Ropeyarn Sunday â€œSea Storiesâ€• and Open Trackbacks

Description

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Dateline: Just before Independence Day, 1973, Charleston Naval Base, Charleston, SC, aboard USS CONE (DD-881).

The ship has been to sea for two weeks, playing â€œOrange Forceâ€• (polite way during the Cold War of not offending our enemy by calling our seaborne aggressor units, something other than â€œred forces.â€•) surface units, catching up on their Naval Gunfire Support (NGFS) qualifications by sending round after round of 5â€³/38 cal (54 lb projectiles) at the Carribbean isle of Culebra.

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The long weekend was coming, there were 6 third class (â€œ3/câ€•) midshipmen aboard, the crew had recently returned from a year off the coast of Vietnam, providing real world NGFS services for the Army and Marines, and the stacks needed a good going over with haze gray and the Shipâ€™s company deserved some â€œR&Râ€• after a hectic operating schedule.

I certainly wasnâ€™t privy to the discussion, being a guy wearing dungarees for 6 weeks, as my first hands on educational experience as a one day to be Naval Officer, but I know this: Someone up the chain of command had the brilliant idea of letting the crew take off early for the really long weekend (Wednesday was the 4th that year), and deemed that the 3rd Class Middies, already with some practical experience handling painting implements in the fire rooms and the interior of the ARSOC launcher, as well as on the Signal Bridge, would be tasked to remain behind and be supervised by the duty section.

So, there we hung in Bosâ€™nâ€™s chairs from the fore and aft stacks, armed with brushes and rollers and prodigious amounts of haze gray, on the morning of the 3rd of July, we went about getting either the Engineer Officerâ€™s of the 1st Ltâ€™s â€œto doâ€™sâ€• knocked out.

Not only was this time well used for getting fresh, hot and humid air and a sunburn, it also provided an opportunity to participate in the long standing sea-going professionalâ€™s past time of bitching. I look back on it now and see the wonderful educational opportunity it provided. We got exercise and we got to complain, loud enough, but quietly enough, about the sailors saluting the Officer of the Deck and requesting permission to leave the ship just below our assigned working area for the moment. We had made plans, also, as it had been put out on the way back from the jaunt to the south east, that a long weekend would be made available, of course excepting those who did not have the duty. It was on the 2nd we middies were informed otherwise.

When I think back to that day, I now realize none of the 3 1st Class Mids were there, getting valuable hands on experience handling a bunch of mutinous talk from young men who thought their weekend fun was of higher precedence than the task to fulfill national security by putting a fresh coat of paint on the upper portions of a Greyhound of the Sea. I certainly could not see the connection to that honorable

tasking back then.

Iâ€™m not sure what caused the change of heart, but once we had been allowed off the stacks for lunch, we were informed we could knock off and hit the beach. We didnâ€™t hang around the dissect the underlying leadership and management implications, we quickly disappeared below decks to change and do as ordered: Hit the beach!

Off I went on an epic road trip with two fellow skydivers from school, all of us armed with red DoD ID Cards for the summer, but thatâ€™s another category of storyâ€¦.much like a sea story, but not about life at seaâ€¦and we still have no idea where Herbieâ€™s sneakers are.

Category

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