

Sent by Jay Kacena (AGR-6 1958-61)

Bad Weather "Now hear this! The weather deck is secured until further notice due to inclement weather." Inclement weather? THAT was an understatement. As Engineering log room yeoman, I had been watching the degree of rolling and pitching indicated by that "thing on the wall" in the Engineering office. (I know there's a proper name for that device but damned if I can think of it now!) Anyway, I haven't forgotten seeing the scale roll over to a point where the bubble indicated a roll to starboard of 42 degrees! Yikes, I thought. If this thing is going over, I think I'd rather be outside than in! And that was before I saw Titanic! The idea of a trip through shaft

Alley and up the ladder to after steering was born at lunch that day. Naturally, weather was the topic of discussion and Mac told us that he had the stern watch. I don't think he was looking forward to four hours alone at the stern and suggested that it should be a dynamite spot from which to view the high seas for anyone willing to keep him company. Of course, since the weather deck was secured, the shaft alley was the only legal access. Anyone who has climbed that ladder knows it's not an exercise you do for the fun of it; but after witnessing the 42 degree roll, I was inspired. Mac was right to suggest that the up-close-and-personal view of our picket station from the door at aft steering was quite spectacular.

I'm sure he can tell you it was even more spectacular from the fantail itself as he discovered shortly after my arrival. Mac got a call from the bridge instructing him to go out to the fantail and make sure the stern light was lit. I remember that he balked at the idea and was threatened with being placed on report if he refused further. So, out he went.

No sooner had he disappeared around the corner when I felt LOCATOR'S bow dive in to a deep trough. On the fantail, of course. We were high and dry (and I do mean high). You know what happens next: the bow goes up and the stern goes down (and I do mean DOWN). In fact in this case, it went UNDER. Now I know that many will think this impossible but you can bet that Ralph Mc Allister will bear me out. We dropped like a rock.

Fearing for his life, I stepped out of the door just in time to see him down on one knee at the aft rail. He was facing forward, left hand on the rail, right hand clutching his white hat. Water was pouring, I swear, a foot or more over his head. The fantail was UNDER WATER! At this, helmets were washed out of the racks in which they had been stored and were floating everywhere. Of course, we were on our way back "up" by the time he scrambled to the door and safety. Needless to say, old Mac was one scared deck-ape while I had only one wet foot for having stepped out the door.

Was the light on? I don't recall his report to the bridge but I will say this for the guy: he stayed on with Uncle Sam, to retire as a Chief Petty Officer in spite of the experience. I, on the other hand, got out and have been selling insurance ever since!

