

# The After Battery Rat

Volume 13, Issue 3 – Insert 2 of 2. By Dex Armstrong with Permission

Summer/Fall 2012

## Cinematic Sub Stuff

The German film "DAS BOOT" (The Boat) is the only film that closely approximates the boatservice I knew. Hollywood films never showed stores crammed everywhere, dirty laundry, skin books tucked above ventilation lines, gear adrift, piles of 'one-way' trash... And folks in raggedy ass dungarees.

What they did show were officers wearing dress uniform hats in the barrel (conning tower). To get their eye up flush with the rubber eye piece on the periscope, the officer's hat had to be turned around backward with the visor to the rear. Anyone ever see that? I never did. Anybody ever see a dirty cup in a submarine movie? How 'bout a full butt kit? A lookout wearing a straw hat? A messcook in an apron that looked like it was salvaged from a leper colony dumpster?

How come the boats commanded by Cary Grant, John Wayne, Ronald Reagan, Clark Gable, Burt Lancaster, and Tyrone Power all operated using convent language? How come all the raghats went to fancy nightclubs full of knockout twenty-year-old blondes who drank Manhattans and danced to Glen Miller tunes in designer dresses? Where were all the hairy-lipped honeys that hung around the zoo cage bars we frequented?

How come all the boats returned freshly painted and the happy non rated guys all went bopping across the brow in fresh starched whites to be met by twenty wholesome bobby-soxers named Linda Lee and Peggy Sue?

Where were those admirals in dress canvas standing on the pier waiting to congratulate the old man when we came in?

How come the piers are all spotless and taxicabs are lined up to take all the squeaky clean Arthur Murray qualified liberty hounds to the Copacabana? How come no returning bluejacket ever meets some homely chick with six runny nose kids... A head full of curlers, worn out sandals and hands her a thirty pound sack of filthy dungarees?

How come you never see some jerk hauling ass to get radio traffic and guard mail? Where do they hide the tenders with the rust stains? Speaking of rust, how come when highly paid Hollywood guys turn up on a pier, oxidation stops?

How come none of the returning drunks ever look like Ray Stone and Doc Beeghly? No missing clothing, blood, lipstick or leg chains.

How bout the nicknames on those Hollywood fleetboats? "Rusty", "Big Mike", "Billy", or "Smiling Eddy"? You never see anyone called "Butt Face", "Fat Ass", "Fungus Foot" or "Garbage Gut"... We had a kid nicknamed, "The Chinese Whore".

We spent half an evening at a boat reunion trying to remember the kid's real name.

Who loads torpedoes and store on those cinematic wonders? The Good Fairy? Shoemaker's elves? The entire tender crew out of the goodness of their brown bagger hearts? The National Conclave of the Little Sisters' of the Poor?

There is always a scene where Mr. Admiral Warmhart has Captain Cleanliving in his office.

The admiral speaks...

"Jack, I've got to give you a rough one this time."

"Bingo Lizard Straits?"

"You guessed it Jack... Bingo Lizard Straits. Word has it that there are three carriers, seven heavy cruisers, five lights, twenty-seven destroyers, nine motor torpedo boats, a paddle wheel tour boat and a geedunk truck in there. "

"Should be able to line up a target or two, admiral."

"That's the spirit Jack. I knew you would say that."

"We'll make you proud admiral."

"I know you will. By the way, the entire crew of the tender, Damage Control School, base sick bay, base galley staff, barbers and command staff have volunteered to stay aboard tonight and help your E-3s load torpedoes, stores, sea print films and trading material to use for barter with aboriginal simple people... and people in France... and paint the entire boat. By the way Jack, how are Alice and the boys?"

"Well Admiral, she was so despondent after the last assignment you gave us on the USS Happyfish, that she drowned Billy and little Teddy and shot herself."

"Hmmm, sorry to hear about that. Doris wanted to get her pineapple upside-down cake recipe."

Who writes the dialog for those gahdam things? Better yet, who does the Navy give them for 'technical advice'... Mary Poppins?

I don't know a damn thing about nukes. I figure all the movies made about them are the gospel truth. John Wynn told me, "Nukes never lie".

**DEX**