

March 2008

Wow, this stuff is great! I am enjoying the web-site and the plan-of-the-day from our stint in Vietnam. Thanks for thinking of me and turning me on to these resources. I forgot that Honeycutt re-upped while we were over there but if I recall, we were forever afterward fond of reminding him that "It's your Navy, Honeycutt."

Have any of you ever had regrets about not re-upping when the time came? I have had twinges but no considerable regrets. However, I do believe the Navy was one of the great adventures of my life and I treasure the memories and the growing up I did, as well. It must have been a great adventure, since I love telling sea stories to my kids. They patiently suffer through these relations and I keep hoping that I have not started repeating myself.

I believe I'll always feel a sense of loss when I think of DD-823 lying somewhere in a deep dark sea. As we well know, a ship is never just steel and guns. Rather a ship is all the people who walked her decks, stood her watches and, at least in many of our cases, went to war in her. The ship becomes all of us and, at the same time, a part of each of us. We're no more aware of it as its happening than we are of the breaths we take or the beat of our hearts. It simply becomes a truth as time passes. Do you suppose anyone that had not been so wedded could understand such as that? I doubt it and barely understand it myself. It just is and I take joy from that.

Bruce Gadansky
STG-3
64-67

June 2008

I have wanted to pass along a few memories and anecdotes about life aboard the SBR for awhile now and am finally doing so. I came aboard in 1968 as a radar striker and immediately became the division "scrub." In other words I was elected to perform every dirty job that no one else wanted to do. Working parties, loading of supplies and cargo, and cleaning details were but a few of the indignities to be suffered. I even got assigned to 'mess-cooking' and can remember washing out those huge cauldrons (you could stand in one) crusted with hardened mashed potatoes. That is not a pleasant memory.

RD1 Wigglesworth once had me paint the yardarm even though he knew I had a deep-seated fear of height. I eventually completed the assignment much to his and most of the crew's amusement. To avoid some of the dirty work, myself and several of the other scrubs used to hide in the air vents, that is till we were discovered by the Chief Radioman. No more hiding out!

I remember the intense and hectic training we went through at Gitmo and putting to task everything I learned in Radar School. Wasn't long before I became very familiar with the radar equipment on board, the DRT (Dead Reckoning Table) and honed my skills in writing backwards on the transparent board.

During 1969, I remember running into a Communist May Day celebration in Italy. Hammers and Sickles decorated every pennant. Wearing our dress uniforms made it impossible for us to avoid detection and it wasn't long before the crowd started chasing us. We made it to the dock and fortunately an SBR boat was waiting and whisked us safely back to the ship. I have never again ran that fast.

Also in 1969 we made our foray into the Black Sea, steaming just five miles off the Russian coast. Roberts and one other can were sent on this mission and we feared being boarded by the Soviets the whole time. We were there primarily to spy on the Russian Fire control Radar and despite being escorted out of the area, accomplished our mission.

Prior to arriving at Gibraltar, the older crewmembers told all us young guys to be on the lookout for the Prudential Insurance sign affixed on the Rock. Naïve as we were, when word was received that we were nearing the Rock, we all rushed out on deck with binoculars and cameras. Search as we might, we were unable to isolate the sign. The E5's and E6's were laughing so hard, they cried.

I have so many more memories about my time on the Sammy B. that I could write a book. Maybe, one day after I retire, I will.

Ervin A. "Rep" Whitfield Jr.
RD3
1968-1970