

The character assassination went just as the division wanted, my work was good and my last evaluation report showed that. The captain had to go along with the amount of witnesses against me and I was busted to E\*2 and sent to X division. By this time our ship was sent to Beirut to escort shiploads of PLOs out of the area into the Red Sea port of Jiddawhich is on the coast close to Mecca. The first ship we picked up was the **NEREUS** line, a greek vessel that looked like a car ferry. We pulled into Beirut harbor and saw four or five destroyers and a couple of helo farms and a few more amphibious ships LSDs and LSTs. There were quite a few marines there already. We did not know what was happening on shore, I assume they were landing for the US police action with the UN in Beirut. We sat in the harbor and ran around at two or three knots a couple miles from town. There was a lot of excitement, because we did not know how hot the action was with the PLOs leaving town. The sailors went up to the flying bridge to survey the scene through the 'Big eyes' used by the look outs. On my turn at the big eyes I could see smoldering structures and a puff of an explosion now and then. The old town on the peninsula looked pretty well worked over and I could see half demolished buildings. On the coast roads north of town things looked like a normal suburb. Cars drove around and nothing looked bombarded. It was probably a seven mile trip around the harbors semicircle.

That day I could forget all the trouble I had with B division and got into all the action we were having. I guess the most paranoid of the BTs probably did too. We were doing something real and other problems lost their focus.

While we were awaiting our ship we were checked out by a mean looking Israeli patrol boat. It was loaded with all sort of weapons and if the situation was delicate and negotiations blew up would do some damage to our ship. Nothing happened and we left the same day and headed out south in the Mediterrean towards Port Said and the Suez canal.

I still had business to take care of with the Navy all this time. In X division the MAA watched over us and assigned us to different tasks from pop riveting dividers in the head, scrapping and painting the main decks, and cleaning up compartments. It was easy and with only three or four guys in predicaments like my own there wasn't the constant wear and tear of harrassment. I was still aware I was on the same boat in the middle of the sea with the dopers who suspected me of rattling them off so the relief wasn't that great. In the mess line one of the cooks gave me a bunch of shit and I responded with a "WAA, WAA" and didn't answer his stupid remarks, the cook wouldn't shut up and the mess deck MAA said something cute to me about throwing me overboard. The harrassment was not over. I found I could help the PACE, GED, teacher put some of the guys through high school. It was a natural job as I had the English background. With the other work assignments, I wasn't to sharp but still was a help in administrating the course and checking the papers. I handled the situation well and didn't try to make these men feel awkward because they didn't finish high school. I even helped a few of the same guys who boosted me out of the fireroom.

I got out on the weather deck much more in X division. We had to lay out in Port Said's harbor for quite a while. There were a half dozen sunken ships still unsalvaged when we went through. Their superstructures rusted away some only ten or twenty feet lower than their waterlines, others only showed the highest deck houses or radar gear through the water. It was an eery sight and absorbed me almost as much as sailing through the straights of Messina which is unforgettable. The way that old town sits in the hills is something to see from that straight. While we waited to get into the canal The MAA spotted a huge old sea turtle. In comparison you could say it was as big as a automobile. I had never seen one but this turtle had to be a thousand years old,