

Some of the guys really liked to be locked up to on the quarterdeck watch and got a big bang out of packing a side arm. I knew their feet got sore standing those watches. This captain did not even do the guys whites so what was the big deal? I kept at the cold iron watch which could be done in fifteen or twenty minutes each hour and kicked back with a book the rest of the time. I wasn't into leadership that much anymore as I already found out what good being too outstanding would get me. The one second class that went to CAAC to dry up was truly in love with that sort of activity, so what sort of an example was being set for the guys anyway?

I'd say that about half of the younger guys were truly gung ho on the military stuff. They would hang around the Seals and do jumping jacks with them sort of as a try out for scuba diving. I didn't even like to swim. The seals got some real spiffy weapons, fold up automatic rifles and stuff and definitely were an elite. They got to be kind of sickening as all they did was Debby Drake workouts and never helped on the ship at all. Some of the guys were pathetic in their attempts to get into the Seals. You had to be a true athlete and most of the guys were slob or wimps. I knew I'd never swim the test if I lived to be a hundred and was not into hero worship like some of the kids who really got a bang out of associating with the Seals. The CeeBees had a decent attitude and didn't act to stuck up and had interesting gear like giant deisel out boards for the causeways to learn about. On the Vreeland I poked around the helo deck some and some of the guys showed me the Gas Turbine when they were overhauling it and could actually explain the control system in easy terms. There was a lot to be learned on the ship. I already had picked up the distilling plant pretty well although I continue to fire the boiler as my full-time duty. We kept the boiler on the line real well, but had many an evaporator casualty and I learned the darn things by having to help take the stupid things apart all the time. We had full distilling capacity 25% of the time if we were lucky. Usually one evap would blow something we couldn't fix and went down until we could get parts at the next stop or off a tender. Aqua-Chem, or my POIC should be shot, that part of the ship was total junk. The same was true of the controlled propellor drive system which was broken about all the time as well. The steering system of the ship was forever apart and malfunctioning, and the engines would blow turbos and heads and exhaust parts with regularity. A diesel generator blew a record five heads out of eight one time. The Barbour County was like living in a junkyard. The second chief engineer was an electronics of radioman as a youth and never came down to see the gear. The captain got report from him! I suppose these two were too busy throwing tea parties for the mates to watch over engineering. If they had to go somewhere at ten knots behind the rest somewhat. Their remedy for getting things done was to dog engineering, but not get the gear in real working condition. I guess we were supposed to use bubble gum to hold stuff together. I saw my boss hand over some bearing to the Flip yard workers one time for who knows what. The tools disappeared with regularity. I'd be lucky to borrow a big crescent wrench. The whole place was a farce.

There was no incentive to getting things maintained at all. I painted out 75% of the Boiler Flats while underway and nobody seemed to notice, and no one else would lend a hand. The majority of the lagging and bulkheads had been neglected for years, and even though I made visible progress, there was no pat on the back. There was only a demand for more and more while the rest of the division bopped around the log room or played frogman or buttered up the chief. The POIC gave me a lot of responsibility as a petty officer and no authority to organize the rest of the guys to work. Things went on an seniority system and I was supposed to catch up on the stuff that the guys who were there longer had neglected. All but one of the guys assigned to my division had drug involvement and that