



Sea Stories

send your sea stories to mel.harder@snet.net

The Last Cruise: from David Livingston, USS Scanner

I was a 2nd class ET on the USS Scanner AGR5 from 64-65. This was the last cruise before they shut down the picket line and decommissioned the ships, June 1965. Just before we got underway, it was reported that one of the pumps used in making fresh water was inoperable. The Captain was not going to let the ship fail in completing our assignments. He said we had enough fresh water on board and we could fix the pump at sea. We had barely passed under the Golden Gate when it was reported that one of the freshwater tanks was contaminated. He said we could sanitize it and refill it after the pump was fixed. We went on water rations with the fresh water turned on only during mealtimes and a shower once a week for all except the cooks, medical and some of the engineering people. Showers were monitored by an MAA to be sure we took an honest Navy shower.

Since we were clean on Saturday, we had an all hands inspection in a different uniform each Saturday morning. I remember during our Dress Blue Uniform inspection, as the Captain started down our line, a seagull flew over and landed a big one on the shoulder of the guy next to me. When the Captain came by, he didn't say anything, but I could tell he had a hard time not laughing.

We did get the pump fixed and started making fresh water, but we were to stay on water rations until the freshwater tank was refilled, which never happened. As we were approaching the Golden Gate on our way back, the Captain ordered a complete fresh water wash down of the exterior of the ship. He wanted to enter port on our last trip looking bright and shiny.

This was the last trip for the ship and the end of my enlistment. I was to be discharged on June 20, but that was a Sunday and the day we entered port. I was discharged the next day on the 21st. It gave me 4 years and 1 day on my enlistment. That meant that all my unused leave was paid at the higher pay of over 4 Years.

I didn't stay out long. I reenlisted about 2 and half months later. At the end of my 2nd enlistment, I was finishing my shore duty tour, was married with a new son. I didn't feel like going back to sea, so I took my discharge. There was something about the Navy I couldn't get out of my system. I enlisted in the Reserves and spent another 20 years with them and retired as a Senior Chief.

Sea story from USS Vigil about USS Outpost

Submitted by Donald N. Thompson USS Vigil AGR-12

The last Sea Story about the USS Outpost brought back a story of my service on the USS Vigil AGR-12. I served on her from June of 1961 to May of 1963 as an Electronic Technician coming on board as a Seaman and leaving as Second-Class Electronic Tech. Once you made third class as we all knew you stood quarter deck watch while in port. That was a normally boring slot of time of four hours, standing there with the officer of the deck. This one morning as I was on duty and the Outpost was leaving to go stand her next picket. I was ordered by the officer on watch to go to the captain and inform him that the Outpost stood out in the harbor at what ever the time was as required to keep the captain informed. Well! Sorry fellow sailors we had a nick name for the Outpost – it was the Outhouse! So, do you know what I said as I Saluted the captain; "The Outhouse stood out in the harbor at such and such time". That was a oh carp moment. The Captain returned my salute, had a frown on his face and I quickly left. Well needlessly to say, it did not take long for the captain to go to the XO and to my division officer to me, to explain that it was never to happen again with some rather strong, loud language.

THE SEARCH FOR THE TWO 3" 50s FROM THE USS VIGIL AGR-12

Henry MacKay BT-2 USS Vigil (Dec 1962 -Dec 1964)

At the recent Colorado Springs reunion I mentioned the fact that the two guns of the USS Vigil had been removed from the ship and placed in front of American Legion Post 15 in East Greenwich Rhode Island by Harry Miller and some Seabees. I was asked if I could take some pictures of them for our yaggram newsletter. I replied affirmatively as I knew exactly where they were located. Little did I know the journey of discovery I was about to take.

My search for the guns that came off Vigil that were located in front of American Legion Post 15 in East Greenwich Rhode Island turned into a major hunt. A few years back I stopped at this legion hall and actually laid hand on these two beauties and read the plaque that told of their origin being from the good old USS VIGIL but low and behold when I went back to take pictures of same, they were gone! The Post was closed and barricaded the guns nowhere to be seen. The only clue that they were ever there were two pits of broken concrete and slag from a cutting torch used on the bolts that secured the guns to their base plates.

With a little google research I found out the post had shut down and surrendered their liquor license after a woman had spent about five hours there drinking and killed another woman in a head on accident in North Kingston after leaving the legion post. The post lacked sufficient insurance and the post shut down and is selling the property for development. In an article from an older issue of The Providence Journal about this incident, I was able find the name of the post commander and then searched his name in East Greenwich and found a phone number for him.

I called him identified myself as a legionnaire and a member of YAGRS and told him of my hunt for these guns. He was very forthcoming with all the information about his travails in trying to get a home for the two guns. He tried twice to give them back to the US Navy only to be told they did not want them back. The Navy suggested he scrap them. He was not willing to do so and he initiated inquiries around American Legion circles and found a willing recipient in the "VETERANS GARAGE" of Posen Illinois. This organization finds and restores military artifacts and hardware on a fully volunteer basis.

This led me to the Veterans Garage who contracted with local Rhode Islanders to remove the guns and load them onto a flatbed trailer. Well according to the post commander, the contractors were ill prepared for the job and what followed can only be described as a comedy of errors. Finally, after many attempts the guns, each weighing about eight thousand pounds were loaded up and sent to Illinois. *(Apparently Harry Miller and some Seabees from Davisville made very sure these guns were very securely anchored.)*

I spoke to a Mr. Joe Werner whose name was given to me by the very cooperative post commander in Rhode Island. He stated that both guns are in Illinois and have been grit blasted to bare metal, primed, and all rusted and missing parts have been repaired or replaced and the next step is to put a two-part epoxy finish coat on them. One is going to be displayed in a museum and the other ones' fate is as of yet was undecided. I have inquired of my American Legion post if they would be interested in getting the second gun for or post and got an affirmative response. I am now awaiting the big "IF" being the cost of the restoration. In the universe of AGRS there is to my knowledge the two guns in Illinois and one complete engine from the USS Protector in the Newport News, Virginia Maritime Museum still in existence. Joe Werner has promised to send me photos of the two guns in the near future as well as a cost of the restoration so my American Legion post can decide if the cost benefit is worth it. I will keep all informed of the final outcome and forward any pictures I receive.

If anyone has any knowledge of any other parts, pieces or artifacts of the YAGRS it would be interesting to hear about. A very extensive photo history of this gun relocation is on the Veterans Garage.com web site veteransgarage.smugmug.com/artillery-restorations/MK22-3-Naval-Deck-guns-from-Rhode-Island