Ropeyarn Sunday â€œSea Storiesâ€• and Open Trackbacks

Description

Continued from last weekâ€¦

The Combat Systems Assessment (CSA) on the USS WAINWRIGHT (CG-28) was going to be different. Since the ship needed some work done in Norfolk, she was sailing a few days early from her homeport of Charleston, SC to conduct her CSA off the coast of Virginia. The plan was for us to ride a small boat out of Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, and meet her near one of the main buoys in the approach lane to Hampton Roads.

We met at the pier at Little Creek, on the appointed day, before the sun rose, LCDR Kathy Hobbs included. Our ride into the entrance of Chesapeake Bay that morning was one of the Special Boat Unit boats, so the team of about 15 had plenty of room. Off we went, into the sunrise, across a choppy bay. We (the guys) were keeping an eye on our XO for signs of discomfort, at the least, or plain old sea sickness. None noticed.

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We pulled alongside the WAINWRIGHT and they had rigged a Jacobâ€™s Ladder for us to board. It was about a 15 foot climb up the side of the cruiser to the weather deck. Once more, Kathy kept right up with us, not a sign of disapproval for the unusual arrival method, even for us.

Once aboard and when the ship was safely returning to sea, the Captain, CAPT â€œIron Mikeâ€• Fahey, joined us in the Wardroom to do the obligatory â€œWeâ€™re glad youâ€™re hereâ€• speech and introductions. Then it was off to work. My usual first check was to inspect the Personnel Qualification System (PQS). Off I went to the Embarked Commanderâ€™s Lounge area, accompanied by a second tour division officer who would present the Shipâ€™s program to me. LCDR Hobbs came along.

I start down the checklist, one which was distributed to the Fleet, carefully researched and referenced to actual published requirements, having done this many, many, and many more times than I could count by now. The young, dedicated LT sitting across the table from me exuded confidence, as he explained the things â€œseeminglyâ€• amiss int he records. He was, wellâ€¦wrong, but he had figured if he took a â€œforward leaningâ€• stance in the discussion, it would pass. After a few minutes of questioning and looking over watchbills and service records, LCDR Hobbs asked if she might ask a question. I, thinking this would be greatly entertaining for a shore based officer to get into a program pretty well identified with only the Surface Navy, said something like, â€œgo ahead.â€•

Right out of the starting blocks, she commenced rapid fire questioning of this LT, quickly reducing him to admitting the bad administration and lack of compliance with the standards set by the various levels of the chain of command. My jaw was on the deck, aghast, not because she had the LT figuratively groveling and begging for mercy, but moreso because she had it all right, which, in my over two years of doing this inspecting job, found it was a rare case that someone had that level of understanding of such a foundational program.

I dismissed the sliced and diced LT after some follow up questions, and then looked at Kathy and asked: â€œWhere did you learn that?â€• â€œThe PQS Management Guide.â€• Wowâ€¦someone had actually read and understood the process, and, more amazing than that, someone who had almost no requirement to work with that program in a shore duty status.

Her stock went way, way upâ€¦

Next week: The grind of Combat Systems Training Team (CSTT) drills.

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