

Stories from the Crew

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Crew Stories

David Hauer (TM2, 55-58)

As a new seaman right out of sub school and on our first cruise I did what all new people do - I asked how we got mail while at sea. This happened during the first part 1956.

Everyone aboard sprang to the job of selling me on this story about how you had to diligently stand watch and spot the mail buoy so we could stop and pick up our mail and if you missed it... then no mail. I, of course, took this hook, line and sinker. I did ask how the mail got there and of course the answer had already been told for years before that all ships coming from port left mail for other ships so they could stop and pick it up. I kept asking when it would be my turn and after a period of really getting me going there was an opening in the "mail buoy watch list" just for me. Of course it was raining and really bad that day.

I stood this "mail buoy" watch in addition to my regular watches several times before the light of day hit me. Boy, did I net ribbed on this one! But I made sure that I was not the last one to get sucked in.

Hugh D'Alessandro (YNSN, 70-71)

I hadn't been aboard more than a month when I was assigned to hold morning colors by the COB (MCPO HESS). I had no idea how to do it. The Quarter Master came up and gave me the flag. He put it in my hand and told me to hook the ring in my right hand to the snap pull the cord, tie it down, stand back and salute. Our CO was on the Tender that day with the Commodore observing colors. As I stood back to salute I noticed I had hung our flag upside down. I immediately rushed forward to correct the situation. Chief HESS never forgave me. Several years later when I was assigned to COMSUBLANT he was the Command Master Chief for the rest of my tour. He always referred to me as FR (flag raiser) till the day he left.

Roosevelt Watson (QM3, 51-54)

Captain Kaufman received his promotion to full

Commander while we were underway to the Mediterranean; I was on the bridge when he threw his old shoes overboard when we got to Caldis. He and his buddies took an admirals' gig ashore to Cels, and came back hale and happy.

I have two stories about Capt. Price: When he first came aboard, we were all nervous. He looked so strict; didn't smile at first - Capt. Kaufman always had a smile.

One late night at sea, my best buddy Wally Walraven and I were working in the conning tower when Capt. Price stopped by on his way to the bridge. He came in and sat down on the bench that was for the signal man during battle stations - Wally thought it was me.

While Wally was standing helm watch, he reached over and stuck his finger in Capt. Price's ear, who pushed it away. Wally didn't turn around, and so still thought it was me - he did it again, and that time Capt. Price said, "What's wrong with you?!"

We all laughed after that.

Capt. Price always wanted me at the helm during battle stations, and when cruising to port. One day I had just gotten the radio shack to pipe some hillbilly music in for me in the conning tower. Capt. Price stopped by on his way to the bridge, and the song called "There Stands the Glass" came on just as he arrived in the CONN. He stood there for a moment, then said he wanted to have it piped throughout the boat while we were on maneuvering watch.

Fred Baker (CS3, 71-72)

We were in the North Atlantic during the Northern Europe run. We were submerged and I had finished my duties for the day so I went to the Conning Tower to visit with the OD Submerged (Rusty), the QM (Tex), and "Brownie", who was on the helm. If memory serves me correctly, Rusty had been told to surface the boat at a certain time in the near future, so I thought that was pretty cool since I'd never been up in the CONN when we surfaced. I was standing kind of back out of the way. The order was given to surface and when we stabilized Tex opened the hatch and started up to the Bridge with Rusty right behind him leaving myself and

Brownie in the CONN. All of a sudden someone shouted something from the Bridge. Being unable to hear them Brownie stepped over under the hatch. Now remember, I was standing back towards the rear of the CONN so I had a perfect view of everything going on. Suddenly all the water in the world starts pouring down the upper conning tower hatch. Just the most perfect cylinder of green water you have ever seen! Well, everyone knows how Brownie was built. This cylinder of water shot down and then deflected off Brownie's belly and shot perfectly down into the control room without getting a drop on the Conning tower deck. It was like one of those things that can only happen in a cartoon. Brownie is pulling the hatch down and gets it sealed and by that time the hatch to the control room has been secured and all the alarms in the world are going off. So here we are sealed in the CONN - a Seaman on the helm and a Cook. Rusty and Tex are sealed off up on the bridge. Brownie looks back at me and says I guess one of us needs to get on the sound powered phones and since he was driving I was elected. When I got the phones on everyone was checking in giving damage reports and the XO was on one of the phones in Control. When I checked in from the CONN the XO asked who was on the phones. When I told him it was Baker I was answered with dead silence. Finally he asked me who was there with me and I replied Brownie. Another long period of dead silence. I think if I could have read thoughts I would have heard "Oh God we are going to die". It was hilarious. As everyone knows it turned out to be minor. We got washed by a freakish wave. Nothing damaged in the CONN because of Brownie's belly but I think the Diving Officer in Control about drowned because that's where all the water shot.

John Eldridge (MIDN 1/C, 70-70)

I was a first class midshipman, between my junior and senior year at college, on board Sirago for six weeks during the summer of 1970. Got on the boat up at Annapolis, got off in Norfolk. A great time.

I was JOOD on the mid watch, when we were on the surface and just going back and forth inside some night steaming area. Captain Shaffer had gone to bed, but the Night Orders required that he be called for each change of course. So, on this particular night, we were turning about every half hour.

On about the third time of waking the Captain and making the routine report of having reversed course to remain in the assigned area he said, rather sleepily, "John, you don't need to make any further reports to me for station keeping within the night steaming area." The first response that came to mind went directly over the circuit. "Very well, Captain." Well, much to my amazement, Captain Shaffer could go from completely asleep to wide awake in a nanosecond.... "Don't you 'Very well' me, Mr. Midshipman. Proper response is 'Aye, aye, Sir.'" Chocking back the urge to say..."Very well, Captain..." I heeded his advice and responded, "Aye, aye, Sir." "Anything else for tonight John?" I knew how to answer that one..."No Sir. Have a good night."

All was well, until the next morning. Maneuvering had heard the whole thing. Someone got hold of my name tag and in addition to Mid'n 1/C Eldridge, they had made a dymo-tape addition: "Very Well, Captain." I figured I had better wear it. It got me lots of laughs.

I lasted for 31 more years in the navy after that summer on Sirago, and never again misused that term. Subordinates would occasionally use "very well" to me... and I would just smile. Each time, I remembered that night on Sirago and the ability of a commanding officer to rise to the occasion whenever necessary.

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