camp, I was assigned to a company and directed to a small living area, in an open bunk room. I don't remember the number of men in the company, but I'm quite sure it was more than thirty. During the next few days, I received my uniforms and seabag, that was bigger and heavier than my one-hundred-fourteen pounds, so I thought. It wasn't until I was in my twenties that I could carry it, without suffering, and my weight was now one-hundred-forty-five pounds. All of our heads were shaven bald, kind of like I am now. We were given a million shots, well that's what it seemed like. I think they inoculated us for every known disease.

The starting salary for a seaman recruit was ninety-eight dollars a month. I don't remember what my actual first pay was but it was small. Taxes and miscellaneous charges for some of the supplies we had to have, like soap, toothbrush, razor, and other personal items included in a small canvas bag, called a ditty bag, were taken out. Since I was at bootcamp I had no place to spend it. I don't remember if I was even allowed to go to the exchange. I don't remember if we were granted any liberty, not that I would have gone. I was seventeen and scared. All the other recruits were 18 or older, and most had graduated high school.

What I remember most about boot camp is the constant marching, drilling, and standing watch, all of which were with an inoperative rifle, which I suspect were army relics of the late eighteen hundreds or World War 1 vintage. I suppose the main purpose of watch standing was to get us familiar with shipboard routines. On watch, our job was "Not" to fall asleep, report unusual events, and sound the alarm in case of fire. The military frowns heavily on sleeping on watch; in some cases, life does depend on staying awake. I managed to stay awake, not freeze to death

(it was November, December, and January in the north-east,) and I never had to report anything—fire or otherwise. Between marching and watches, we went to class to learn about ship's nomenclature, military rank structure, who to salute, and navy jargon. Throughout my boot camp training, I kept to myself, did what I was told, and most important, kept my mouth shut. I wish I could say I did the same later in life. We were given a general intelligence test and interviewed for a rating assignment. I told the interviewer I had taken electric shop in high school, where I built a small electric motor. As a result of my testing and interview, I was assigned to the Electrician Rating.

After graduating boot camp, I got orders to report to the officer in charge of Electrician's Mate Class "A" school, which is basic training in the specialty, at Great Lakes Naval Base, Great Lakes, IL. I was given fourteen days leave before I had to report. I don't remember how I got home and later to the Great Lakes; I suspect it was by bus. At the time, bus transportation was the most economical for those of us without a car. I was in class about two weeks when my dad past away. I was given another fourteen days of emergency leave. When I returned, I was put into another group to continue where I had left off. If I remember correctly the school was an eleven week course. I think I read recently that it is now twelve weeks.

One of my unusual duties was when I was volunteered to set pins at the base bowling alley, this was before the automatic pinsetters became prevalent; I'm not sure they were even invented at the time. I would step on a lever and small metal rods would protrude through the deck. The bowling pins had a small hole on the bottom for placing over the rods, thereby lining them up as well. I made it a game for me. I worked at setting the pins faster than I did the time before. The evening went by quickly and I received big tips which I had no idea I would—I think I made more than my basic pay. Volunteering for me in most cases has turned out to be beneficial; fortunately, none were for suicide missions.

While I was in class, I applied myself. I liked the subject and it was the first time I felt comfortable in school. I found the material interesting and absorbed it fast. As a result of my efforts, I came in second in a class of fourteen, which was a total surprise and a confidence builder. When the list of possible assignments came out, we were given our choice based on where we finished in class. After number one picked,

I chose a ship home ported at the Brooklyn Naval Shipyard. I had no idea what kind of ship it was, its size, or what it did. I lived in Brooklyn and its home port was my hometown.

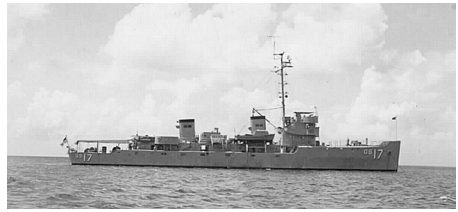
After graduating, I was designated an Electrician's Mate Fireman Apprentice, E2. Again, I was given leave. I was so far in the hole; I would have to serve a couple of years, maybe even reenlist, before I began to accumulate leave again. My orders were to report to Commanding Officer, Administrative Command, Norfolk, Virginia for further transfer to my ship.

As the bus approached the base, I saw a sign, "EM Club," my initial thought was, "They have a special club for electrician's mates"—EM is the rating designation. Moments later I realize it was Enlisted Men's Club; I was kind of naïve. Needless to say, I felt pretty stupid but was thankful I didn't say it out loud.

About a week later, my orders had me flying to Argentia, Newfoundland to meet my ship. Argentia is located in the south of Newfoundland, on Placentia Bay, in the north Atlantic. Mistakenly thinking I was going to Argentina, I wore my whites, because I mistakenly thought it was summer in the southern hemisphere. I was wrong, it was fall in Argentina, which happens to be on the southern tip of the South American Continent. It would likely have been cold. When I arrived at Argentia, it was dark, cold, and scary. After checking in with the receiving unit, I was taken to the ship.

Chapter 2 – USS Pursuit (AGS 17)

March 1955 – November 1956



The ship was the USS Pursuit (AGS 17). It was a small, steel hulled minesweeper, AM 108, converted to a survey ship. It had served in WWII where the ship earned eight battle stars. The ship stats are as follows: Displacement: 890 long tons; Length: 221 feet 3 inches; Beam: 32 ft; Draft: 10 feet 9 inches; Speed: 18 knots (a knot is roughly equivalent to 1.15 mph); Its propulsion plant was diesel-electric, twin screws. Complement: 100 officers and enlisted.

Pursuit was decommissioned 30 June 1960. Her name was struck from the Navy List on 1 July 1960.

As a survey vessel, I don't think the Pursuit had a full navy complement because we didn't do any minesweeping or have any minesweeping equipment. We did have a contingent of several civilians assigned. I guess they were a part of a scientific team.

The day following my after dark arrival, while I checked in, the ship got underway for the Arctic Circle to perform survey operations, of which I didn't have a clue about. I found out later that the ship mapped the depth and the civilian personnel took samples of the water at various depths, I don't know what they were looking for. I never did find out what the samples were for and I guess I didn't care. I was just too busy trying to adjust to navy life aboard ship.

My initial assignments were to mess cooking and compartment cleaner. A mess cook is a gofer, that is you go for this or that, carry the food to the serving line, clean up for the cooks, and all other menial task associated with preparing and serving food for the crew. Every other week I was assigned to the scullery, in there I washed everything associated with preparing, serving, and eating. Aside from standing switchboard and propulsion watch, I didn't get to do any electrical work for several months. When you're the most junior person on the ship, if there is a job requiring no skill, I got it. Some of the jobs were, dish

washer, projector operator, shop cleaner, chief's mess cook, and compartment cleaner. So, I just did the best I could and kept my mouth shut and hope someone junior to me would come aboard quickly.

It was only a couple of days after I reported for duty, that the ship crossed the Arctic Circle and I was initiated as a Bluenose. My initiation, August 18, 1955, required that I wear all my clothing backward and I had to lasso an iceberg, then paint it red. I was able to rope one about the size of a basketball. Every time I put a little paint on it, the paint would run off as the berg melted. When I finished painting it, it was the size of a baseball. The way I finally got it painted, was to just dip it into the paint bucket. The Bluenose initiation isn't quite as extensive as the one to become a Shellback.Except for brandy, that is use for medicinal purposes, such as returning to the ship after performing duty in near freezing temperatures, it was against Navy Regulations to drink on a ship, Ships were allowed to carry and store alcohol beverages for use ashore. The Pursuit had an ample supply of beer. Midway through our trip to the Arctic the Captain had the ship's boat lowered and placed alongside. For those men that wanted a beer, they could consume two in the boat. I guess drink in a boat wasn't against regulation. I don't remember if I gave my two to someone else. I didn't like beer at the time.

There was a contingent of underwater demolition personnel. They kind of took me under their wing and provided me with guidance. Unlike the rest of the crew, they didn't tease me. I guess it has to do with their teamwork training and how they support one another.

The electrical division, when I first reported, consisted of a first class, a second class, an ICFN, and four EMFNs—including me. After several months, the first class was replaced by a chief. I don't remember the first class at all. The Chief was a crusty old guy but truly knowledgeable. I remember he told me to charge batteries using light bulbs and to connect them in parallel using a non-standard DC charging source. I said I thought it should be series. We discussed it for a while and when his patients was at its limit, he sat me down with a naval manual and directed me to read. What I learned was, we were both right. What he was saying, you put the bulbs in parallel with each other, not with the batteries. I was saying, you connect the bulbs in series with the battery. With the bulbs in parallel with each other and the group in series you can charge batteries from a standard DC supply. Each time you added a bulb the charging current would increase. It was the first time I

realize that you have to establish the same point of observation. He was looking at it differently than I was. Did I learn from it, yes, but I forgot it many times in the future, particularly with my wife, who usually looked at things differently than I did.

I was just a couple of months past my seventeenth birthday and pretty immature. All the other non-rated men were somewhat older, at least a year or more, and more mature, which didn't take much when compared to me. All of them had graduated high school—I was the only dropout.

One of the first things I learned, was people regardless of their age, enjoy bringing other people down, in the guise of teasing. I had a Jimmy Durante nose; it was large to say the lease. It didn't take long for my shipmates to razz me. Comments like, "Duck he's turning around," were said. I decided that there was no way I could ask them to stop, it would just encourage them more. So, I took the offensive and would say, "Hey, you all better duck, I'm going to turn around." It worked. They stopped after a while and I realized, if you participate in the tease and appear not to care, it stops being fun for them. I've used this tactic a lot in my life. My personal philosophy on this is, "People only belittle others to bring them down to their own level."

I quickly became qualified for underway watch. Since the ship was diesel-electric driven and speed control was located in the engine room, which is directed by signals from the bridge. If I remember correctly the controls were one-third, two-thirds, full, and flank. Speeds in between were transmitted in revolutions-per-minute (rpm). Unless we were routinely steaming, where the speed is relatively constant, otherwise I was kept busy adjusting the speed or rpm.

When the ship returned from the Arctic Circle, before deploying to the Mediterranean Sea. We docked at the Naval Shipyard Brooklyn, NY. I was returning one night, late, I think after eleven and went straight to bed. The next day the Executive Officer had me report to him. He asked me if I had my hat on the back of my head when I returned the previous evening. He was a stickler for regulations. I told him I don't remember and if I did, I wouldn't do it again. I'm sure as long as I served under him, I didn't do it again. He didn't do anything except to state 'Make sure it doesn't happen again.'

During our stay in Brooklyn, I was on mess cooking duty. I spent a lot of time on mess cooking, chief's mess cook, compartment cleaning,

and scullery duty; as I stated before, I was the most junior man aboard ship. It the dues one pays as a junior that joins an organization; you get all the dirty jobs nobody else wants.

One evening I was carrying hot gravy when I slipped and spilled it over my right leg, around ankle high. I hurt like all get out. I was taken to the dispensary for treatment. For the next few days, I got off mess cooking duty. It didn't last long. I think the first year I spent on the Pursuit, I served ninety percent of my time on non-electrician duty.

My first major role as an electrician was to maintain the ships batteries, another job for the junior man. We used large, automobile type batteries, to start the ship's boat and emergency generator. Everyone on board knew I was the battery maintenance man because I had all these little holes in my clothing from splashes of battery acid. I was the only person allow to wear clothing with holes. When the Chief replaced the first class, he got me a pair of dress blues and told me to wear them when I service the batteries. It turns out that wool didn't succumb to battery acid as did cotton. If I remember, I had all these purple spots on them.

Once and only once, after I had made repairs to the running or possibly the aircraft warning light on the top of the mast, I decided I would slide down one of the mast wire stays. As I started down, no gloves, I found that the stay had frayed wires protruding; these broken wires were needle sharp. Further the stays were greased to protect them from the elements. Till this day I wonder how I could be so stupid and manage to have made it to the bottom without receiving severe cuts or other serious injury. The height of the mast was between 25 and 50 feet.

On one occasion when I went to Executive Officer's (XO's) Mast, not a real legal process, where he would give us a choice of extra duty or Captain's Mast, an official process that would go into one's record. Most of us would take the extra duty which was usually accomplish after the normal working hours or on weekends. Once I was written up, like receiving a driving ticket, for sleeping in my bunk with my clothing on. I didn't do it. At XO's mast, I told him I didn't have my clothing, skivvies aside, on and that I was under the covers. He gave me the choice of one hour extra duty, three hours extra duty, or Captain's Mast. I was afraid to go to Captain's Mast so I told him I'd take the one hour. He said, 'I think you're telling me the truth. Had you taken the three hours it would indicate to me you were lying.' I think he was using

a King Solomon's Judgement[1] tactic. He knew that in general, right or wrong, none of us wanted to go to Captain's Mast, where the punishment would be official and likely more severe. Even though he believed me I still got the one hour of extra duty.

I remember that the second class was troubleshooting, why a motor was starting without the start button being pushed, that is, periodically it would just start. I was on watch, at the propulsion station and he was behind the switchboard. I moved to a position where I could watch him just in case something happens and he needed help. He was working near live circuits. Suddenly, I saw a bright flash, he whirled around, and I saw another bright flash. Stumbling out from behind the switchboard, in a mild daze, he said, "I found out what the motor problem is. The start relay fell out of its housing and was too close to the contacts. When the ship rolled, it fell against them which started the motor. I'll put it back in and the motor will start normally." He made the repairs and was about to leave, when I ask, "What the hell was the second flash?" He laughed and told me, "That's when my keys hit the main busbar." He showed me his keys which, were now welded together. I thought, *'He's lucky he didn't get killed.'* Both he and the Chief were good leaders.

You might ask, "Why do sailors need keys?" Well, there's the personal locker key, it's difficult to use a combination lock in the dark. The access to areas that could be hazardous, like behind an open switchboard, are provided with locking mechanisms. Then there are the shops and equipment lockers, where special tools are kept. High security spaces are also locked. Typically, we would keep them on a brass snap hook – 3.5 inches. Its primary purpose was to connect a flag to a halyard for hoisting and lowering. The hook was usually clipped on to one of the trouser belt loops.

Once when I was on watch I accidently snapped the clasp on my clipboard. It made a loud banging sound that could be heard over the roar of the diesel engines, which would ultimately cause me hearing loss. About ten seconds after my accidental snap, an old, well to me anyone past 25 was old, third class engineman, the watch supervisor, jumped up and asked me if I heard a loud noise. I didn't put it together at the time and I replied honestly, no. The engineman took a tour of the engine room to make sure everything was running properly and there were no

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judgement_of_Solomon

problems. I don't know how I came to realize it was my snapping the clipboard clasp that made him think something was wrong, but somehow, I did. So, when I got bored and the third class engineman was on watch with me, I'd snapped the clipboard clasp. It always worked. I don't remember if I ever stopped or if he found out. I guess I was as big a jerk as the people that teased me.

One of my biggest scares was when I started one of the main engines and fail to close the cylinder blowout valves. Before a main engine was started, cylinder blowout valves were opened and the fuel lever was held in the closed position. Using compressed air, the diesel was jacked over and any gases or soot in the cylinder would be blown out. The engine started and the place erupted in ear splitting thunder; I had forgotten to hold the fuel lever off. The engineman on duty quickly shut the engine down. I closed the valves and restarted the engine.

Two stories about the Chief I find funny. The Pursuit was at best considered a small ship; some might want to call it a boat. Like me, the Chief got seasick easily, probably something to do with his age. I think the Chief was in his late forties, maybe even fifties, it wouldn't have surprised me to have found out he was sixty something. By my standards he was ancient, kind of like I am now.

We were in the shop going over some stuff when the division officer, an ensign, with no experience, said to the Chief, "Chief aren't you glad you were assign to the Pursuit." It was a mistake. The Chief fired back, "Sir, I asked for the Saratoga (supercarrier) and they gave me its motor launch." The Chief turned, walked out of the shop, before the division officer could respond—not that he had a response.

I was up on the yardarm repairing the aircraft warning lights. Besides spending a lot of time on mess cooking duty, I was assigned to do the electrical repairs on the mast running and aircraft warning lights. Occasionally when I just wanted to get away for a while, I'd check the mast lights. After I determined all was fine, I would position myself so I looked like I was working and just relaxed and enjoyed the peace and tranquility. On the mast I would always wear a safety belt. On one such day, the lead engineman, a first class, yelled up to me. He said, "I need you to come down. I've assigned you to a work detail." I pretended not to hear him and yelled down, "What? I can't hear you. It's windy up here and difficult to hear." He repeated himself and so did I. He then said, while my chief was standing there. "Stuart, you need to come down, I

have all the other electrician fireman, except you." My chief went into orbit and shouted up to me, "Stuart, don't you dare come down." I shouted down to the Chief, "Okay Chief." Then the Chief turned to the first class engineman and began reading him the riot act.

Somewhere between returning from the Arctic Circle and going to the Mediterranean Sea to do surveying off the coast of Turkey, the ship made a cruise to several of the South Atlantic island countries. I think we were down there for training by the Fleet Training Group (FTG) at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. I don't remember if it were Jamaica, Haiti, or The Dominican Republic where I kind of lost my virginity, in one of the sailor bars, where I paid a prostitute, maybe ten bucks; in 1956, it was a lot of money. Anyway, she took me up to a room, stripped very quickly, then lay spread eagle on the bed. I stood looking with my mouth open. She asked, "What the hell are you waiting for?" I quickly removed my pants, got between her legs, and lost my virginity, sort of. It took all of ten seconds. Two minutes later, I was outside the bar wondering what had just happened. However, I could say I got laid. I was pretty stupid though. I didn't use any form of protection, so, until we returned to our homeport and given the opportunity to get a blood test. I worried about catching a venereal disease. At the time the Navy put out a lot of information about venereal diseases and prevention. I was told how painful peeing could be if one had gonorrhea, so I prepared myself every time I went. I would take a deep breath and wait for the pain. When it didn't happen, I'd let my breath out. My blood test came back negative for all venereal diseases. The whole episode, I consider as one of the worst events of my life. I never did anything like that again.

The first real cruise I made was to the Mediterranean. The ship's mission was to survey the seas just off the coast of Turkey. We would steam, a generic term for a non-sailing ship when it is at sea, up and down the coast for days, which turned into weeks. Our sister, or a rather big sister, ship, the Tanner, would survey deeper waters, not that we couldn't. We were, in this case, more suited for close to shore work.

For me, the Mediterranean cruise wasn't all that interesting. I got to visit Istanbul and Izmir, Turkey. While we were moored in Istanbul, a few Russian ships, one of which was a cruiser, sailed through the channel leading to the Mediterranean Sea from the Black Sea; I have no idea what the channel was called. The event was exciting, we got to view Russian ships, our cold war enemy. I remember absolutely nothing about either

visit, except what happened to one of my shipmates and a trip to the nearby beach for a picnic, which included beer drinking. I swam and had a few tidbits to eat and soda.

In the port of Izmir, we were given liberty. The only thing I remember is one of my "E" Division shipmates got arrested. In Turkey there's a jail system called a compound. Please remember this is nearly sixty years ago. A compound as I understood it, was a place where women could work to pay their fines off. Here we call them houses of prostitution. Any way my shipmate was accused of stealing something. In the end it cost him over three hundred dollars. At our pay grade, that was a lot of money, close to three months' pay, not to say stressful.

Two radiomen hatch a practical joke on one of our shipmates. They prepared a secret message to the Captain, essentially saying that Jack, was being sued in a paternity case and they would like to know when the ship was due to return so they could serve him with papers. The radiomen told Jack, because he was their good friend, they'd show him a copy of the message. They told him he had to keep it secret or they'd be in big trouble because the message was confidential and for the Captain's eyes only. The message was intentionally leaked out and when people passed Jack, they would make a remark like, "Hi daddy." Needless to say, Jack swore if he got out of this, he'd never do anything as stupid as that again. They let him suffer for about two weeks when they finally told him it was made up. Oh, none of the crew knew it was made up, while they rubbed it in. People can be pretty heartless at times.

When the ship visited Istanbul and Izmir ports for crew liberty, that is, rest and recreation, I think I stayed aboard, I don't know why—perhaps I was young and scared.

When we returned from the Mediterranean, the ship was sent to a shipyard for repairs. I made Electrician's Mate Third Class and was assigned to the Armed Services Police unit, located in Manhattan. Before I left, the XO told me I had scored remarkably high on the advancement exam. I don't know how he knew. I didn't care how he knew, the news he gave me made me feel good about myself and to some measure was a confidence builder. Although I was disappointed about being assigned to the police unit, I wanted to be a part of the ship's repair, however, the assignment turned out to be great. I met some really nice guys that were either in the Army Military Police (MP) or Airforce Air Police (AP). Most of the army MPs were New York City cops, that had been drafted.

My work schedule was 3 days on, 3 days off, 3 days on, 3 days off, 4 days on, 4 days off, which then repeated itself. Awork day was just 8 hours. I was living at home and given per diem, which I think at the time was more than my normal pay and it was tax free.

On the Pursuit, and on all the ships I served on, we were allowed to read navy course books related to equipment, regulations, and advancement while on watch. I did a lot of reading and studying. In many of the equipment operation and repair manual were sections on the theory of operation and detail repair procedures. I found this especially useful throughout my career. I don't think many of the people I worked with did this.

When I wasn't on watch or working, I began reading books of all sorts. I also started to do correspondence courses. I found that I had a good ability to learn from written material. I think of the wise old owl and the young one. The young owl ask the old owl '*How come you don't talk a lot.*' The old owl said, *'The less I talk, the more I see and hear, the more I see and hear, the more I learn and the less I talk.'* For me, my reading skills improved and I was able to read faster, not as fast as I would have liked, but fast enough. So, I read a lot and hence learned a lot. Reading fiction allowed me to experience, vicariously, many adventures one can only dream of or imagine. Adventures of the old west, travelling to new worlds, falling in love, the list is endless.

Since the ship was homeported in New York, the drinking age at the time was eighteen. On those rare occasions when I went with my shipmates to a bar, I would order seven and seven, they would order beer. My drink cost a buck and a quarter or more, theirs twenty or twenty-five cents. I decided I should learn to drink beer. Over the course of several months of suffering the God awful taste of what I imagined urine might taste like, I grew accustomed and, in the end, really liked it. Beer became my drink of choice and my refrigerator, when I had a refrigerator, would be stocked with an ample supply.

When I got back to the ship, from my duty assignment with the Armed Services Police, I found out that the ship received orders for an EM3 to report to the USS Severn (AO 61), since all my shipmates had made third class the same time I did, but they had more service time, which made them senior to me, and none of the other EM3s wanted to go, I was given the orders—I was the most junior.

Chapter 3 – USS Severn (AO 61)

November 1956 – November 1958

The USS Severn (AO 61), was a Cimarron-class fleet oiler, of 7,236 tons unloaded and 25,440 tons fully loaded, her length was 553 feet with a beam of 75 ft, the draft was 32 ft. She was driven by geared turbines, twin screws, and had a 30,400 shaft horsepower. Severn could do 18 knots, carry 146,000 barrels of oil. Her crew, officers and enlisted, was 314. Severn's homeport was Newport, Rhode Island.

On 1 July 1974, Severn was decommissioned and towed to the Inactive Ship Maintenance Facility at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her name was struck from the Navy List, and her hulk was turned over to the Maritime Commission for disposal. Subsequently, she was sold by MARAD and scrapped on 22 January 1975.

In November 1957 I was advanced to Electrician's Mate Second Class. The first class electrician was replaced by a chief—I don't remember when. What I remember about the first class was he was technically competent, at least when it came to motor repair. There was a motor burnout, that is, the winding shorted. I thought we would have to wait to have it repaired by a shipyard or naval tender. The first class explained to me that he had been on a tender in the motor rewind and repair shop. From the technical manual, I think, he was able to determine the wire size and the number of turns. We didn't have the correct wire size; however, we had a wire size if doubled, that is, two strands would be the same as the required size. Using whatever he could, he rewound the motor, varnished it, baked it in the galley oven, and put it back together. It was quite impressive, the motor operated like new.

I became the division leading petty officer, under the Chief. If my memory serves me, which I'm sure it doesn't, there were two or three third class and several fireman electrician's mates, along with two or three interior communication technicians in the division. While the ship was large, its crew was relatively small when compared to warships of

equivalent size. The size of the crew was mainly for manpower when the ship refueled other ships and transferred supplies. The crew complement was also about the size of a WWII Fletcher-class destroyer.

The current Commanding Officer, Captain Charles Bonham Langston, of the Severn had arrived a month or two before I reported in. If my recollection serves me, he was a submariner and this duty was for the purpose of getting his tonnage, i.e., in preparation for large ship command, like a heavy cruiser or carrier. Oilers were cheaper than cruisers and carriers.

Of all the COs I served with, he was the easiest going, down to earth, and crew friendly; he was a sailor's CO easy to approach. He was the kind of leader that you wanted to do your best for. If he happened to stop in a bar, where the crew was drinking, he would buy a round, sit, and chat for a while. Sometimes he would tell a crew member that they should swap uniforms, so he could have a good liberty. I remember, we pulled into one berth, where the stern was by the dock. Rather than run boats for coming and going, he had a section of the guardrail removed, so a gangway could be installed.

During one of our underway replenishments, we were supplying a carrier with fuel, when the squadron Admiral radioed our CO. As the story goes, the Admiral said Chuck your ship is in terrible shape. Most COs would try to make excuses, not our Captain. He replied, "With all due respect sir. My ship has been at sea for months without a significant break, except to return to port for a quick refuel. We just don't have time to do much else except to provide you all with fuel." To which the Admiral said, "I'll arrange for you to get some in port time. Take care of your ship." When our fuel was depleted, we were given eight days in Marseille. The Captain told the Deck Officer and Chief he literally wanted the deck painted by just throwing on the paint and not to worry about preparing the surfaces. That's exactly what the deck crew did, in about two days. We all had eight days of good liberty. When we returned to our mission, the Admiral told our CO that our ship was the showboat of the fleet. Showboat became our ship's newspaper name.

While I served aboard, the second commanding officer was Captain David McCampbell. He is the Navy's all-time leading flying ace and top F6F Hellcat ace, with 34 aerial victories. He was a Medal of Honor recipient. Other awards are the Navy Cross, Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross. My impression was that he wasn't too happy

with the assignment. When he gave his relieving speech, he referred to the Severn as the Salem. The Salem was a heavy cruiser, a choice career enhancing assignment. I'm sure his desire was for the command of a carrier, as would any aviator.