

The process of “Chip and Paint”, involved scraping and sanding off any rust and old paint prior to adding a rust protective coat of red paint to the affected area before applying a finished grey or black paint job on top of it all. One of my assignments involved preventative maintenance of the forward anchor and anchor chain. PMP, (Preventative Maintenance Plan) was just another fancy way of saying, chip and paint, chip and paint. Sometimes I would spend hours, even days, painting that anchor chain only to have all the paint scrapped off as soon as the anchor was lowered in port or at sea during sea trials. Then I would start all over again.



**A routine morning muster and roll call of 1<sup>st</sup> Division**



Oh, oh...Sea rust. Time to chip and paint.

In the next sequence of pictures you see the anchor waiting orders to let go the port anchor. The sailor on the left is holding a lanyard attached to the pin that locks the pelican hook closed. When the order came he pulled the pin and the fellow to his right swung a hammer to open the pelican hook that held the chain. Then the ship's bo'sun watched the chain run until enough had played out. More chain was run out until yellow links came up on deck. Then the brakes were set and the crew attached the pelican hook "stopper" to hold the chain. Finally a second stopper was attached, just to be sure. When the hook was down the sailor on the bow hoisted the Union Jack on the jackstaff.



The yellow chain links were a warning that most of the chain had run out. Following these were red links. The round handles in the foreground controlled brakes on the wildcats that fed the chain out of the chain locker below deck. If the brakes failed and the chain could not be stopped, when the red links appeared everyone cleared the area as fast as possible. If the chain ripped free in the chain locker and the end came on deck, the flailing loose end could easily slice through the deck, gear locker, or any unfortunate sailor who was in the way.



I stood some of my favorite watches while assigned to 1<sup>st</sup> Division. When the weather was bad and visibility was poor I would be assigned to the “Fog Watch” at the very front of the ship’s bow. Despite all of our modern radar and sonar capabilities it would be my job to bundle up against the elements, plug in a wired phone to the bridge and stretch out on my stomach on the bow overlooking the very front of the ship. I was then to report any floating objects in the water or nearby vessels that may mysteriously appear in the misty fog. Of course there wasn’t much to see and most watches were very peaceful. Some of those times still linger in my mind as one of those great experiences in life that will never be repeated.



I can still feel the cold swirling around me and the quiet solitude as the bridge and superstructure above me disappeared into the grey fog. I remember looking down and watching the forward bow cut into the ocean waves, the spray slicing up the side of the ship and watching dolphins cross each other in front of the bow as if they were racing or playing tag with the ship. The sea is a vast reflection one's future life, just rolling along, one wave after another.



**Another lonely 4 hour watch**



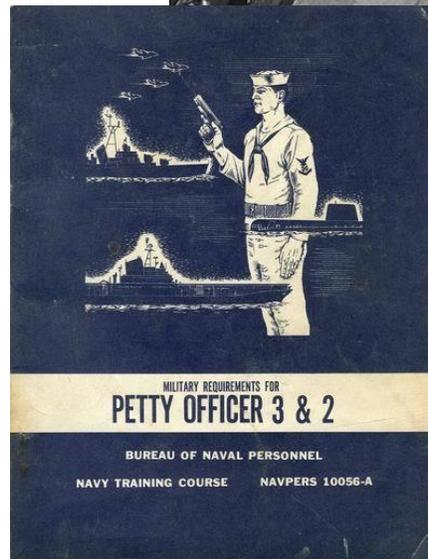
I was a port and starboard lookout and stood bridge, CIC, quarterdeck, fog and anchor watches. I worked sea and anchor details when we put out to sea and entered port. Bridge watches were nerve racking because you were in close proximity to the ship's Captain sitting in his captain's chair and other officers on the deck. It required four hours, day or night of my best performance and behavior as I relayed orders throughout the ship using a sound powered phone.

I was a sweeper and a member of endless work parties. I spent hours on refueling details, or unloading supplies delivered by air and sea. I stood post as shore patrolman and a guard and manned battle and fire stations throughout the ship. Ships like ours stationed on the Vietnam gun lines also spent a lot of time, day or night, with their sailors at combat battle stations. I loaded weapons until my arms and back were numb or relayed orders over sound powered phones until I was horse and hard of hearing. The old recruiting saying about the Navy being "More than a job...it was adventure", was a crock. It was a job all right. A long, dirty, tiresome, never ending job that paid me about \$45.00 a week in 1971.



This mooring rope was called the "Rat line" because of the cylindrical metal tubing used to keep the rats from boarding the ship.

To relieve the boredom and dull routine of deck and weapons maintenance I completed work on several training and armed forces school correspondence courses. The required lessons for Petty Officer and for the Postal Clerk rating were finished and a college course in Criminology was completed.



**November 17, 1971** . On this date the OKLAHOMA CITY crossed the Equator and conducted the traditional *Crossing the Line* ceremonies well known to all men of the sea as the "Shellback Initiation". Seven hundred and fifty one new Shellbacks joined the crew of four hundred and forty nine old Shellbacks by days end. I had met Davy Jones and lived to become a citizen of Neptune and joined a brotherhood of sailors from around the world dating back for many centuries.

U.S. Frigate *Colorado*, 11 May 1870

.....With the assistance of the main-top men, a large canvas awning was inverted and filled with water by the steam pumps, and, a rude chair being improvised, the scene from this time beggars description. Landsmen, bandsmen, and marines joined in an indiscriminate rush to the hatches, only to find all retreat in that direction cut off by armed sentries, posted on every ladder! Then to the shrouds, where they found the upper ratlines occupied by veterans, who on a signal from Neptune captured and delivered them by scores to the scaly embraces of his satellites. The Court Barber performed his duties with a rapidity truly astonishing. Each victim was lathered, shaved, shampooed, hair, whiskers and *face dyed* in the twinkling of an eye. Some submitted meekly; some expostulated wildly, and some fought courageously, but all were treated *barber-ously!* From the chair, each was rolled backward into the "bath," to be grasped by a dozen strong fins, rubbed, scrubbed, and held under water until a wave of the trident proclaimed him an adopted son of Neptune. Then arose a great cheer from the crew, and amid the roar of six hundred voices, the Sovereign of All the Seas vanished into the night as mysteriously as he came.

Source: Willis, George R. *The Story of Our Cruise in the U.S. Frigate "Colorado," Flagship of the Asiatic Fleet - 1870-'71-'72 (Yokohama, Japan?: 1873?):* 24-32.

**Reprinted from the Oklahoma City (CLG-5) December 1971 edition of**  
**"The Sooner."**

*"Crossing the Line" ceremonies are among the most ancient of naval traditions. Since antiquity, seafaring men have used the occasion of crossing some significant sea frontier to test the worthiness of inexperienced seamen. For ancients sailors who navigated the Great (Mediterranean) Sea, passing through the Straits of Gibraltar was occasion for important ceremonies; the thirtieth parallel - - which is further South than any part of the Great Sea - - was another early frontier. More recently, the Equator and the International Date Line have become the important markers.*

*Greek and Roman mythology influenced the earliest "Crossing the Line" ceremonies, and the sailors often offered propitiatory gestures to Neptune, Ruler of the Deep. Later ceremonies were largely intended to determine that new seamen could endure the rigors of a difficult voyage. Typical modern "Crossing the Line" festivities combine elements from both traditions. Thus shellbacks (those who have crossed the Line) have certificates bearing the seal of Neptunus Rex. The "Ruler of the Raging Main" himself is one of the principal characters in the initiation, as are Davey Jones and other members of Neptune's royal court.*

*While the physical abuse suffered by the initiates is considerably less than that inflicted on seamen in bygone days, shillelaghs, fire hoses and garbage chutes are still part of*

*the fun. The OKLAHOMA CITY crossed the Equator on November 17, 1971 en route to Singapore. After two days of boisterous activities, about 750 "pollywogs" (those who have not crossed the line) became "trusty shellbacks," having been "duly initiated into the SOLEMN MYSTERIES OF THE ANCIENT ORDER OF THE DEEP."*

"Davey Jones - - arriving!"



In retrospect it's a good thing I was new aboard the ship and had not yet made too many friends or enemies. Crossing the line was an "old Navy" tradition that demanded true courage and commitment from officers and enlisted men alike. There was no room for those that could not except an extreme challenge or submit to the humiliations required of a real blue water sailor to pass this test. A written request had to be submitted and approved by the Captain to forego the ceremony and only a few of the crew dared to skip the initiation.

And so I reported on deck, dressed in my dungarees covered by boxer shorts, to start the initiation by crawling a full circle on my hands and knees (1,200 ft.), on one of the last true wooden decks in the modern Navy



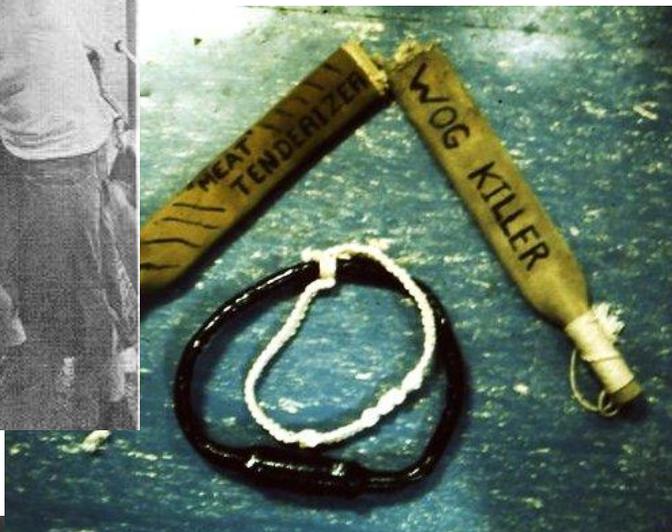
The "Shellbacks" that had already crossed the line then ringed the gauntlet and were allowed to beat on us poor "pollywogs" as long and as often as they chose with a shillelagh, (club) made of cut up nylon and canvas fire hose soaked in salt water so it would sting those open cuts suffered during the beatings...ah, I mean initiation....

**A little squirt of Tabasco sauce wets the appetite for imminent ordeals**

Many times the line would slow down as other sailors were chosen for special beatings and while the salt water spankings were beginning to take its toll on my rear end, it was my knees that hurt the worst as they became cut and bloody from the crawling on the salt water soaked deck. Even strangers like myself were not “spared the rod” as I would have to crawl faster to avoid the more severe beatings. There was no mercy from those who thought of you as an enemy which is why I was glad to be a stranger to most of the crew at this time.



A sailor demonstrates the proper use of the shillelagh.



After about 45 minutes, which seemed like hours, we are routed to the fantail area where the real fun began. We are required to crawl through a 20ft. canvas chute full of wet garbage mixed with the vomit of our predecessors.





We are then brought before one of the rulers of the sea. Axel grease was rubbed in our hair and then we were forced to kiss his big, hairy belly before our final test.

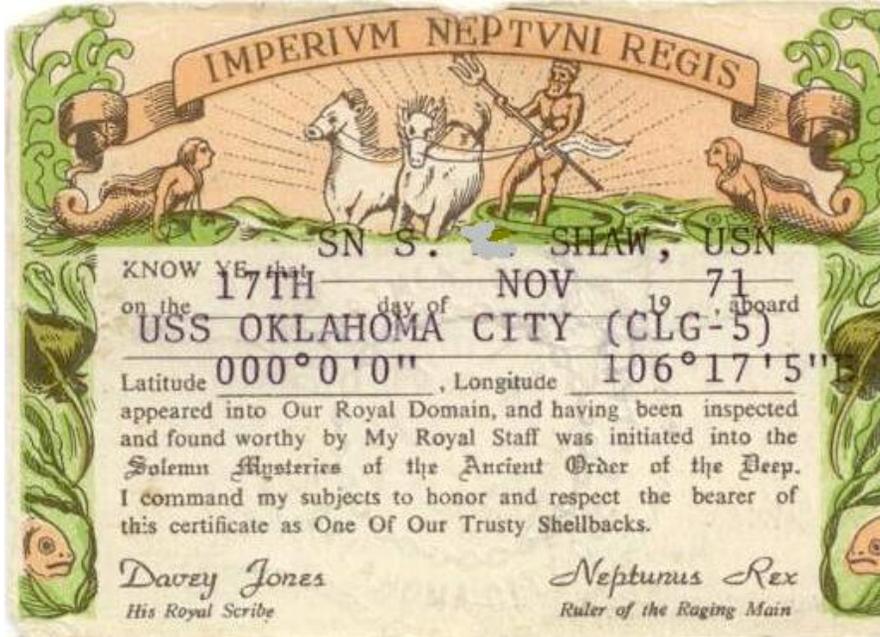


Great chunks of hair were cut from our heads by the Royal Barber

We were then led to a large tank of water, filled to the brim and "baptized" after the lid is lowered and we are forced under water until hyperventilation sets in.

**The initiate is "baptized" - - and the pollywog becomes a Shellback".**

I can remember collapsing to the floor of the shower, bruised and bloodied, covered in, grease, vomit and garbage with my knees shaking so bad from the pain and cuts ..but I made it !! I guess it could have been worse. I talked to some Australian sailors in Singapore that had also, "crossed the line" and they said it was the toothpaste squeezed up their butts that was the worst part of their ordeal !!!!



Reprinted from the military newspaper, "The Stars and Stripes" dated Feb. 18, 2011

## STARS AND STRIPES

*A culture clash remains in the Navy between the bawdy traditions of old and the image of a modern co-ed service that current leaders portray.....*

*.....The Navy retains a few hazing rituals from the older generation, like the infamous "Shellback" ceremony, when sailors cross the equator. Tradition holds that the ship's commander orders sailors to carry out humiliating tasks, including cross-dressing, drinking hot sauce and kneeling before the "sea-baby," usually the fattest Chief Petty Officer on board, and then forcing them to pluck a cherry or other food item from his greased belly.*

*"It took a week to get the grease out of my hair," said one former officer who went through it. The officer spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss matters sensitive to the Navy. An older version of the ceremony often included bare-bottomed paddling with short lengths of garden hose that left sailors limping for a week.*

\*\*\*\*\*

**November 19 1971** Arrived at the ANZUK Naval Base in Singapore.



The Republic of Singapore consists of 58 islands plus the main island of Singapore, off the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula between the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. Inhabitants of the Malaysian peninsula and the island of Singapore first migrated to the area between 2500 and 1500 B.C. British and Dutch interest in the region grew with the spice trade, and the trading post of Singapore was founded in 1819 by Sir Stamford Raffles. It was made a separate Crown colony of Britain in 1946. Singapore attained full internal self-government in 1959, and in 1963 Singapore joined Malaya,

Sabah (North Borneo), and Sarawak in the Federation of Malaysia. It withdrew from the federation in 1965, and proclaimed itself a republic.

Singapore developed into one of the cleanest, safest, and most economically prosperous cities in Asia. However, Singapore's strict rules of civil obedience also drew criticism from those who said the nation's prosperity was achieved at the expense of individual freedoms.



Singapore was a huge city with many high rise buildings and a large population. It was the only city in Asia that I felt truly safe and relaxed to walk about in. The streets and buildings were the cleanest I ever seen in any large city in the world.



Littering carried severe penalties which included being beaten with a cane in some cases. The shopping and restaurants were fabulous and very upscale and modern for the times. I spent many hours visiting upscale bars and street side restaurants, content to watch the world go by, and engaged in very little actual tourist activities. This is one of the cities in Asia where I would like to return for another visit.



One of the restaurants I visited back in 1971 is still in operation at the same location in the year 2011. I bet the prices have changed!

**Cola** No 48869  
 Date 19/11 1971.  
**COLA RESTAURANT**  
 NO. 7, JALAN LEGUNDI, 12½ M.S. SEMBAWANG ROAD,  
 SINGAPORE, 27. TEL: 591658.

Quantity	Particulars	\$	Cts.
1	Food-		80
1	M. Milk Shake		90
3	Hamburger + clip		4 20
		\$	5 90
	hout hat		20
		\$	6.10
1	Dringht-		90
		\$	7.00

THANK YOU GOOD-BYE, PLEASE COME AGAIN

While Singapore turned out to be one of the best ports I ever visited during both tours to the Orient, it also had the worst beer I ever drank during my time overseas. The Fraser & Neave company had been in Singapore since the 1880's and grew into one of the region's largest soft drink manufacturers by the late 20's during which time they decided to enter in to the beer industry. During this same time period Heineken was working on launching their beer on the international market. These two companies merged in 1931 to form Malayan Breweries. Heineken supplied it's brewing expertise to the adventure and Fraser & Neave added their distribution abilities, with production facilities in Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.



In 1932 construction of the new brewery was completed and the Malayan breweries, (now Asian Pacific Brewery) introduced the Tiger Beer Brand. This stuff tasted terrible! It had a bad smell, was very dry and bitter to the taste and left you with a bad hangover.

**November 24, 1971** Departed Singapore. Out to sea.



## **MY LIFE AT SEA**

**Free steaming" is a Navy term meaning to act independently. Navy doctrine called for flagships to operate away from the fleets as part of the strategy to spread out targets in case of nuclear attack. The *Oklahoma City* almost always steamed alone, except when we were in the Gulf of Tonkin.**



**The ship spent quite a bit of time "showing the flag" in foreign ports as a part of its diplomatic mission. Liberty in these ports was really good, and we often received red carpet treatment. However, steaming between ports was a fairly monotonous routine. In addition to our regular watches we also had to carry out the routine ship's business.**

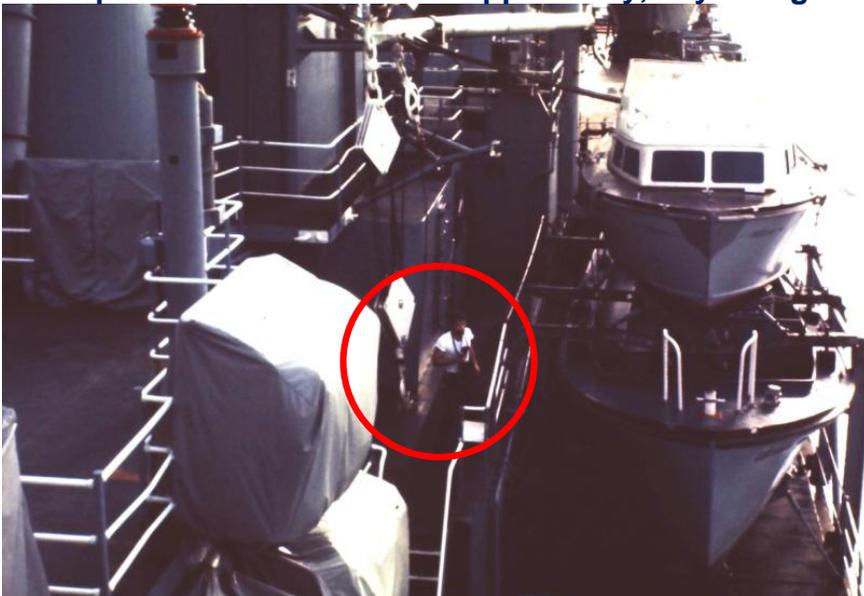
**A typical day at sea started about 0600 (6 AM).. The crew mustered at roll call - a head count to be sure everyone was still aboard. Then we did ship's work until noon.. The crew's mess also had two seating's for lunch. Afternoons saw more work, with two more seating's at evening meal. After that we had free time. Sometimes movies would be shown to the crew ion the mess decks. Lights out was 2100 (9 PM) or 2200 (10 PM), depending on your division.**



**Of course someone has to operate the ship 24 hours a day, so we had to work our watch schedule into the daily routine. So we wouldn't have the same watch period each day there was a short two hour mid-watch from 0000 (midnight) to 0200, followed by another from 0200 to 0400. The four hour watch periods were from 0400 to 0800,(8AM), 0800 to 1200 (noon), 1200 to 1600, (4PM), 1600 to 2000, (8PM) and 2000 to 2400 (midnight). This became very tiresome after two or three weeks without enough time for a decent sleep. When the ship was in combat we went to General Quarters, when everyone was at his combat station for as long as combat continued.**

The two battle station assignments that I remember the most were the Combat Information Center and the storage area for the 6in guns. The powder magazine that contained the explosives and shells for these guns were located three or four decks below the water line deep inside the ship. After my first combat action, loading ammo into the elevators that would carry them topside to the gun mount, I stopped worrying about taking enemy fire. It was pretty obvious that any nearby hit would result in my immediate extermination with all of that ammo nearby or death by drowning since we were located so far down below decks. The CIC assignment was very interesting because I was finally able to obtain the specifics and details of each battle as it developed. All parts of the ship were required to keep CIC apprised of their action status. Reports would flow in from duty stations and lookouts and I would record information on reusable charts and logs that hung on the bulkhead.. Speakers about the compartment allowed one to gain a complete picture of the battle taking place rather than being confined to one area and not seeing, 'the big picture". However it was strange to be able to hear but not see any of the action taking place while inside the fully enclosed Combat Information Center during a "Battle Stations" condition.

**Occasionally we executed drills of various sorts where everyone went to his duty station. All in all, it was difficult to keep a regular routine at sea and we worked and slept whenever we had the opportunity, day or night.**



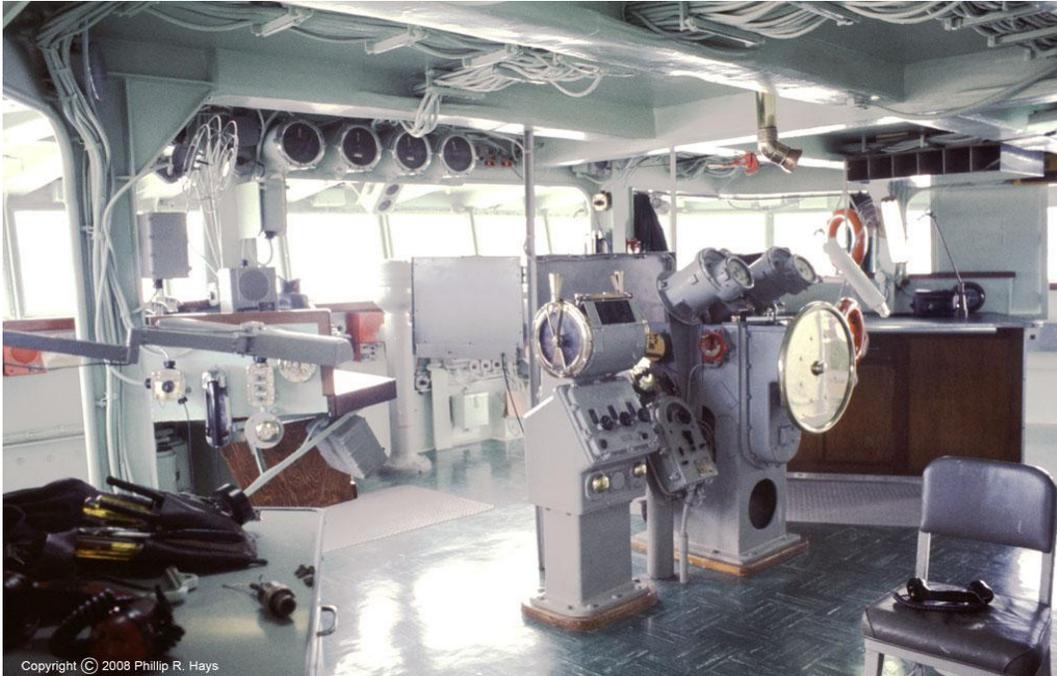
**That's Me !**

The navigation bridge was the control center when we were at sea. Here the Officer of the Deck (OOD) commanded the ship. The chair in the picture was the Captain's chair. By Navy tradition no one else was allowed to sit in it. The Captain spent much of the time at sea in that chair.



I stood several watches at this phone. My job was to relay information between the officers and engineers below decks. "Full speed ahead " or maybe it was..."left rudder 10 degrees to port, aye sir!" I never could get it straight !!

We had a radar repeater, gyro compass repeater, rudder angle indicators and other equipment for "conning" the ship. The red telephone sets were secure (scrambled) voice links to Pacific Fleet Headquarters, the Pentagon, etc. In port the handsets were removed. In addition to the Captain, OOD and JOOD (Junior Officer of the Deck) an enlisted sound powered phone talker was on the bridge to communicate with lookouts topside. To either side of the enclosed bridge were open wings that were used when maneuvering alongside other ships or pulling up to a pier.



Behind the bridge was the pilot house. The round brass wheel was the helm (steering wheel) that controlled the rudder, and the machine to the left of it was the lee helm that sent engine speed orders to the engine room. Overhead were four propeller RPM indicators. The helmsman and lee helmsman listened for orders from the OOD and carried them out. Also in the pilot house were the navigation watch stander and the bo'sun of the watch.



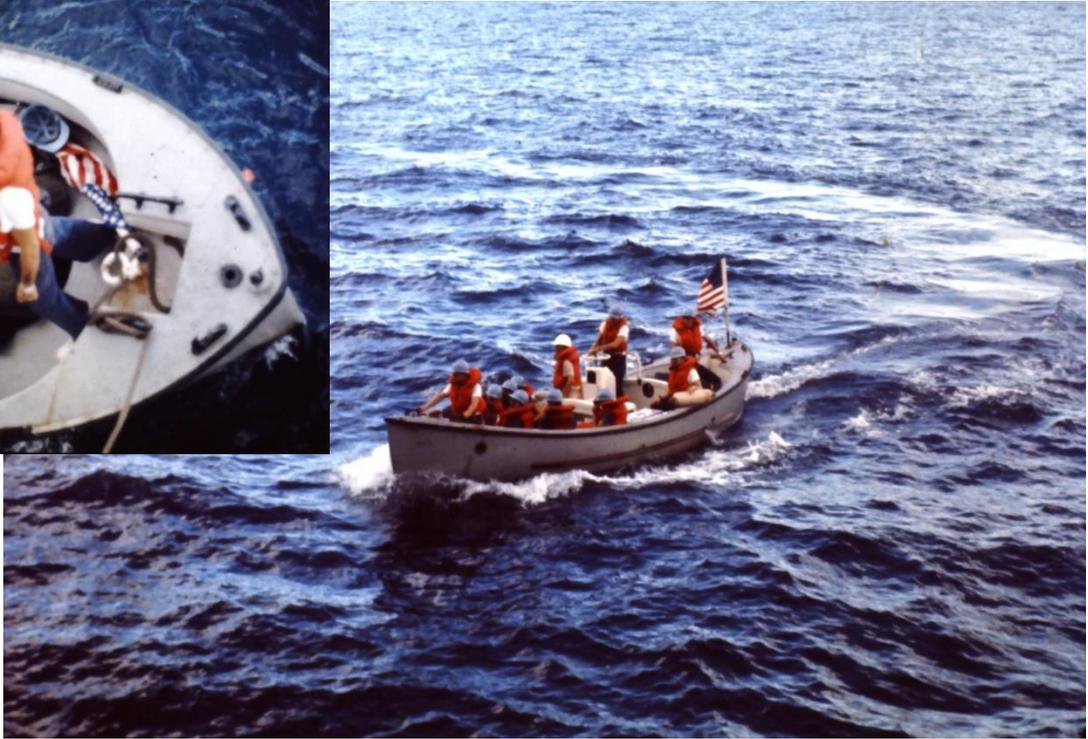
Pictures of the bridge and pilot house were taken in port because when at sea the bridge is all business - no sightseers allowed.



**The complementary view is from the stern, looking at the ship's wake trailing off to the horizon. We typically steamed at 15 to 20 knots (nautical miles, or 17 to 23 miles per hour), though we could go about 32 knots if we were in a hurry. At 20 knots it took about four days to steam from Yokosuka, Japan to Yankee Station in the Gulf of Tonkin near Da Nang, Vietnam.**

**A typical day would have people working on the engine in the motor whale boat, or the boat winches. Sometimes the Helo Detachment would be working on the Admiral's helicopter. Here we see the life nets and antennas on the fantail lowered for flight operations.**





**GM Division occasionally performed planned maintenance on the missile launcher. The Navy made statistical studies of the failure rates of all equipment on ships, and developed a planned maintenance schedule that allowed replacement of critical parts to be scheduled before they were expected to fail.**



**One of the "evolutions" unique to the *Okie Boat* and other ships with wooden decks was "holystoning." We had teak decks extending from just aft of the anchor windlasses to a point forward of the missile launcher. To keep these looking pretty (we were a flagship, after all) the deck Divisions had to clean them regularly. The preferred method was holystoning.**

**This is a tradition that dates back to sailing ship days. A stone with a hole in it is placed at the end of a broom handle. A mixture of water and lye, oxalic acid, or some other bleach is poured onto the deck. Then the men scrub the deck with the stones to make it nice and white. This also requires a lot of elbow grease to get just the right finish. It was just another of the joys of being on a flagship.**

It is said that the name, holystoning derived from the practice of sending crews into the town of Portsmouth, England to steal headstones from cemeteries as this was a reliable source of quality stones for ship's in the area.. Modern Navy practice is to use fire bricks removed from the boilers as they were periodically relined. I will never forget being woken and told to fall in place for a detail topside in the cold dark morning. With frozen hands we mixed our batchers of cleanser, and water and soon, while soaking wet we grabbed our cut off broom sticks and grating stones and formed a line. Only half awake and with aching backs and hungry stomachs, we hunched over like the pirate slaves we had become and slowly worked our stones across the deck, a few inches at a time. A Bo'sun Mate stood nearby, keeping our lines straight and calling cadence for an old sea chantey that must have dated back for many years. For just one miserable moment I felt like I had been transported back in time to the days of a free sailing ship manned by old Buccaneers somewhere on the Spanish Main.

*They say that in the Navy the coffee's mighty fine  
it looks like muddy water, it tastes like turpentine.*

*They say that in the Navy, the mail's so fast it's great  
Today I got a letter dated 1948.*

*They say that in the Navy the toilets are mighty fine,  
you flush them down at seven, they come back up again at nine.*

*They say that in the Navy the pay is mighty fine,  
they give you 100 dollars and take back 99.*

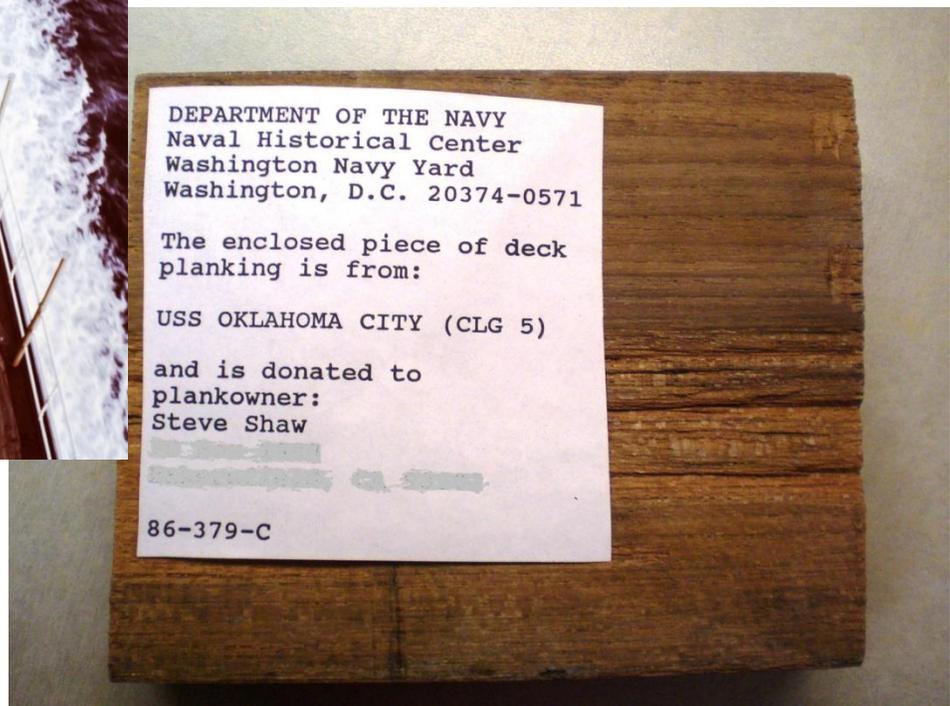
*They say that in the Navy the training's mighty fine  
Last night there were ten of us, now there's only nine.*

*They say that in the Navy, the meat is mighty fine  
Last night we had ten puppies, this morning only nine*

*They say that in the Navy, the shoes are mighty fine  
You ask for size eleven, they give you size nine*

*They say that in the Navy, the pancakes are mighty fine  
You can try to chew them, but you're only wasting time.*

As the sun began to rise over the horizon I lifted my weary head and wondered, once again, what the hell I had gotten myself in to !! ( Many years later I was able to obtain a 4x6 chunk of that wooden deck that had been removed from the ship after it was decommissioned from the Department of the Navy Odd to think that many years ago, in another life, I may have stood on that very piece of wood and looked out over the ocean, wondering where my life would take me in some distant future.)





# Holy stoning



“Six days shalt thou labor and do all thou art able, And on the seventh — Holy stone the decks and scrape the cable.” Seaman’s traditional Philadelphia catechism, c. 1830.

More than a century has passed since those words were recorded, but for the men of Oklahoma City the words ring true. “Scrapping the cable refers to chipping paint from the anchor chain: easy enough. Only the SEVENTH Fleet flagship has wooden meindecks, the kind that require Holy stoning.

Harkening back, Ship’s Boatswain, CW02 Emil Moravec says, “In the old days of sailing ships, a ship was judged by the condition of her decks.” Consequently, today the cruiser’s teakwood decks are almost always stoned just before entering port. Holy stoning is a method of shaving a thin layer of wood off each plank’s surface to clean away the natural residue of dirt, grime and salt.

There are about 6,000 square feet of wood to be maintained, and the job belongs to the deck divisions; 1st, 2nd and 3rd; where most undesignated (un-trained) seaman coming to the ship are first assigned.

Overseer of deck evolutions is CW02 Moravec. Only the large cruisers have a ship’s boatswain; in addition to being a great organizer, he is a walking storehouse of information pertaining to things nautical.

It’s now 5:00, Sunday morning; most of the ship sleeps, unaware of the splendid light-show the sun is producing in shades of orange, red and green as it climbs slowly over the horizon. There’s a light, warm breeze blowing and the sea is calm in keeping with its name: Pacific.

This may be the first taste of real seamanship for some of the newer sailors, but for others, it is a familiar scene.

Bubble, bubble, toil and trouble . . . boraxo, sand, bowl cleaner, bleach, sound like a bizarre recipe? This abrasive mixture is called “suji”. It’s spread about the deck like chicken feed and aids in peeling the wood. Next, men line up at the gear locker where they are issued broom handles and Holy stones.

The stones are actually pieces of firebrick, a pumicelike material used to insulate the ship’s propulsion boilers. The handles are carved to a point at one end

and a hole is chipped in the brick's center so the two mate securely.

Soil is absorbed by the wood's porous surface. Going always with the grain, the men slide their bricks left and then right in a seemingly endless rhythm. A team leader, either a third class boatswain's mate or the leading seaman, calls a vigorous cadence echoed by the men.

Boatswain Moravec beams when he speaks of the many compliments Oklahoma City has received on the condition of her decks. The seasoned wood and sleek steel of the ship's forecabin provide an interesting backdrop for Commander SEVENTH Fleet receptions which host many foreign dignitaries. He says, "It's an indication of the crew's pride."

Special precautions must be taken to protect the wood. Those who are painting, working with torches, oil, grease or moving heavy objects are required to be especially careful. Wetted mats are placed where there is any danger of sparks from welding outfits, and the crew is alert for even minor paint spills.

Even with careful attention, the teakwood eventually wears out. Craftsmen at the Ship Repair Facility at Yokosuka replace the wood. "This is the only place we know of that can do the job," remarks the boatswain. Uncut logs of teak are shipped from Taiwan and allowed six months to cure. Then, they are cut into the planks destined to form Oklahoma City's famous maindeck. Formerly, they were two-inches thick. Nowadays, however, with the Navy ever mindful of needless cost, the planks are made of one-inch pinewood laminated to an inch of teak. The finished planking is set in a base of rubber which acts as grout.

When the guided missile cruiser gets underway for the final time, it will be a sad occasion, not only for the thousands of men who have served onboard, but for people everywhere who treasure things suggestive of the past and tradition. Both wood decks and the art of Holy stoning of which our sea-going forebears felt compelled to write, will fade from the U.S. Pacific Fleet.

