



Bob Bayer (AGR-11, 1958-1960)

Fresh out of college, a 22 year old NROTC ensign, I looked forward to my first picket aboard the USS Protector (AGR-11) It was October of 1958.

During my first night at sea, my stomach began feeling uncomfortable and I was really embarrassed that I was so sick that I was unable to get out of my bunk to stand my first midwatch. What a great way to start my Navy tour of duty, I thought!

The next morning I felt worse and was still in pain. The Hospital Corpsman examined me and was fairly certain that it was a combination of seasickness and something that I had eaten the day before. However, rather than take a chance, the Captain decided that I needed to be transferred to an inbound ship. To this date, because I was "out of it", I cannot remember if I was transferred to the picket ship we relieved, or to a German freighter. (The latter still sticks in my mind). Given the choice of being highlined or a small boat, I opted for the latter. I recall a wild sea as I sat doubled over in pain while the small boat crashed through very high waves on the way to the other vessel.

The next day we arrived at the Davisville docks and I was taken via ambulance to the Quonset Point Hospital. Doctors were unsure of what my problem was. They determined that I needed immediate emergency exploratory surgery. However, since all of the O.R. suites were in use, they decided to transfer me to the Newport Naval Hospital.

I was placed back into an ambulance, then onto the ferry for the trip across Narragansett Bay. Halfway across, the ferry lost power and we drifted for about half an hour.

Finally, at Newport, doctors operated on me and determined that my appendix had ruptured that first night at sea and that life-threatening peritonitis had set in. I spent the next 30 days being treated and recovering in the hospital. I was finally released just in time to make Protector's next picket. Fortunately I did not have to withstand any derision from my shipmates relative to the "young ensign getting seasick on his first night at sea"!