It Began 30 Years Ago

Description

It shouldnâ€™t have hit me out of the blue as it did, but yesterday I realized I first â€œwent to workâ€• 30 years ago today.

It was a saturday that year, and, having arrived in Norfolk from the DC area, I knew I needed to report in. Itâ€™s not like I hadnâ€™t stepped on a Quarterdeck before and handed over a very think manila envelope to and Officer of the Deck, but this time was different. It was my first permanent duty assignment. After several schools (4 to be exact, over a 10 month period), it was time to earn my pay.

It was early evening, and after dinner. It was dark and the USS MILWAUKEE (AOR-2) was berthed starboard side to to Pier 2 at the Norfolk Operating Base (NOB). LTJG George Parrish, the Shipâ€™s Navigator, was the Command Duty Officer. Tall and thin, sporting a mustache, he sat down with the spouse and I in the sitting area of the Wardroom and told me what time to be at work on Monday morning. I can still recall the scene, but not the words spoken. anyhow, it was done, I had just begun an assigned three year division officer tour, which ended up lasting two years, before I was assigned to a pre-commissioning unit.

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I was assigned as the Combat Information Center Officer, with additional duty as the Electronic Material Officer (CIC/EMO), leading the OI and OE divisions in the Operations Department under LCDR Frank Mueller, the Operations Officer.

The Commanding Officer was CAPT Wright, a submariner, with about one month of his command tour left. CDR David Martin was the Executive Officer. The Engineer Officer was LCDR Carl Klein, who was not a Surface Line Officer, but and Engineering Duty Officer who had convinced the Navy that large plants needed the expert attention of those who had chosen a profession of being engineers above commanding warships. The 1st Lieutenant was LCDR Leo â€œMikeâ€• Pivonka. LTJG Pat Wall was the 2nd Division Officer and ENS Harry Watkins III was the 3rd Division Officer. LT Randy Rice was the Communications Officer, with LTJG Clifford Barnes aboard as the Damage Control Assistant. Bosâ€™n Eddie Watson was in Deck Department, and in Engineering, there was one CWO4 as the Main Propulsion Assistant and a CWO3 as the Electrical Officer. The assigned Medical Officer was an OB/GYN by professional background, but our â€œDocâ€• nonetheless. He and the Supply Officer once had had a contest to see who could stay â€œin the rackâ€• the longest and they were both golfers. I donâ€™t recall who won, but I know it was the call of nature, and not the will to win that was the tiebreaker in the situation. I think they both put up a good fightâ€¦.

Aboard the â€œOld Mil,â€• I began an education that taught you about seamanship, engineering and logistics, unencumbered by the flashiness of modern (or just about any) weaponry.

More to come on this topic this coming Wednesday in the Ropeyarn Sunday and Open Trackbacks series, for 4/4/1977 was my first actual working day in the Navy.

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admin

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