Ropeyarn Sunday â€œSea Storiesâ€• and Open Trackbacks

Description

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But, â€œsea stories,â€• too!

So, there I was, a not necessarily fresh caught Ensign, but not an old hand yet. I had been aboard USS MILWAUKEE (AOR-2) for a few months when we sailed, in company with some other ships, but the only one I recall was the USS FRANCIS MARION (LPA-249) from Norfolk, VA to be part of the Naval force to honor Queen Elizabeth II on the occasion of her 25th Anniversary as Queen of England, her â€œSilver Jubilee.â€•

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It was my first cruise overseas, while a commissioned officer, and was only about 6 weeks long, but it has some special memories. Not only was I exposed to my first taste of fleet steaming, it was the second part of the â€œJoin the Navyâ€¦â€•

We head towards the English Channel, and, unlike the rest of the units in company, who headed into Portsmouth for the Naval Parade festivities, we, the â€œfat shipâ€• got sent east, then north, arriving to anchor in the Firth of Forth, off the Royal Navy Dockyard at Rosyth, Scotland, just north of Edinborough.

I decided, when not on duty, to get ashore and do some exploring. I did and got some great sightseeing in. Oh, did I mention that enroute Scotland, some of the radio equipment I was responsible for maintaining had suffered casualties and I had sent out casualty reports (CASREPs) on them? Oh, sorryâ€¦small details make for good stories some times. I did have outstanding equipment issues, which were in need of updated status reports (SITREPs). I figured, being the wise young officer at that point, that when we got underway, there would be plenty of time to get the updates out. However, I seemed to not yet have grasped the understanding that SITREP dates required sitreps, or casualty correction (CASCORs) sent along to keep the larger logistics system up to speed.

Thankfully, LCDR Frank Mueller did have a grasp on not one, but two things: The operational necessity to keep â€œthe systemâ€• informed of such important matters, and also that some junior officer donâ€™t get it yet.

The day we sailed from the Firth of Forth, after sea and anchor detail had been secured, Frank asked if I had updated my casualties. I said, â€œno, sir, but I will get it done today.â€• His response was something like: â€œThis is how it works: CASREP SITREPS are due out the day status changes, or when the previously indicated SITREP date is reached, which ever comes first, then you get to go on liberty (I later learned he should have said â€œShore Leave,â€• but I understood than and now).â€• His voice was calm and got itâ€¦.

While in transit to Europe, we had a problem with the Raytheon LN-66 Pathfinder RADAR. I had to submit a CASREP because we didnâ€™t carry the zener diode required to make the repairs. We anchored at Wilhelmshaven, Germany for three days. I wanted to go ashore, but I had my assigned

duties, trying to track down the elusive zener diode, so my electronic techs could make the repairs. We finally did get one via the local husbanding agent and the ETs went to work.

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I was able to â€œhit the beachâ€• for a few hours, so LTJG George Parish, the Navigator, and I went to find gifts for the wives. I Had converted $60 to Marks for my ration of gift money. We wandered into a porcelain shop and I was in awe of the several painted and unpainted dolphin figurines by Kaiser Porcelain. They were exceptionally lifelike and the painted ones didnâ€™t have that hard looking edge that hand painting normally has, with these figures looking just like the ones I had seen at sea. All I could afford was the $58 dollars for an unpainted pair of dolphins jumping over a wave. I donâ€™t know art, but not only was the wife pleased when I got home, a few weeks later, as we wandered through Military Circle Mall, there, in the window of a jewelery store, sat the exact same dolphins, but with a price tag of $120. I never made a buy like that again (from the profit standpoint), but I will say the two dolphins are still with the Ex, and she wonâ€™t hand them over. I suspect they are worth a little more than $120 by nowâ€¦.

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Date Created
August 1, 2007
Author
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