



Sea Stories

From Mel Harder, RD3, USS Investigator AGR-9



This would have been in 1963 or 1964. We were on station. A bunch of us were hanging out at the fantail gun, enjoying the calm seas, nice weather and sunset. We could see the sail boat off in the distance. One of the officers from the bridge came down and told us it was the 295' Barque Eagle, U.S. Coast Guard training ship out of New London CT. I had a small camera on me so one of the guys cranked the gun around until the crosshairs were on the Eagle. I simply put the camera lens up to the gunsight and clicked. I don't know if the Barque Eagle has ever been put in the crosshairs before, but I bet this is the only photo.



left: archive photo of Barque Eagle

gunsite photo by Mel Harder

Pete Bowman, AGR-11 (USS Protector) 1960-1962, EM2

I served in the engineering group headed by Strafford Morse from 1960 –1962. After all these many years, there is an event that is important to me. I have read that there are about 10 things that occur in one's life that are significant enough to not only remember but that have an important impact. Lieutenant Morse was involved in one of my 10 and I wanted to share this with my fellow YAGR mates.

No it's not the time we sailed down to Key West to be the radar lookout during the Bay of Pigs (next sea story maybe). I had been on several picket cycles and the shipboard process was fairly routine. We sailed into our Davisville dock sometime during the day. I had drawn the midnight to 4 am watch. I was awakened and did my 4 hours. However, I did something that I had never done on all the watches. I had crawled down the ladder into the shaft alley many times and never found a thing wrong. So this night, I decided to skip that part of my watch duty. Apparently so did the people that had the 4 pm – 8 pm and the 8 pm to midnight. A very scared sailor sometime around 5 am awakened me. He told me the shaft alley was full of water. Apparently, the bearings had not been tightened after the ship made it into port. I got dressed and went to the forward shaft alley

Bowman cont.

door, opened it and found water almost to the top of the alley. For those sailors that don't know what a shaft alley is or how big it is, it is a very large compartment that runs from the exit point of the shaft to the prop and forward to the engine room. It also runs from the bottom of the ship to the lower deck (a tall height). I called for all the bilge pumps to be turned on and went out onto the dock. I saw that the ship was very low in the water. Actually it was extremely low, well below the line when the ship was full of supplies and fuel just before sailing. In the morning, I can't recall what actually happened. However, as the ranking member of the watch that night, I had to face Strafford and tell him what had happened. I assumed that I would be sent to Siberia or something worse. He crawled down into the shaft alley and surveyed the oil slick all over the walls and equipment. I recall that all he said to me was "make sure you get this mess completely cleaned up." That act of forgiveness and not throwing the book at my fellow watch people and me stuck with me all this time. I think I have "paid-it-forward numerous times." I have a related memory but can't be sure it is not just my imagination related to my own near-sinking experience. At some time when we were tied up at the dock in Davisville, a DE was docked across from us. In the morning, only some radio antennas were visible above water as it sank during the night. OY!



Bill Ivie, USS Vigil ARR-12

The SMQ Weather Receiver

The meteorologist on my ship launched a daily weather balloon to gather data used to forecast conditions. The balloon carried a transmitter which sent information back to the ship which was received by a SMQ radio receiver. As a Third Class Electronic Technician one of my duties was keeping the SMQ operating. I was working on the bench in the ET shop having just completed a repair on the SMQ when my division officer, the EMO, (Electronic Material Officer) opened the top portion of the dutch door to the shop and asked, "Did you get that SMQ up?" I answered, "Yes sir." He asked, "What was wrong with it?" He had very limited knowledge of electronics with a degree in "Animal Husbandry" and I was in a playful mood so I answered, "The fallopian tube was blocked." He responded, "Good man," closed the door and was gone. A short time later my chief came into the shop and asked, "What did you tell the EMO was wrong with that SMQ?" I sort of snickered and told him. He cracked up and said, "He went to the bridge and told the captain (who had a EE Degree) right in front of everyone, the helmsman, lookouts, and officer of the deck, and the captain restricted him to his stateroom for three days and told him to spend the time studying." The chief said, "I would steer clear of him when he gets off restriction if I were you. I was nervous, but when he had finished his time he came in the shop and never mentioned the incident. I guess we both learned from it.