

## DARVY COHAN

**USCGC BASSWOOD (WLB-388) – Jan68 to Jul69**

### Golden Journeys Booklet - 2015

Decommissioning Cutter EWING in 1967 sent me back to Hawaii as XO of USCGC BLACKHAW (WLB-390), a 180' buoy tender. No good deed going unpunished, I was transferred to another tender, USCGC BASSWOOD (WLB-388), in Guam, where I served in 1968-1969 as XO, relieved the CO, and was promoted to Lieutenant.

### RELATED ARTICLES/WRITINGS ATTACHED

#### BASSWOOD IN VIETNAM

As XO of USCGC BLACKHAW (WLB-390), a 180' buoy tender in Honolulu, Darvy supervised expanding the ship's facilities, and its organization in preparation for its duties in Viet Nam. He was then transferred to USCGC BASSWOOD (WLB-388) in Guam, where in 1968-1969 he served as XO, relieved the CO, and was promoted to Lieutenant.

The book written about BASSWOOD, including some of its Vietnam service, by its First Class corpsman (HM1) entitled "Realm of the Golden Dragon", which makes reference to Darvy as "Max Crohn," the ship's Executive Officer, is a highly embellished version of reality - a sea story, as acknowledged by the author. All the stories about combined SEAL team operations and combat actions are fictional although there were times when SEAL teams were aboard. The author does state BASSWOOD was in Vietnam in 1967 during his tour. The author left for another billet before BASSWOOD went back to Vietnam.

#### TYPHOON TRANSIT

While somewhat fictionalized, but reflective of several actual heavy sea experiences while CO of BASSWOOD, the Typhoon Agnes and Typhoon Bess convergence in the fall of 1968 is true and the BASSWOOD did transit that confluence on their return to their home port in Guam. Besides Darvy, Tom Pennington, Bob Offutt and Howard Newhoff experienced Typhoon Bess rolling up the Vietnamese coast first hand.

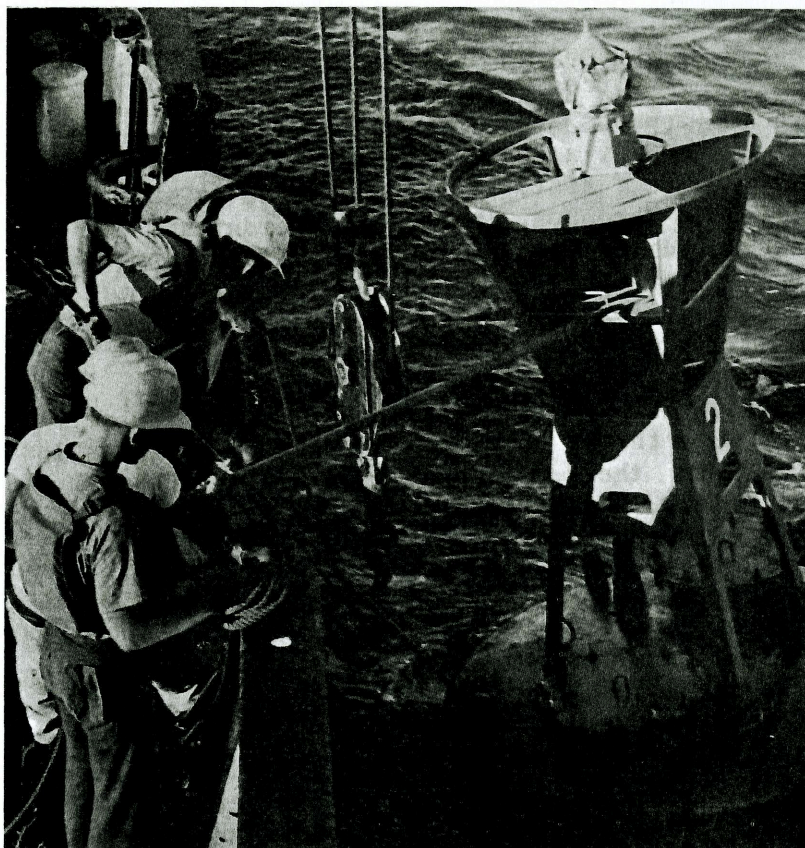
#### SEA STORIES FROM THE JUNGLE'S EDGE – PROLOGUE

Aspiring for a lifetime to be a published writer, Darvy frames his thoughts of a possible book or work of which TYPHOON TRANSIT would be a chapter or short story.

The process of making Vietnam safer for merchant and military vessels is new and still not complete. Thus far, the Coast Guard has sent three cutters to Vietnam at intervals of six months for 30-day tours to establish new aids and re-service already established aids dotting the Vietnamese coastline. With some 70 merchant ships arriving monthly and hundreds of military craft plying the coastal waters daily, the aids play an important factor in the upkeep of the war effort.

There are many problems working this far from home without nearby Coast Guard base or depots with the ready supply of buoys, moorings, batteries, flashers and spare parts. However, the Basswood is no stranger to this type of operation, having operated among the far-flung islands of the Pacific for many years.

The Vietnamese Directorate of Navigation has one buoy tender and maintains an aids to navigation system which was adequate for pre-war shipping. However, the rapid development of port facilities and U. S. bases in areas where previously there was little shipping created a requirement which they could not meet by themselves.



FIVE TON BUOY--Helmeted Coast Guardsmen tug one of the larger buoys on station in Vietnamese waters toward the side of the black-hulled cutter.

The U. S. Coast Guard is providing advisory assistance to the Directorate so that South Vietnam will eventually be able to maintain the entire system.

In the meantime the Basswood and other 180-foot buoy tenders, whose black hulls are familiar in U.S. waters, are becoming an equally familiar sight in Vietnam.

U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**United States  
Coast Guard**



Commander  
Eleventh Coast Guard  
District

400 Oceangate  
Long Beach, CA  
90822-5399  
Staff Symbol: (r)  
FTS: 984-5360  
213 - 499-5360

1650

SEP 24 1988

From: Commander, Eleventh Coast Guard District  
To: Captain Darvy M. Cohan, 554 58 0316, USCGR

Subj: LETTER OF APPRECIATION

1. I note with pride and appreciation your dedicated performance of duty to your country during a period of more than 23 years. Your service has included many positions and units, including the following:

UNIT	DATE	JOB TITLE
a. CGC CHAUTAUQUA	1965-1966	DWO/FIRST LIEUTENANT GUNNERY OFFICER
b. CGC EWING	1966-1967	EXECUTIVE OFFICER
c. CGC BLACKHAW	1967	EXECUTIVE OFFICER
d. CGC BASSWOOD	1968-1969	EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND COMMANDING OFFICER
e. USCG ACADEMY	1969-1970	INSTRUCTOR IN NAUTICAL SCIENCE
f. ORTAUG 11-83741	1971	CURRICULUM OFFICER
g. ORTUP 11-82741	1971-1975	AUGMENTATION AND TRAINING OFFICER
	1975-1979	EXECUTIVE OFFICER
h. CGRU SAN DIEGO	1979-1980	EXECUTIVE OFFICER
i. CGRU COSARFAC	1980-1982	COMMANDING OFFICER
j. VTU SAN DIEGO	1982-1983	EXECUTIVE OFFICER
k. CGRU 11TH DIST RCC	1983-1984	COMMANDING OFFICER
l. CGRU SAN DIEGO	1984-1985	COMMANDING OFFICER
m. VTU SAN DIEGO	1985-1987	EXECUTIVE AND COMMANDING OFFICER
n. VTU SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA	1987-1988	DEPCOM MARDEZSOCALSEC

2. Your leadership, dedication, and professionalism have been exemplary throughout your many years of service. Your contributions have improved the effectiveness of the Coast Guard and Coast Guard Reserve.

3. During your military career you earned the following medals and awards, a testimony to your accomplished record:

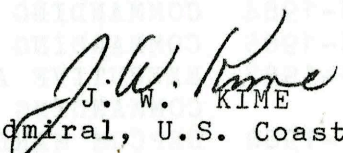
Subj: LETTER OF APPRECIATION

- a. NATIONAL DEFENSE SERVICE RIBBON
- b. COMMAND AT SEA INSIGNIA
- c. EXPERT RIFLE MEDAL
- d. EXPERT PISTOL MEDAL
- e. RESERVE MEDAL
- f. SEA SERVICE RIBBON
- g. ARMED FORCES RESERVE MEDAL
- h. COMMAND ASHORE INSIGNIA

4. Highlights of your career have included having served as the Commanding Officer of the USCGC Basswood (WLB-388), a distinguished vessel in the Coast Guard's "Black Fleet" of buoy tenders. You also received the Commandant's Letter of Appreciation for the development of the first successful computer program for search planning, demonstrating the use of computer applications to Coast Guard SAR operations. Your reserve career included contributing to several augmentation programs which provided reservists with valuable "real time" Coast Guard experience and responsibility. These challenging assignments have provided noteworthy service and lasting memories of your career with the Coast Guard.

5. As we wish you farewell, I want to extend the sincere thanks of the Commandant and the Coast Guard, as well as my own, for your many years of service to the United States of America. You have made significant contributions and can take justifiable pride in your accomplishments.

6. Your dedicated performance of duty has been in keeping with the highest traditions of the Coast Guard.

  
J. W. KIME  
Rear Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard

#### TIMELINE

**Feb/Mar 1968** – Darvy as XO of BASSWOOD

**April 1968** – Saipan buoy run.

**May 1968** – Darvy as CO of BASSWOOD

**June 1968** – Yap, Ifalik, Eauripik, Woleai of the Caroline Islands – Toxoplasmosis research mission.

**September 4, 1968** – Typhoon BESS hits Vietnam; BASSWOOD worked last sea buoy mission out of Subic Bay and then outran typhoon returning to Guam.

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## Annotations

1 message

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Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

Wed, Jul 21, 2021 at 12:52 PM

To: Darvy Mack Cohan <dmc@cohanlaw.com>

Darv - Here are the annotations I propose for using in your pages in the Scapbook:

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BASSWOOD IN VIETNAM - An accounting, to the extent with which he can be comfortable, of Darvy's tangential involvement in the Vietnam War as well as his limited time in Vietnam waters and ashore.

TYPHOON TRANSIT - While somewhat fictionalized, but reflective of several actual heavy sea experiences while CO of BASSWOOD, the Typhoon Agnes and Typhoon Bess convergence in the fall of 1968 is true and the BASSWOOD did transit that confluence on their return to their home port in Guam. Tom Pennington, Bob Offutt and Howard Newhoff experienced Typhoon Bess rolling up the Vietnamese coast first hand.

SEA STORIES FROM THE JUNGLE'S EDGE - PROLOGUE - Aspiring for a lifetime to be a published writer, Darvy frames his thoughts of a possible book or work of which TYPHOON TRANSIT would be a chapter or short story.

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Let me know what you think....Bill

### DARVY

1. ~~When did you report aboard as XO; I think I've figured out it was sometime in February/March of 1968. And when did you take over as CO?~~
2. When were you relieved as CO of BASSWOOD?
3. What about the redesign of the sea-going buoy tenders to accommodate more men and additional operations?
4. What about rescue of bird watcher?
5. Do you want me to use Darvy or Max?
6. I have a picture of BASSWOOD working a buoy in Vung Tay harbor – most likely in January 1967. Do you have any pictures of your time in Vietnam?
7. In an e-mail from you to me, you said, "Can you tell me why I have a specific recollection of Bill Simpson on Kwaj. My crew stole the coke machine and wanted me to load with beer, but I made them return it. That fixed Simpson in my mind."

## Darvey Cohen Non-Vietnam Tour

As an English aboard the USCGC Chinkotinct, all the crew was screened for secret clearance a level above Top Secret before embarking on a mission in Kingsbay in the Preble Islands south of the Philippines having something to do with atomic energy testing.

Because of this very high level security clearance in his military records he was sought out by the Navy for special courier duty that did not intermingle with his regular sea duties.

Basswood 6 officers 54 men stationed out of Guan. A half dozen Courier missions were 1 and 2 day trips aboard Navy contracted aircraft to places mostly unknown to him. He carried packages to be delivered and signed for by specific locations which contained codes and other information.

As skipper of the Basswood, he did transverse into Vietnamese waters and even moored for brief periods to pick up materials and transited to places officially recorded in SITREPS that were not the locations he actually visited.

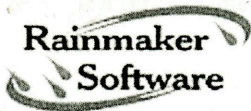
Bob Burnett meet with Darvey in Bob's San Clemente home on afternoon and adamantly confirmed that Darvey actually came aboard his white cutter while in Vietnamese waters. Call Bob to get his story again of this rendezvous.

Ask Darvey what were his tour dates as XO and CO of the Basswood.

As a courier Davey had to be the last person to get on a plane and the first off. On one flight he was on, General Westmoreland and his entourage were on as well. Davey had to walk through the entourage and right past Westmoreland. The officers in the entourage were not to have protocol changes and asked Davey what he thought he was doing and that's when Darvey said he had to get off first. General Westmoreland interceded and said, "Go ahead and do your job young man." And Davey got off first.

While in one location on one of these trips, as a Lieutenant, some senior officers at the officers club confronted Darvey about his Command at Sea insignia and Darvey said.....

Darvey was never in a combat incident within Vietnam territorial waters and he never worked aids to navigation. The book written about the Basswood has many inaccuracies.



Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

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**Re: BASSWOOD IN VIETNAM**

1 message

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Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

Wed, Apr 21, 2021 at 8:10 PM

To: Darvy Mack Cohan <dmc@cohanlaw.com>

Darv - OK, I put the paragraph in just as you wanted and made reference to the two typhoons.

It would be great to have your full story about you out-running AGNES and BESS....looking forward to reading it....Bill

On Tue, Apr 20, 2021 at 9:36 PM Darvy Mack Cohan <dmc@cohanlaw.com> wrote:

Bill:

If you want to add in the typhoon identifications, I have no objection. The Typhoon was "Agnes", sweeping in from the south-east into the Philippine Sea.

I had to go through it to reach Guam, and I'll write you a Sea Story From The Jungle's Edge based on it.

I would prefer that the following paragraph simply be returned to its original form:

"The book written about BASSWOOD, including some of its Vietnam service, by its First Class corpsman (HM1) entitled "Realm of the Golden Dragon", which makes reference to Darvy as "Max Crohn," the ship's Executive Officer, is a highly embellished version of reality – a sea story, as acknowledged by the author. All the stories about combined SEAL team operations and combat actions are fictional although there were times when SEAL teams were aboard. The author does state BASSWOOD was in Vietnam in 1967 during his tour. He left for another billet before BASSWOOD went to back Vietnam."

Thanks,

Darv

**From:** Bill Carr [mailto:bill@getrain.com]

**Sent:** Tuesday, April 20, 2021 12:03 PM

**To:** Darvy Mack Cohan <dmc@cohanlaw.com>

**Subject:** BASSWOOD IN VIETNAM

Darv - Sorry for the delay in looking this over and getting it back to you for your final approval.

I got diagnosed with walking pneumonia after getting back from Connecticut and New Jersey last Friday. So I got a little lazy.

But all is well now and I'm back on track given the good effects of the prescribed medicine.

Attached is your write-up on the BASSWOOD and your tangential duties in Vietnam. I made very few changes.

Can you give this one more good read to make sure I'm not missing something or that I made changes not appropriate? Let me know and we can close the file on this one.

Thanks ....Bill

*and continues to provide.”*

**Walt Viglienze** writes, *“What a surprise to learn of a classmate’s service, and that it was briefly mentioned in a book, but under a pseudonym. The book is REALM OF THE GOLDEN DRAGON by C. D. WILLIAMS (CWO, USCG, Ret.) [www.pocolpress.com](http://www.pocolpress.com), 2016, about serving onboard CGC BASSWOOD in Viet Nam and the islands of the West Pacific.*

*The classmate is **Mack Cohan**. He's only anonymously mentioned briefly at book's end, and most of the book is salty sea stories of many port calls.”*

In talking with Darvy, he does substantiate he was the commanding officer and there were many port calls throughout the West Pacific as part of normal and specifically ordered confidential operations - although the timelines of events stated in the book are not exactly as he remembers them. He also is adamant about the fact that he was never in Vietnam himself as the skipper although the commanding officer before him was. Time with Darvy sharing his experiences throughout his command is a book in itself.

DARV

+COL  
JOURNALS dates as Broomwood CO  
Seals stones and fruitless

BROOMWOOD was in Vietnam in 1967

8/17/67 B/W not used for new report of GUMM  
15 MO GUYSEE

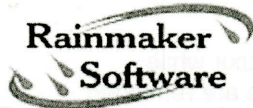
ACRONYMS INCREASING W/5015?

43 initials + 5 Americans  
which included Vietnam

APR 1968

JUN 68 medical resupply trip  
was there on medical when you took a road m/c on  
to FT STAFFORD AIR BASE?

JONATHAN LIAM QUINN III p.9.



Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

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**RE: BASSWOOD and Vietnam Theatre**

1 message

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**Darvy Mack Cohan** <dmc@cohanlaw.com>  
To: Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

Sat, Mar 27, 2021 at 2:32 PM

Thanks, Bill. I do appreciate it.

Pleased proof read it. On page1 "buoy" is misspelled as "bouy." On page 2, middle paragraph, "Basswood" should be capitalized as "BASSWOOD." Page 3, second paragraph, second line, "closed" should read "close," and CHAUTAUQUA is "(WPG-41)", not "40" On page 5, second paragraph, delete the excess "," after "Hut," On page 6, last line, "mustr" should read "muster,"

I look forward to seeing the results of your project and see the stories of other classmates. I'll see you either in September, or next Winter.

Darv

**From:** Bill Carr [mailto:bill@getrain.com]  
**Sent:** Saturday, March 27, 2021 9:15 AM  
**To:** Darvy Mack Cohan <dmc@cohanlaw.com>  
**Subject:** Fwd: BASSWOOD and Vietnam Theatre

Damn...you are good Darv. Such excellent writing. Loved reading it.

It will make a superb addition to the Scrapebook project.

I've got an appointment with the Academy museum curator April 10th in New London; I'm looking forward to donating this scrapbook along with another book of my experience in Nam that I just finished.

Give me a call when you are able. ...Bill

----- Forwarded message -----  
From: **Darvy Mack Cohan** <dmc@cohanlaw.com>  
Date: Fri, Mar 26, 2021 at 5:02 PM  
Subject: RE: BASSWOOD and Vietnam Theatre  
To: Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

Bill:

please call 319-398-1022.

**Continuing Education Waiver:** Kirkwood Community College assumes no liability for accidents that occur while participating in Continuing Education classes and provides no funds to cover medical costs. Participants are reminded that participation is entirely voluntary and are strongly urged to have their own health insurance. It is understood that participation is voluntary and Kirkwood Community College is not responsible for injuries or accidents and all liability against them is waived.

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**Inclement Weather:** Kirkwood Community College and off campus locations may close due to weather or other emergency situations. The decision to cancel Continuing Education classes will be made by 6:30 a.m. for daytime classes and by 3:00 p.m. for evening classes. To find out if your particular Continuing Education class is affected by this notice, please visit [www.kirkwood.edu/ceweather](http://www.kirkwood.edu/ceweather).

**Kirkwood Community College**

Continuing Education and Training Services

6301 Kirkwood Blvd. SW

Cedar Rapids, IA 52404

319-398-1022

[contactce@kirkwood.edu](mailto:contactce@kirkwood.edu)



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Working from what you wrote, I have edited it, and expanded it to answer some of the questions that posed at the end. I tried to keep everything related to Vietnam and your project, removing what I was uncomfortable with and deviating where I felt context required.

I don't know what you have from other people, and I don't want to seem to minimize anybody else's service. Upon review after I had written it, I wonder whether it would really fit into your project. In any event, give it a read and call me.

Darv.

**From:** Bill Carr [mailto:bill@getrain.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 24, 2021 8:43 PM  
**To:** Darvy Mack Cohan <dmc@cohanlaw.com>  
**Subject:** BASSWOOD and Vietnam Theatre

Good evening my friend. I know you have to be thinking, when in hell am I going to call you back like I keep saying I am.

Well, now I'm ready.

I've read "Realm of the Golden Dragon" a couple time now. Lu read it before me. She wants to through me over for this HM1 Williams guy cause he knows how to have a lot of fun. 🕶️

I've sorted through a number of sources besides the book to come up with the attached.

Could you look it over and then give me a call when you have some minutes to talk about it? I'm totally open to additions, clarifications, etc., etc.

How are you doing with Covid and all? Lu and I both have our shots and trying to get back to a full schedule of dancing but this pandemic in her family plus plus keeps getting in the way. This weekend we are driving a couple hours to around Des Moines for a 6 - 9 dance and then back to another locally on Sunday from 1 to 5.

Looking forward to talking with you now that I've done my homework...Bill

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## BASSWOOD and Vietnam Theatre

1 message

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Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>  
To: Darvy Mack Cohan <dmc@cohanlaw.com>  
Bcc: Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

Wed, Mar 24, 2021 at 11:42 PM

Good evening my friend. I know you have to be thinking, when in hell am I going to call you back like I keep saying I am.

Well, now I'm ready.

I've read "Realm of the Golden Dragon" a couple time now. Lu read it before me. She wants to through me over for this HM1 Williams guy cause he knows how to have a lot of fun. 🕶️

I've sorted through a number of sources besides the book to come up with the attached.

Could you look it over and then give me a call when you have some minutes to talk about it? I'm totally open to additions, clarifications, etc., etc.

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Looking forward to talking with you now that I've done my homework...Bill

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 **Darvy Cohan - BASSWOOD and Vietnam.docx**  
24K

**From:** Bill Carr [bill@getrain.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 25, 2018 1:40 PM  
**To:** 'Lloyd George'  
**Cc:** 'Walter S. & Diane Viglienzone'; 'Andrew T. & Ann Horsey'; 'Douglas H. & Phyllis Teeson'  
**Subject:** RE: cga65 Re: VN Vets Project

Lloyd – Talked to Walt and the next step is for him to get back with Darvy about his allowing me to put that paragraph in a column or some other way tp publish the information....we are to stand by....Bill

---

**From:** lgeorge00@gmail.com [mailto:lgeorge00@gmail.com] **On Behalf Of** Lloyd George  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 25, 2018 1:33 PM  
**To:** Bill Carr  
**Cc:** Walter S. & Diane Viglienzone; Andrew T. & Ann Horsey; Douglas H. & Phyllis Teeson  
**Subject:** Re: cga65 Re: VN Vets Project

He mentioned it to me also, also my recollection is not as vivid or as detailed as Walt's. If you don't hear from Walt before you leave, you could take a chance and mention his conversation with me, mentioning his BASSWOOD tour, although I don't remember much.

You could dovetail it with the overall project, and, of course, I'll respect his wishes.

Meanwhile, please give him my best, and safe travels.

Lloyd

## Bill Carr

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**From:** Bill Carr [bill@getrain.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 25, 2018 1:00 PM  
**To:** 'Walter S. & Diane Viglienzone'  
**Cc:** 'Andrew T. & Ann Horsey'; 'Douglas H. & Phyllis Teeson'; 'Lloyd George'  
**Subject:** RE: cga65 Re: VN Vets Project

Walt - I'm with Davy visiting for the week. We have talked about much of his time as CO of the BASSWOOD not only this time but during previous visits.

Would it be appropriate for me to ask Darvy to review this paragraph of his involvement or should I not since you swore us all to secrecy unless we both die?

Let me know right away please by phone if you would (563-529-3982) - as I am leaving San Diego tomorrow morning and would like to talk with Darvy about this today.....thanks....Bill

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**From:** lgeorge00@gmail.com [mailto:lgeorge00@gmail.com] **On Behalf Of** Lloyd George  
**Sent:** Monday, January 22, 2018 8:23 PM  
**To:** Walter S. & Diane Viglienzone  
**Cc:** Andrew T. & Ann Horsey; William C. Carr; Douglas H. & Phyllis Teeson  
**Subject:** Re: cga65 Re: VN Vets Project

Thanks, Walt.

'Twas I with you and Mack on the USS MIDWAY.

I believe I've already alphabetized the list in another XL.

I'll look through your reply more carefully after this week's round trip to visit a family member in Montreal who's in hospice.

Best,

Lloyd

On Mon, Jan 22, 2018 at 8:34 PM, <[viglie@aol.com](mailto:viglie@aol.com)> wrote:  
Lloyd et al

great job Lloyd

( while i've been less activ  & not productive - but have tried to solicit more workers... )

1. a. does anyone have skill - (or think worth time) to alphabetize the list ? by last name?
  - b. any problem adding non- shipboard months ? - e.g. walt V Div13 OPS ( Jan - Jul '69)
  - c. thought list was at 43 ? when we circulate this best effort - 43 may surface
  - d. see next for # 44?

### 1 & 5 **YOU ARE SWORN TO SECRECY - ONLY DISCLOSED IN CASE HE & i DIE**

Darvey Mack Cohen -- Discussion in May revealed, and subsequent research revealed :  
he served in Viet Nam, afloat, and may be only 65er who'se featured in a book?  
HE EXPRESSED SENSITIVITY, AND SOME NOT SO POSITIVE MEMORIES.

I forget if Lloyd or Orrvis visited aircraft carrier with Darvey, and me?

**Unless a veto, my plan is to ask his OK for this draft input to class column?**

If he says NO, then **YOU ARE SWORN TO SECRECY UNTIL HE DIES...**

COHAN, Mack [2499 Vantage Way Del Mar, CA 92014](mailto:2499 Vantage Way Del Mar, CA 92014)

Hm# [\(858\) 481-7635](tel:858-481-7635) [dmc@cohanlaw.com](mailto:dmc@cohanlaw.com)

..." Mack was geat seeing and spending time with you in May, at Les's and on aircraft carrier. I was surprised and impressed with what i understood was your shipboard duty aboard CGC BASSWOOD - a tale of the "SOUTH PACIFIC," including Viet Nam. Understanding some sensitivity, and not all positive memories, would you mind me sending the following for Bill to put in the class column? Subject to your editing or additions..."

What a surprise to learn of a classmate's service in Veit Nam, and that it was briefly mentioned in a book, but under a pseudonym. The book is **REALM OF THE GOLDEN DRAGON** by C. D. WILLIAMS ( CWO, USCG, Ret.) [www.pocolpress.com](http://www.pocolpress.com), 2016. The classmate is Mack COHAN, and he can tell you the rest of the story. He's only mentioned briefly at book's end, and most of the book is salty sea stories of many port calls. No, Mack is not mentioned in any of them...."

[Pocol Press - Realm of the Golden Dragon](http://www.pocolpress.com)

[www.pocolpress.com/getBookDetail.php?bookID=000068](http://www.pocolpress.com/getBookDetail.php?bookID=000068)

1.  
2.

**Realm of the Golden Dragon. By C.D. Williams. ISBN: 978-1-929763-67-2. Price: \$17.95. Shipping: \$4.00. On 17 August 1967, after many years of being home ported in Honolulu, Hawaii, the 180-foot U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Basswood set sail for her new home port on Guam in the Marianas Islands. With this sailing, she ... Missing: ewe ret 2016**

2. b. Late 1968 DivCom13 LCDR SMITH sent to Paul JOHNSON (then LIBRARIAN/defacto CGA MUSEUM CURATOR) the lifering of a Tug. Pt Marone had rescued ~ 6 from - mouth of Bassac River - i kept 2nd lifering, but have not dug down in my memory boxes deep enough yet, in search of it... I do have the XO at that time, as a STILL living witness to the rescue... Rescue may have made it into the justification for a Div 13 Unit Citation -- more research for another day. But a line in STARBOARD SCREW, snorkel aided cutting it out, and lost anchor ( THEN FOUND ), round out a story worth a beer, or making time to tell.

so much more to do...

Walt home [850 492-5634](tel:858-492-5634) cel [850 206-3522](tel:858-206-3522)

-----Original Message-----

From: Lloyd George <[Lloyd.George@lfgcpa.com](mailto:Lloyd.George@lfgcpa.com)>

To: Andrew T. & Ann Horsey <[horseyandrew@yahoo.com](mailto:horseyandrew@yahoo.com)>; Walter S. & Diane Viglienzzone <[viglie@aol.com](mailto:viglie@aol.com)>; William C. Carr <[bill@getrain.com](mailto:bill@getrain.com)>; Douglas H. & Phyllis Teeson <[dhteesson@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dhteesson@sbcglobal.net)>

Sent: Wed, Jan 17, 2018 11:46 am

Subject: VN Vets Project

Gents,

Happy New Year to you and yours.

It's been a while since you've heard from me on this project, for which I apologize.

Addressees to this note include Andy, Bill and Walt for obvious reasons and Doug from his AA & Museum board perspective.

## BASSWOOD IN VIETNAM

### Darvy Cohan

USCGC BASSWOOD (WLB 388) officially completed three deployments to Vietnam during the Vietnam War and earned the Vietnam Service Medal three times and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal for deployments in 1967, 1971, and 1972. Although Darvy served as both the Executive Officer and the Commanding Officer of BASSWOOD, he was not onboard during any of these officially recognized deployments.

Darvy's participation in Vietnam was tangential. As the Executive Officer of USCGC BLACKHAW (WLB 390), while in Honolulu in September, 1967, Darvy was tasked with supervising a dockside refit expanding the ship's facilities, and with the administration of expanding the ship's organization from 6 officers and 56 enlisted to 8 officers and 63 enlisted to accommodate the additional personnel and operations required for service in Vietnam.

It had been determined that BLACKHAW would replace USCGC NETTLE (WAK-169), then home ported at Naval Station Sangley Point, Cavite, Philippines, and would be designated as the buoy tender to work in country in Vietnam.

Although completing the task on schedule and within budget, Darvy did not sail with BLACKHAW in January, 1968, to relieve NETTLE. Instead, he was transferred to serve as Executive Officer of BASSWOOD, home ported in Apra Harbor, Guam, to backstop a ship with leadership and organizational problems because its Captain could not handle the pressure of command and sought solace in a bottle. Darvy only became fully aware of this in the middle of March when he relieved the Commanding Officer after being hospitalized, without any prognosis for release, for over a month after returning to port.

At age 24, and only a LTJG, Darvy was in command of BASSWOOD, with a complement of 6 officers and 56 enlisted and an independent operating area stretching from the Marshall Islands to the East China Sea and from Japan to the Equator. As skipper of the BASSWOOD, Darvy did transit Vietnamese waters, went where he was told to go and did what he was told to do, but is not comfortable giving any specifics of those missions – even given they took place over 50 years ago. Darvy and Bob Burnett met in Bob's San Clemente home one afternoon and confirmed the both of them actually got together on the USCGC INGRAM (WHEC-35) while in South Vietnam waters - although neither can remember much of the details.

Darvy's pages 106 – 108 in "Gift of Leadership" talk about working a last sea buoy off of Subic Bay in time to head for their home port of Guam and outrun the double-header of Typhoon AGNES and Typhoon s BESS. BESS hit Vietnam in the first few days of September in 1968 at the same time Typhoon AGNES came sweeping in from the south-east into the Philippine Sea.

The book written about BASSWOOD, including some of its Vietnam service, by its First Class corpsman (HM1) entitled "Realm of the Golden Dragon", which makes reference to Darvy as "Max Crohn," the ship's Executive Officer, is a highly embellished version of reality – a sea story, as acknowledged by the author. All the stories about combined SEAL team operations and combat actions are fictional although there were times when SEAL teams were aboard. The author does state BASSWOOD was in Vietnam in 1967 during his tour. The author left for another billet before BASSWOOD went back to Vietnam."

Darvy was never in a combat incident and he never worked aids to navigation within Vietnam territorial waters. As close as he got was acting as a Confidential Courier of crypto information and gear for the Navy.

As an Ensign aboard the USCGC CHAUTAUQUA (WPG-41), he and all the crew were screened for secret clearances, at levels above Top Secret, before embarking on a mission to Kingman Reef, off Palmyra Island, about half way between Hawaii and American Samoa - having something to do with atomic energy testing. Classmates Steve Cox and Ron Wetzels were also part of that crew.

Because of this very high-level security clearance in his military records, Darvy was later sought out by the Navy for special Confidential Courier duty in connection with the Vietnam War effort, which as a collateral duty, intermingled with his regular sea duties as CO/XO of BASSWOOD. The half dozen or so Courier missions were one and two day trips aboard Navy contracted aircraft to places mostly unknown to him.

Technically ensuring the chain of custody, Darvy carried "packages," which included essential crypto codes and gear, or contained other sensitive confidential information, to be delivered and signed for at specific locations. The Courier missions, requested by a "higher authority" and accommodated by the Coast Guard's Mariana Section, constituted an unwelcome invasion upon the rare ten days in port time that BASSWOOD had to repair, resupply, plan and prepare for its next fifty-five day deployment. The missions, themselves, were mind numbing plane rides with a quick turn around. Darvy can remember only two of them, because they were unique or otherwise entertaining.

As a Courier of Confidential Information, Darvy had a traveling priority. To insure the security of his "package," he had to physically see it loaded and unloaded, and, therefore, he had to be the last person to get on a plane and the first person to get off.

On one flight, General William Westmoreland and his entourage were on as well. They were all seated when Darvy, naturally, boarded last and he was shuffled to a seat in the back of the plane. Upon landing, Darvy had to barge his way past the other passengers, including the entourage and walk right up to Westmoreland. The officers in the entourage were not to have any protocol changes and asked Darvy what he thought he was doing and that's when Darvy said, "Excuse me, General, I'm the Confidential Courier, and have to get off first." General

Westmoreland interceded with his staff and said, "Go ahead and do your job, young man." Darvy got off first.

The only other memorable Courier mission found Darvy remaining overnight in a Navy Officers' Club BOQ. While its location was unknown, Darvy was traveling in Tropical White Long uniform and, after delivering his "package" at the air strip, was driven in an open jeep, in the dark of a very tropical night, to the O-Club. He checked in at a chest-high counter manned by Navy Stewards, inside of an entrance that looked like an over-grown Quonset Hut, and presented his Courier orders. In response to their inquiry as to his Service Number, he answered with his Coast Guard Service Number, "7574."

Apparently, a Naval Officer's Service Number is considerably longer than that, and in the Navy, like the Coast Guard at the time, the lower your Service Number, the higher your rank or precedence. The Steward asked for the rest of his Service Number, and when Darvy told him that there was no more and that was it, the Steward picked up a telephone to report his arrival, then started yelling orders to his subordinates as a full blown exercise erupted. Unable to determine who he was, the Navy ushered Darvy to very commodious Senior Officer's Quarters for the night.

The next morning and still somewhat shocked by the previous night's accommodations, Darvy walked into a large wardroom, belying the size of the O-Club entrance, and was shown to a seat in a segregated Senior Officers' section - behind a polished wood balustrade, starched table cloths, service crockery, silver, hovering white clad Stewards and the works. Then a mere Lieutenant, Darvy was not going to question the unexpected service.

However, a Navy Lieutenant Commander, as all Naval Officers, always conscious of rank and position, and insanely jealous of the rights and privileges appertaining thereto, was not so accepting. He could not understand why a mere Lieutenant was getting senior officer treatment while he had to sit out with the rest of the crew. He strode up to his table, and openly stared at his shoulder boards, not recognizing the gold Coast Guard shield on them.

After having the good sense to wait until the Steward had finished pouring Darvy a cup of coffee from a Wardroom silver coffeepot, he jabbed a finger at the gold Coast Guard shield and snidely inquired, "I've never seen a Staff Symbol like that before. What is it?"

"It's not a Staff Symbol. It's a Line Symbol," Darvy responded.

"Oh, yeah? What does it mean?" the Lieutenant Commander persisted.

Darvy fixed him with the most conspiratorial look he could muster, raised his index finger to his lips, and whispered, "It's so damn secret that I've been wearing it for almost 5 years and they haven't told me yet."

Navy knew that he'd been had, and that he was making of fool of himself. He laughed, said "Good morning, sir, enjoy your breakfast," turned and walked away.

Darvy was relieved as Commanding Officer of BASSWOOD in January, 1969, but stayed on as Executive Officer until July, 1969, to align with regular rotation dates and to insure an overlap of command level knowledge about BASSWOOD's vast and unique operating area.



USCGC Basswood works a buoy in Vung Tau harbor 1967

She returned to the Marshalls in 1966, carrying Dayle Husted of the Smithsonian Institution to Enewetak as part of the Pacific Ocean Biological Survey Program.<sup>[9][a]</sup> *Basswood* spent two days anchored in the lagoon there while Husted conducted his survey.<sup>[9][b]</sup>

*Basswood* completed three deployments to Vietnam during the Vietnam War.<sup>[12]</sup> Consequently, personnel who served aboard her during one of these deployments are "eligible for the presumption of Agent Orange herbicide exposure" by the Department of Veterans Affairs.<sup>[13]</sup>

From 1968 until her decommissioning in 1998, *Basswood* was stationed in Guam, and holds the distinction of being commissioned longer than any other naval ship assigned there.

She also earned the Vietnam Service Medal three times and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal for deployments in 1967, 1971, and 1972.<sup>[1]</sup>

In the 1950s *Basswood* made several trips to the Marshall Islands in support of US nuclear weapons testing there, specifically for Operations Greenhouse (1951), Castle (1954), and Redwing (1956).<sup>[4][5]</sup> Forty-three nuclear weapons tests occurred at Enewetak Atoll in the Marshalls from 1948 to 1958.<sup>[6][7]</sup>

Mack Cohan

Commanding Officer

USCGC BASSWOOD (W-388)

In an exchange of text messages, I asked Darv if there were LORAN stations where he had to do buoy or other related work when he was the CO of the Basswood and if there were any classmates that were on the buoy tenders that serviced in Vietnam waters. I also asked if Larry Cochrun was on the Nettle that also plied Vietnam waters.

Mack in typical Cohan fashion responded, "Why do you want or need this dusty old information? There were more LORAN Stations than I can remember at places I can't even spell. I worked aids, resupplied and did maintenance and repair on most of the LORAN Stations throughout the western Pacific. Bill Simpson was the only classmate I remember running into on a LORAN Station. He was the CO of the Eniwetok Loran Station when I visited.

NETTLE was actually home ported in Cavite (Sangley Point NAS - Manila Bay) in the PI doing only M&R work exclusively in the PI. She was decommissioned in 1967. In 1967, as XO of BLACKHAW (WLB 390), in Honolulu, I did the organizational work and dockside rehab to expand her from 6 Officers and 56 enlisted to 7 Officers and 63 enlisted to replace NETTLE. BLACKHAW was intended to work in-country.

No classmates I know of served in-country Vietnam on buoy tenders.

# Aids to Navigation

April 1966 – December 1972



## 4 BUOY TENDERS

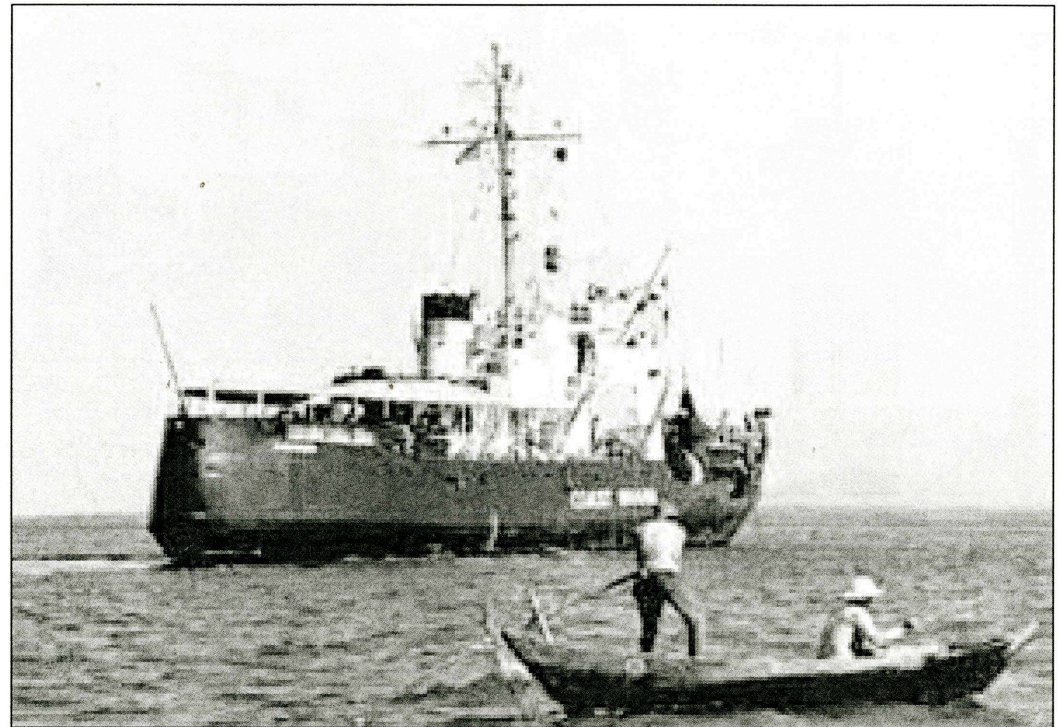
- USCGC BASSWOOD (WLB 388)
- USCGC BLACKHAW (WLB 390)
- USCGC IRONWOOD (WLB 297)
- USCGC PLANETREE (WLB 307)

*Placed & Maintained Buoys in  
Operating Areas for Military and  
Commercial Vessels*

## CARGO VESSEL

- USCGC NETTLE (WAK 169)

*Construction of 5 LORAN  
Stations*



## Coast Guard In Vietnam

# Basswood Plots Viet Buoy System

by JO2 Dave Jiminez

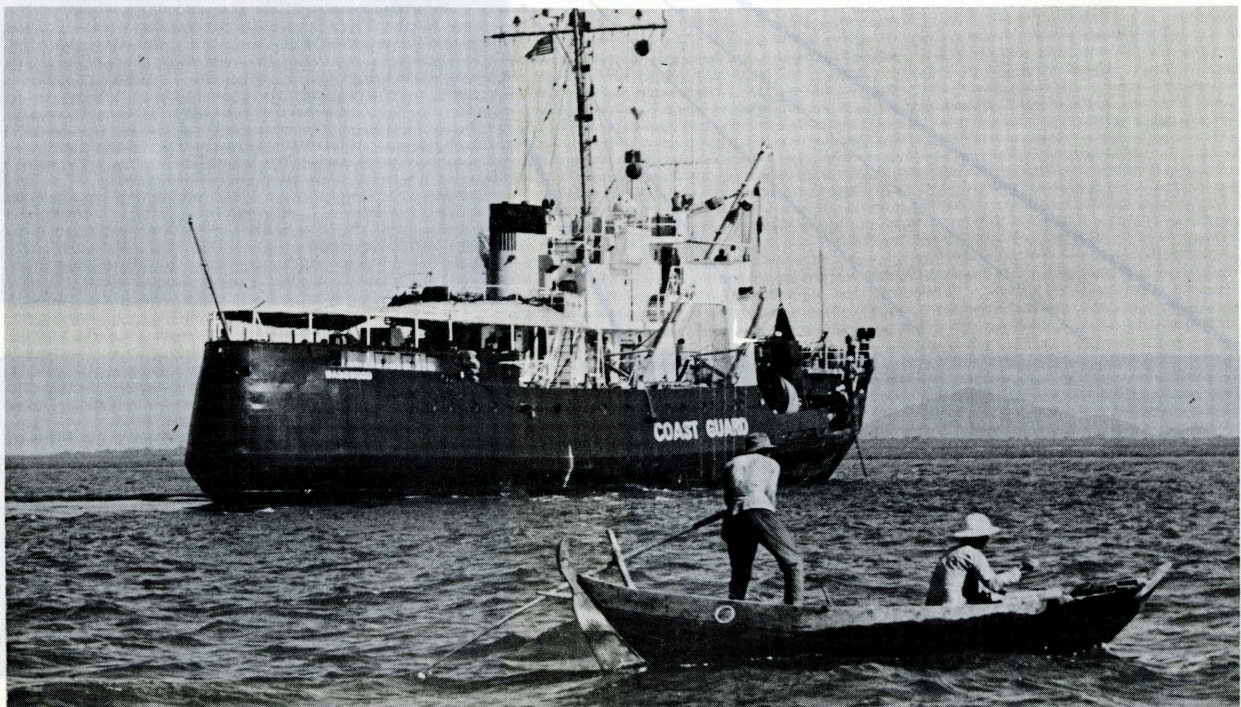
A scene which is common to the harbors and coast line of the United States is being re-enacted along the shores of South Vietnam, as U. S. Coast Guard buoy tenders establish and maintain a system of navigational buoys at the entrances to many of this country's coastal seaports.

The most recent of these tenders to bring the long experience and specialized equipment of the Coast Guard in buoy work to Vietnam was the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Basswood (WLB 338).

The cutter, now operating out of Guam, completed her busiest day working 10 buoys in the harbor of the central coastal city of Vung Tau. The operation involved bringing the buoys aboard, cleaning and repairing electrical equipment, replacing power packs and replanting the buoys, which ranged in weight from 700 pounds to the lighted five-ton sea aids.

"Besides the weather (monsoon season) another dangerous feature of working in these areas of Vietnam is the interference by other vessels travelling in the vicinity," says the commanding officer, Robert O. Slade.

"All through our tour here we were plagued with this problem. It's not that they get in the way on purpose, but I think that this operation is basically new to this area and they just don't know the problems we have to face."



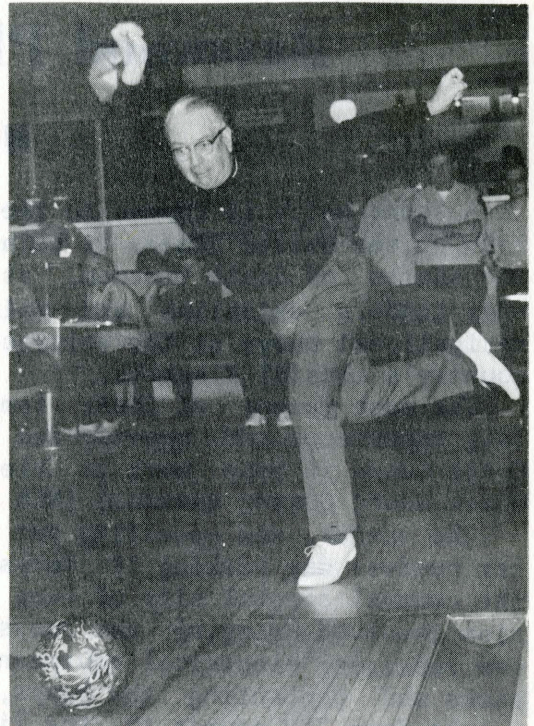
# Armed Forces Tournament: Coast Guardsmen 'Do Well'



*MIO, Cleveland - 1st team (hdep)*



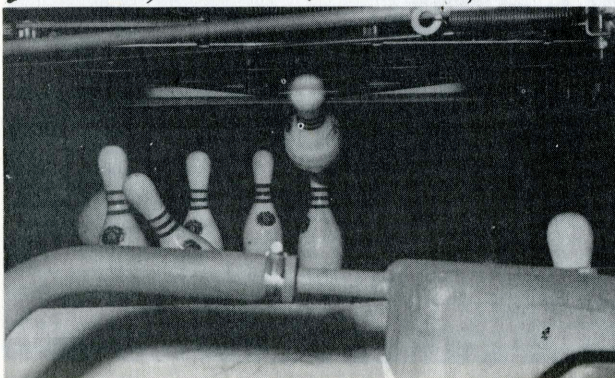
*1st Doubles (scratch): USCG*



*RADM Tighe rolls 1st ball*



*Singles Champs: USCG & USA*



## TYPHOON TRANSIT

### DARVY COHAN

The scream of the sound powered telephone shattered the darkness and, instantly, he was fully alert. He had not been sleeping, for subconsciously he had been waiting for this call that always came.

He never really slept underway, just relaxed and drifted in a hypnotic nether world, constantly rolling with the rhythmic motion of the ship, wrapped in a cocoon of its syncopated background noises and vibrations. The throb of the main engines became the beat of his own heart, and the whisper and whir of vibrating motors and machinery meld into his own nervous system. And the ship sang a chorus to him, its bow churning through the gentle sea, telling him that it was alive. And he listened. He always listened.

Lifting the gray metal receiver from its cradle on the bulkhead, he placed it to his ear, and looked at the luminous dial of wristwatch. Its radium green glowing hands read 0225. "Captain, this is Doug," the Midwatch Officer of the Deck said. But, of course, he already knew this. The phone was only connected to one place, the Bridge, and he knew who was standing the Midwatch. "We have a contact bearing 145 at a range of 10,000 yards. CPA is 1,500 yards at minute 45."

His standing "Night Orders" required that he be called in just this situation, where the relative motion plot of a radar contact showed its closest point of approach to fall within 2000 yards. He was already moving. "I'll be right up," he said into the sound powered phone. Replacing the phone receiver in its cradle and rolling to his right, he stood up, pulled on a crumpled pair of wash khaki trousers, and a uniform short-sleeved khaki work shirt, frayed and faded to light tan by too many trips through the ship's laundry, and jammed his feet into seaboots. He grabbed his blue windbreaker and his cap with his right hand, and crossed the cabin, leaning his left hand against its round table when the ship rolled to port.

Pulling open the cabin door, he stepped into the transverse passageway, lit only by red light to protect night vision, turned left, pulled on his windbreaker and went up the inside ladder to enter the Bridge through the rear door. He reached out, grasped and twisted the polished brass knob. Going to sea was not unlike flying, he thought. Endless hours of boredom and routine interspersed with fifteen minutes, or fifteen seconds that scare the crap outta ya. But unlike the airplane pilot, I have the luxury of time to gather facts, analyze the problem, and avoid a disaster.

He recited his mantra in a whisper: "Make your mistakes slowly and up wind. You can always add power, but you can't always take it off. And drifting down wind, with patience, will correct your error."

Opening the rear door of the Bridge, he stepped through, crossed forward to the radar repeater, and looked at the florescent green beam sweeping in its arc and highlighting the blip that was the contact. Taking his standard issue 7x50 Bushnell binoculars from their case by the inside Captain's Chair, he stepped out of the starboard door onto the Bridge wing and into the night. Clouds blocked the western sky astern of the ship, but it was clear to the east. The night felt oppressive, humid, warm and still, like before a typhoon.

Three weeks ago, they had been working buoys in Subic Bay. The weather had turned and closed in on them, forcing them to tie up inside the naval base, getting tossed by raising winds up against the 9 foot pneumatic fenders that protected the ship from the dock. It took only a couple of days banging alongside the dock for him to realize that, regardless of the weather, they would have to get underway to work buoys, even if they only worked one buoy a day.

The crew, trained to the stress and rigors of wrestling aboard 16 ton buoys, with 13 tons of concrete sinker and fathoms upon fathoms of chain, had become restless with inactivity. Arguments, the first signs of real trouble, had started to break out. Barely 36 hours ago, they had completed all but one buoy on the schedule. There was a typhoon named "Bess" churning up the East China Sea.

Typhoons are named alphabetically, in order of their forming and upon reaching the size of a tropical storm. They are always given female names. That's because she sweeps in, he mused, raises holy hell, and fades out. And if you get too close and get tangled up with her, you'll regret it for the rest of your life, if you survive. Nobody wanted to get caught in Subic Bay by Bess, or worse yet, be forced to sortie and ride her out at sea in a Task Group with a bunch of Navy pogues.

He had checked the last weather report from Fleet Weather Central at Subic, noting the position of the eye of the typhoon and its speed of advance. San Bernardino Strait was approximately 240 nautical miles from Subic Bay, and since his ship could make 12 knots, he had calculated that if they completed working the last buoy, lashed down, and stowed for sea by noon, the ship could steam immediately for Guam, round Luzon and be on the other side of the Philippine Islands chain, heading out into the Philippine Sea for Guam, before the typhoon struck.

His decision having been made, they worked the last buoy, off Chiquita Island in the entrance to Subic Bay, under conditions that should have been considered as excessive and prohibitive. The current was at the flood, with an onshore wind and a 3 foot sea running, constantly trying to push them ashore. No safety cautious Captain should have worked buoys under those conditions. It was a killing situation, and only the Captain, who had committed his ship and his crew to this almost impossible task actually believed that the ship and the crew would come through it unscathed.

But they did. Perfectly. The crew worked as they had been trained to work, giving everything they had and telling themselves, and each other, "This is what buoy tenders do, and this is what the men who tend buoys do. And besides, read your enlistment contract, Son: you have to sail, but nobody ever told you that you have to comeback."

Then, pausing only for a cup of coffee, or some water, a can of soda, and a smoke, the crew lashed down and secured for sea, and the ship ran south, down the west coast of Luzon, past Manila Bay, slipping into the lee of the islands through the Verde Island Passage, rounding south of Luzon off Batangas, and sailing east over a slow, gently rolling and almost glassy sea, toward San Bernardino Strait, well clear of the typhoon's path and influence.

Now, entering the restricted waters of Burias Pass, an approaching vessel on course that would pass too close for safety required a bold, even dangerous, change in course. Stepping over to the starboard gyrocompass repeater, he raised his glasses to his eyes and focused out on the bearing of 145. There you are! You are a big son-of-a-bitch, he thought, and showing a red running light. Crossing from starboard to port makes me the burdened vessel. The glowing dial of his wristwatch read 0235. The contact would have closed to about 2,500 yards by now.

Quickly stepping back into the bridge, and taking a radar range to Burias Island to check his sea room, he decided to forgo the customary training exercise of asking for his junior officer's recommendation. "Mr. Mills," he said, addressing the Officer of the Deck formally before the crew, "Come right to 210 for five minutes, then return to base course." That course change, at the speed the ship was traveling would move them only about a nautical mile from their present position, and closer to Burias, but out of the path of the other vessel.

"Watch the contact closely," he ordered. "We should clear her by 2,000 yards." The immediate problem solved, he should remain on the Bridge until the contact had passed. He slipped unobtrusively behind the quartermaster's desk where he could read the log over the quartermaster's shoulder. Petty Officer Second Class William O'Connor, a tall, rangy Texan with a cigarette perpetually stuck in the center of his face, stood his watch "by the book".

In the red glow of the night light, as was both the duty and privilege of the midwatch, he had composed the day's initial Ship's Log entry: 0000. Underway in the Sibuyan Sea, Islands of the Philippines, 1 day out of Manila Bay en route Apra Harbor, Guam, at Lat. 13 Deg. 17 Min. N., Long. 122 Deg. 59 Min. E., Steering course 135 deg T. Speed 12 kts. Piloting by visual LOP and radar range with Luzon Island in sight to port and Burias Island in sight to starboard. Wind is 315 deg T. at 12 kts. Barometer reads 1006 mbs and falling. Starboard boat rigged out. All running lights burning brightly. Commanding Officer is LT David P. Arm . . .

When his wristwatch read 0300, knowing that he would be called just before the course change to run northeast through San Bernardino Strait, he went below to his cabin. Laying down in his rack, he closed his eyes, relaxed and soon returned to the seedy bamboo bar. Perhaps she'll tell me her name this time, he wondered, while the sea and the ship continued to talk to him, and he continued to listen. Darvy Mack Cohan © 2021

"0500, Captain," said Seaman Apprentice Towne, the Messenger of the Watch, proffering him a mug of steaming black coffee together with the metal covered clip-board holding the radio traffic received and copied by the radio watch during the night. "We're approaching the Strait, sir. No other vessels in sight." "Thank you, Towne," he said, sitting up and throwing his legs over the edge of the bunk. "Just put the coffee and the message board on the table."

He dressed in the same clothing he had worn the night before, tucking the uniform short-sleeved khaki work shirt into his washed khaki trousers. Taking the coffee and the message board, he went up to the bridge, but this time he went out through the watertight door at the end of the transverse passageway and used the port outside ladder. Entering, a glance at the chart table told him the ship's position had been recently determined by visual bearings. A good fix. Both Luzon and Ticao were clearly visible in the light of early dawn, and he could see the dark shape of Samar silhouetted by a rising sun casting the clouds into rose pink and red orange colored fingers reaching in a giant hand across the morning sky.

Red sky, he thought, then he dismissed it as superstition. Crossing the Bridge and stepping out onto the starboard wing, he breathed in the sweet scent of copra and banana that always seemed to mix with the mildly fishy smell of the islands and acted in counterpoint to the acrid whiffs of diesel and exhaust to which his senses had become almost inured. In the strengthening light, the military blue-gray of the nonskid covered deck contrasted sharply and cleanly with the white of the bulwarks forming the windscreen.

The watch, as was their routine, had washed down the area and polished the brass rings, bolts and fittings, which glowed coldly. With a feeling akin to the pride of ownership, he hoisted himself into the green naugahyde outside Captain's Chair, and comfortably surrounded by the ship's gentle roll and steady rumble, he sipped his coffee and began to read the overnight message traffic. Most of it was mundane and routine, administrative, personnel and supply matters. A quarterly budget report and requisition request was due on a date prior to their reaching Guam. It would be late.

This crew member's enlistment expiration was approaching. You are requested to counsel and advise whether he intends to ship over. That'll be a short session. He's a sailor. Of course he intends to ship over. One crew member is late in submitting his correspondence courses. So what! Some traffic was operational, ship's movements and exercises that were far removed from his position and did not concern the ship. But the Fleet Weather Forecast for the Philippine Sea, promulgated from Guam, updated and sent out by radio message every eight hours, brought him bolt upright in the Captain's Chair:

" TYPHOON WARNING: Typhoon Agnes upgraded Cat Five. Posit Lat. 13.00 N Long . 132.00 E at 0800Z. Moving WNW at 15 kts. Eye extending approx 150 nm. 941 MB Low. Sustained winds 175 kts. Estimated to be increasing in strength. Advise all vessels . . . "

He swore silently to himself. Yesterday's Fleet Weather Forecast had reported Agnes as a Category 2 typhoon, more than dangerous, but still thousands of miles away and, if moving northwest at 15 knots, as predicted, it should be well north of his ship's course to Guam.

A typhoon, increasing in strength clear off the scale was now sitting directly on his track line to Guam! More importantly, its reported position had not changed in 24 hours. It may have stalled, and it was obviously gathering strength from the warm waters of the Philippine Sea.

Normal barometric pressure at sea level, measured in millibars of Mercury was 1008MB. Wind flowed from areas of higher pressure into lower pressure, and a pressure gradient of only six millibars, or a low of 1002 would generate a storm in the Full Gale category. A 941 MB low was the bottom of the world falling out! He wondered whether he should trust the Fleet Weather Forecast, but it was the best information that he had.

"Captain", said Mr. Dohr, a senior warrant officer and his most experienced watchstander, sticking his head out of the bridge door. "We're approaching our turning point into San Bernardino Strait. Permission to come to a new course of 040, sir?" His wristwatch read 0530. He looked at Mr. Dohr, hoping that his expression gave away nothing that he had just read, or how he really felt about it. "Very well!" he said simply in the most level tone he could muster,

Mr. Dohr immediately gave orders to the helmsman and the ship began a slow turn to port, steadying up on a course of 040, and standing into San Bernardino Strait. To say that San Bernardino Strait was treacherous would be an understatement. It was not simply that the Strait was one of the natural and customary choke points for international shipping plying in and out of the Philippines. Although almost five miles wide at its narrowest point, twice a day with each tide, the open waters of the Pacific roiled and raced through it into the Sibuyan Sea surrounded by the Philippines Islands. The currents eddied unexpectedly and violently, and one of these knuckles of spinning water could easily set an unwary ship sideways in the channel, placing it into the path of other vessels, or even worse driving it aground.

For that reason if for none other, his place was on the Bridge. He knew that handling such an emergency, if it arose, was his job, and only his job. Feeling the weight of command responsibility tugging at every fiber of his being, he watched and he felt every pitch, every roll, and every motion of the ship around him. The ship sang to him, throbbing life with every vibration. The sea, rolling in a wake past the ship's bow, sang to him. And he listened.

For fifty long minutes, and two more mugs of coffee, he watched and waited, evaluating constantly how the ship reacted in the current, where the ship was relative to Luzon on the north and Samar to the south, and what consequence arose from each ship passing to starboard or port, or overtaking from astern. Then, they were through. It was 0620. It was approximately 1415 nautical and miles to Guam.

Although Agnes was presently directly on the ship's course to Guam, the eye of the typhoon was more than 3 days' steaming away. In 3 days' time it would probably have moved far enough to the northwest that it could even pose no danger. In 3 days, in any event, the ship would be steaming through the southwest or "safe sector" of the tropical storm and he could expect following winds and following seas.

Patience, he told himself, whispering his mantra, "Make your mistakes slowly and up wind." Time will give you better information. You can plot the weather as the Radioman receives it, and draw your own weather map. That will tell you what Agnes is doing, not what Fleet Weather Central expects her to do, and then, make your decision. He relaxed back into the outside Captains's Chair and looked at the peaceful, regular ranks of cumulus clouds marching away over a blue-black sea toward the horizon, their purple and gray billowing puffs glowing pink against the red orange of the dawn sky.

The ship's vibrations whispered to him, its gentle pitch and rolling motion became regular and hypnotic, and he listened to it. The three piece combo was still playing its island version of soft jazz, and the young blond in the short gray-blue dress was walking toward him. He could feel the tension drain from his body like liquid running from a tap at the bottom of a barrel.

The sharp scrapping sound jolted him out of reverie, and the seaman's adage, "Red sky in the morning, Sailor take warning" invaded his consciousness. Fully alert, he wondered if he would ever learn her name. The scrapping sound came again. He leaned forward, taking his coffee mug from a convenient shelf of the white railing behind the wind screen and turned toward the scrapping sound.

Fisher, Seaman Apprentice, perpetually sea-sick, affectionately called "Fishnet" by the crew, was crawling across the deck, pushing his barf-bucket in front of him. Short of stature, dark of eye, and almost frail in appearance, he was not an unsympathetic figure. He was, in fact, probably the most educated man on board. He had majored in Psychology at the top rated University of Chicago and, running out of deferment, he had enlisted in the Coast Guard to avoid the draft, a few units short of his Master's degree and only a few steps in front of an Army Drill Sargent.

Lifting his thin face with its greenish pallor, dark hair falling in his eyes, he said, "Captain, do you know your responsibility in taking me to sea in my condition. Do you fully recognize that if I don't survive it's your fault?"

Taking a sip on his coffee, he fixed Fisher with a cold, commanding stare. He knew that he was using his coffee mug as a prop to hide his face and expression, giving himself time to think. He knew that he must not show any emotion whatsoever.

Did he understand his responsibility? He reflected on that in the twinkling of an eye. Christ! No wonder he was going prematurely gray! This type of ship, a mere buoy tender operating in the vast western Pacific, went constantly into harms way, across a trackless ocean to places and islands that were hardly on the map. It worked in waters that other ships avoided as being too shallow and unsafe. He had been in the right place at the wrong time, and circumstance left him in charge of a major vessel, billeted for an officer full grades senior to himself.

He was no longer just a young man aspiring to command, he was a young man who had it, and he would have to fight to keep it. The Change of Command was merely a telephone call, and the whole matter was painfully routine. Yet, in the back of his mind, he questioned whether he had committed mutiny, and he knew that others would argue that he had. As the sea buoy slipped astern on his first trip as Captain, he had considered Fisher's same question - his responsibility.

At sea, he was the law, the ultimate authority, and both the final decision and final responsibility were his. He realized that this was what he had trained for, first at school, then on long watches and on prior ships. It was his profession, the here and now was his time, and he boldly assumed the outside Captain's Chair. Courage, he knew, was nothing more than an ordinary man doing what he must even though it scared the hell out of him to do it. There was no way that he could tell Fisher to be courageous in light of what was in front of them and Fisher's physical susceptibility to motion sickness. Fisher had been sick since they slipped their moorings in Manila Bay, notwithstanding the calm, lake like inter-island passage. The best thing that he could do was give him a directive he would want to and could follow, then quietly transfer him to a shore billet when, and if, they got to Guam.

"You'll survive, Fisher," he said. "Go back down below, and tie yourself in your rack. Eat if you can. I guaranty you that we'll reach Guam in six days, and you'll walk ashore at the Buoy Depot." Fisher slumped, nodded his head, and with an "Aye, sir," turned around and crawled away, still pushing his barf-bucket in front of him.

"I'll be in the Cabin, Mr. Dohr," he said. Stopping in the radio room on the way down, he refilled his coffee, asked for the latest weather message and took it with him. Facsimile transmission of weather maps was a thing of the future. In fact, weather satellites were on the cutting edge of science fiction, secret and unknown to the public. The weather data message was a series of numbers that represented, in code, the compilation of weather observations reported hourly by ships and airplanes all over the Western Pacific Ocean. Deciphering the latitude and longitude of each reporting station, one could plot the barometric pressure, wind direction and speed, and the sea condition each observed. Connecting stations of equal barometric pressure yielded the isobar lines which, identifying highs and lows, allowed the interpretation of weather fronts, and resulted in a weather map.

Taking a plastic covered chart from its storage slot, he sat down at the Cabin's round table and began to translate the message into one of the maps that he would need. His wristwatch told him it was 0650. The weather map slowly took shape under his hand in colored grease pencil on the plastic covering of the chart. It told him that his "3 days" projection, like the Fleet Weather Forecast, was an estimate based on a best guess made at the time. In reality, they weren't worth shit!

Typhoon Agnes was not only further west, but she was driving both high winds and higher seas further south of the eye than the Forecast reported. The sea, so vital to life, would kill without mercy any who were not constantly vigilant to its changing moods. Navigation and seamanship slowly and inexorably based upon painful, often deadly trial and error, transformed itself from risk to art, and from art toward science.

But, predicting the weather where a tropical cyclone or typhoon was concerned, was more akin to voodoo than science. A 941 MB low does precisely what it wants. Like stall, and get bigger and uglier by the day. The "American Practical Navigator", his personal professional bible, originally authored by Nathaniel Bowditch in 1802, and officially revised periodically by the Government since 1868, states in Chapter XXXIX on Tropical Cyclones: "Rarely does the mariner who has experienced a fully developed tropical cyclone at sea wish to encounter a second one. The rapidity with which the weather can deteriorate with the approach of the storm, and the violence of the fully developed tropical cyclone, are difficult to visualize if they have not been experienced."

What an understatement! Difficult to visualize, hell! Try impossible! His stomach churned at the thought. The inner ear was made by God to take only so much, and the sea kicked up by a typhoon far exceeded that. Everybody, even the hardest, will get sick. On the first day, you think you are going to die, and on the second day, you hope you will. But you stand your watch, and do your job, and by the third day your system adjusts, and you wonder why you aren't dead.

He knew that he had to be in Guam in six days, and that he must avoid Typhoon Agnes. Looking at the weather map, and considering that Agnes appears to have stalled, or at least slowed its west-northwesterly progress, he decided he would have to change his ship's course to the south, running into what mariner's considered the "safe sector" of the storm system. But he needed sea room, and he needed time.

A knock on the Cabin door. It opened and Suarez, his Steward, broad crooked smile splitting his mahogany face, came in with a hot mug of coffee, his fourth of the day if he were counting, but he never counted. "Its 0800, Captain." Suarez said with his typical, musical Tagalog accent and meter. "Breakfast in the Wardroom, Captain, until 0830."

"I'll be down. I'd like a couple of scrambled eggs and a couple of pieces of toast, Suarez." "You no want no bacon, Captain?" Suarez asked. In answer, considering the greasy taste of bacon, even when cooked dry, he simply shook his head.

He showered using Zest soap, and brushed his teeth with Crest, and shaved. There are only three types of soap onboard ship, Zest, Lifeboy, and Lava for the snipes in the engine room, and there were only two types of toothpaste. Crest and Ipana. You use these or go without. As he changed into a fresh uniform work khaki shirt and wash khaki trousers, both fraying and faded almost to white by the ship's laundry, he realized that it was probably the last shower and change of clothing he would get for the next six days.

As he entered the Wardroom just shy of 0830 and poured himself another mug of coffee, Chief Warrant Officer Edward Teach Dohr, recently relieved from watch as the Officer of the Deck, sat at the Wardroom table waiting for his breakfast. The short sleeves on his khaki shirt were pushed up over the tops of his shoulders in the gathering heat, exposing two tattoos, one a full rigged sailing ship with the words "Born to Sail" beneath it, and the other an almost erotic, oriental girl in a long, colorful, flowing peacock like robe, pen to expose one long well-turned leg. which was immediately recognizable as the skin art of Sailor Jerry, the Honolulu tattoo artist.

Mr. Dohr was characteristically pulling on his nose, a sign of agitation. And his normally immaculate wavy black hair, shot with gray at the high temples of his swarthy face, was awry. "Morning, Captain." he said. "Morning, Ed." Ed, the only officer he called informally by his first name, had been to sea for the vast majority of his 29 years of service, and his mind and vocabulary were forever warped. Looking at himself in the mirror when in dress uniform, full with medals, Ed was prone to stand up straight, puff out his chest, and intone, "You handsome, bastard! Don't ever let 'em draft you!"

Ed was from a Dutch-Portuguese seagoing family, and very proud of it. He decided long ago that he would never tell Ed that Edward Teach was actually Blackbeard the Pirate, but he felt whatever the similarity, it was justly deserved. Recognizing the sign of distress in Ed's pulling his nose, he sat down at the Wardroom table and asked, "What's the matter, Ed?"

"It's going to get bad," Ed said simply. "Rumor has it that it's the biggest typhoon in this part of the world in decades."

"Rumor has it?" He asked. "Who else knows?" Ed sat back and tossed his face upward with a typical maniacal laugh. "On this rumor mill?" He answered. Spreading his arms in the all embracing manner, "Everybody knows," he said. Just for laughs one day, as a drill, they had synchronized their watches and while Ed went to the Boatswain's Locker in bow of the ship, he had gone to the fantail, a mere 180 feet away. At the agreed moment, Ed dropped a hint that the ship might have to go to Taiwan to specially service an aid to navigation, and he, on the

stern of the ship, simultaneously started a stopwatch. Taiwan, considering where this ship operated, was prime liberty, rest and relaxation, a sailor's dream with booze and women.

Precisely one minute and thirty four seconds later, red headed Hudson Taylor, Fireman Apprentice from Bruton, Alabama, came running up. "Is it true, Cap'n? Are we gonna get a week's R and R in Taiwan?" he had asked in his broad southern drawl. Rumors flew.

"How bad is it? What's your plan?" Ed continued.

"It's real bad. A 941 MB low. I think that its stalled and getting uglier. Much closer than Fleet Weather reported. Too goddamn close!" He answered. "We'll change course, crab as far south as we can to avoid it before running north for Guam. It's a good thing we loaded those three buoy sinkers in the lower hold. Thirty-nine tons of concrete that low will give us extra stability, if it doesn't break loose. I figure that we should run out safety lines, starboard and port, and make preparations to secure the weather decks by 1400. Strap everything down. I don't want anybody out there or on the buoy deck, except the Boatswain's Mate of the Watch, and then him only with a safety observer watching him."

Ed continued to pull at his nose, but nodded his agreement. They finished their breakfast together, making small talk, sailor things that relieved the pressure, like Fisher pushing his bucket in front of him. "Poor bastard," Ed commented. "He can't walk and chew gum at the same time. How'd they ever let him on board a ship."

The remainder of the day fell into a familiar routine. He made his way throughout the ship, making sure, or as sure as he could be, that everything was secured for heavy weather. Gear adrift was stowed. Crewmen's questions were answered. As he went down the ladder into the Engine Room at 1030, he noted that the Playmate of the Month had changed at the Throttleman's Watch Station. It briefly amused him. He paid for the ship's two Playboy subscriptions from the Morale Fund, and never saw an issue. The only way he knew that a new one had come on board was when the Playmate changed in the Engine Room.

At 1100 he inspected the messcooks in the Ship's Galley and tested the crew's midday meal. Today, it was bean soup, hamburgers and potato salad, with ice cream for dessert. He felt that regardless of where the ship had to go, or what it had to do, good food was the underpinning of good morale. The crew on this type of ship worked hard, and accordingly, it must be well fed. The Ship's Cook, a scrupulously conscientious sailor named Simons, who wanted to take the Warrant Officer's examination for Ship's Clerk, knew that he was not above ordering a meal tossed overboard, with the entire Galley starting over, if the meal was not appropriate and properly prepared. He told Simons that he should prepare cold meals for those who could, or would eat, in heavy weather, and not to worry about the Wardroom. There was no sense risking an injury, or worse yet, a fire in the Galley.

At noon he was on the bridge again noting that the wind had freshened to the point of blowing foam white caps off the larger swells, and driving wind streaks across the water. Well, he thought, Agnes is going to be a bitch. If he was going to change course to avoid Typhoon Agnes, it must be now. There was a following sea and he judged that he could come right three degrees to the south, putting the sea on the ship's starboard quarter, or come right ninety-three degrees, and take the sea on the starboard bow. Any place in between would put the sea on the ship's beam, and that was disastrous. The former choice would take him south slowly, the latter would drive him up onto the lee shore of Samar. Turning back was not, and never had been, an option. He ordered the course changed three degrees to the south. "Har. Har. Har," boomed the distinctive, piratical laugh of Murphy, the Boatswain's Mate of the Watch.

Murph's father had been a guard at the federal prison in Lodi, California, and Murph wore his dilapidated uniform baseball cap pulled low over his short cropped round head, squeezing piercing blue eyes between a red walrus mustache and the cap's bill, which turned square up in the front like a prison con's. "Har. Har. Har. We're not afraid of a little weather, are we, Captain? Does this mean there will be no Swim Call at 1400?" Knowing that Murph was an experienced enough sailor to be kidding, he replied, "No Murph. Swim Call at 1400, as always. And you'll be in the ready boat!" As he left the bridge heading for the Wardroom, he could hear Murph's "Har. Har. Har" accusingly following him.

Having picked what he hoped to be the safest new course, and having finished his round of the ship, he came into the Wardroom for lunch, as always, soup and sandwiches. The ship was rolling more heavily as the weather worsened. The five officers, all except for Mr. Mills on watch, sat quietly, with an arm wrapped around their soup bowls and their heads down. The Wardroom table was athwart ship and he sat at the inboard head of the table. It was like trying to eat on a seesaw, but as he did so, engaging in the talk of the table, he could hear the ship whispering to him, the whirl and thud of the ship's nine-foot propeller as it cleaved the water, without cavitation, driving the ship forward, the rush of the sea passed the ship's hull, and he always listened. Periodically, the rhythmic roll of the ship would be interrupted, cut short with a smooth but authoritative jerk, as if it had been grasped by a giant hand, and slowed, then started up again. When he felt that, he would look up to see Ed looking back at him.

They both know that it meant that there was larger force generating overriding wave patterns in the ocean. He let Ed Dohr handle 1300 Call to Quarters which, at sea, was both a head count to make sure you were not missing anybody, and a starting point for either the ship's afternoon drills and instructions, or the ship's work. Dropping into the radio room, he again picked up the latest weather message and then went to the Cabin to update his weather map. As he worked, the jerk interrupting the ship's roll become more pronounced and regular until the ship itself succumbed to its overriding rhythm. The ship rose and twisted with a shudder underneath him.

He worked with one hand on his coffee mug to keep it from flying off the table and crashing on the deck. His inner ear and his stomach told him what the completed weather map only

confirmed. Typhoon Agnes had stalled, and was getting bigger, reaching out across the Philippine Sea, driving higher seas before typhoon winds blowing in a constant directions into the deepening maw of her eye.

By 1500 the sky had turned an ominous gray, the low cloud cover complete, and the wind now whistled through the ship's rigging. Standing on the heaving deck, without a handhold upon something secure, was virtually impossible. The weather decks had been secured, and safety lines had been rigged on both sides of the ship. Taking a mug of coffee to the bridge, he climbed into the inside Captain's Chair. Now all he could do was watch, and wait while the weather deteriorated around him. Crewmen started to get seasick.

In heavy weather like this, the members of the Watch rotated every 20 minutes. The Messenger of the Watch relieved the Helmsman, the Helmsman relieved the Lookout and the Lookout became the Messenger of the Watch. In theory, this was supposed to keep members of the Watch more alert, but in practice it only gave the lookout a chance to warm up and dry out, and the Helmsman some relief from the cramps and stress experienced in trying to hold a bucking ship on a compass course.

When Seaman Second Class Luther Moorhouse, from Lubbock, Texas, relieved the Helmsman, this cowboy had had about as much bucking as he could take. His pallor broadcast his distress, and the fact that he was swallowing burps announced the onset of disaster. He had not been on the helm for five minutes when he hollered over the din of the storm, "Murph! Take the Wheel!" and bolted for the lee door, barely throwing it open before he hit the lee rail and violently vomited.

"Har, Har, Har!" whopped Murph, grasping the helm with both hands and leaning back as if he were waterskiing behind a boat. "That's it, Lukey! Puke your fucking guts up!" Murph bellowed.

Ensign Taylor, the Officer of the Deck on Watch, always tried to be proper, but he was almost as green as Moorhouse had been. "Murphy!" He said, with an ominous gulp. "If you can't use the King's English civilly, don't say anything at all."

"Har. Har. Har!" responded Murph, boisterously. "Fuck the King!" And then, turning toward the open lee door, he reared back on the Wheel and roared at Moorhouse, "Puke your fucking guts up, you lily-livered puke! But if you feel something furry in the back of your throat, swallow hard 'cause its you asshole comin' up!" That was too much for Mr. Taylor, who spun, flew through the open door, and hit the lee rail right next to Moorhouse.

"Har. Har. Har!" laughed Murphy triumphantly.

The Captain wondered if he should even acknowledge the episode. Murphy would get his soon enough, he thought. "Murph. Make sure that door is closed and dogged when they get back in," he said, keeping a tight hold on the arm of the Captain's Chair, thinking that was sufficient.

He felt the roll and the pitch of the ship become even more pronounced. He felt the jarring groan of its hull as it fought against the ever more violent sea. The wind roared in ever higher pitch, and the sea crashing across the deck of the ship drummed constant danger, and he listened. And if he heard the combo's familiar strains of soft jazz, he fought back, getting up from the Captain's Chair, lurching across the bridge, clawing from radar repeater to chart table, to engine order enunciator, to the coffee pot lashed in place behind the quartermaster's flag storage.

He poured himself a fresh mug of coffee, spilling half of it, and groped his way back again, to the Captain's Chair to wait, to watch and to listen. The bridge watch changed at 1600, and he was still there for that was where he was supposed to be. At 1800, Suarez brought him the fried egg sandwich he had requested and reported that no one had appeared for dinner in the Wardroom. That was understandable, for the weather had worsened to the point where it was all that one could do to stand a four hour watch, and then, whether seasick or not, the safest place to be was in one's rack, to try to sleep and gather the strength to stand the next watch.

At 1945, as the next watchstander's crowded into the Bridge for the change of the watch, he saw Petty Officer Kearney, the Boatswain's Mate of the Watch, bulky as the Pillsbury Dough Boy in his foul weather gear, going forward on his rounds to insure that all was secure, both hands gripping the safety line as he crossed the exposed buoy deck. There was no safety observer, and his order to correct the oversight was snatched away by the wind screaming through a temporarily opened Bridge door, and lost in the cacophony of men milling about the pitching - deck, and the groans of pain as bodies slammed into the exposed edges of electronic equipment consols, chart tables, and each other.

Recognizing the immediate danger, he took off his cap and stepped outside onto the starboard Bridge wing, diving for a handhold on the arm of the outside Captain's Chair as the ship rolled violently to starboard. Oh! This was a mistake, he told himself. You screwed this one up big time! The wind, howling in excess of 70 knots, was like the stream from a fire hose, tearing at him, trying to drive him before it. He glanced aft, and in the failing light he saw a wall of blue black sea water rising astern as the ship fell into the trough of the waves.

He knew that his height of eye above the waterline was thirty-eight feet, and he found himself look up, way up, at the incoming swell which, racing forward, lifted the stern like a toy. The roiling crest of the swell was blown off, rocketing downward toward him, and cannonading over the gunwales and exposed decking. The weight of the incoming sea smashed into him, tearing the Captain's Chair from his grasp and he was washed forward, slamming against the

windscreen bulkhead. As the rushing swell swept beneath the ship, allowing it to slid off the back side of the wave into the following trough, he hauled himself back to his feet so that he could look down onto the buoy deck, below. The dark sea water was cascading overboard through the inundated buoy deck's scuppers as the ship's bow shot upward.

Kearney was nowhere to be seen! Controlling the panic raising from his stomach into his throat, he stared intently down into the gloom of the lower deck. A red light spilled out from the watertight door onto forecstle and, seeing Kearney poke his hooded head through the doorway, before closing the door and dogging it shut, he swallows hard in relief.

Clawing and crabbing his way against the wind, he ducked back into the relative safety of the Bridge, closing and dogging the watertight door behind him. He realized how insignificant he was in comparison to this unthinking force of nature, and that only an inch of steel, inanimate until manned by the crew and organized into the living, breathing mechanism that was the ship, was all that separated him, and all of them, from the eternal void.

After the watch change at 2000, he asked the radio watch to bring him the latest Fleet Weather message. He asked the Messenger of the Watch to bring him the weather map from the Cabin and the grease pencils that were nearby. Holding on with one hand, he corrected his weather map in the red nightlight from the chart table, He watched, waited and listened to the ship and the sea, and after the midwatch had relieved at 0000, he realized that even he could fight no more.

"I'll be in the Cabin, Mr. Mills", he said to the Officer of the Deck, taking his weather map with him, fighting his way to the rear door of the bridge, and down the interior ladder to the transverse passageway. He did not undress before laying down, merely took off his seaboots and his shirt. His wristwatch glowed 0030 in pale radium green when he turned off the light over his bunk. He knew that he would reach Guam in six days. What he did not know was that, having commanded a ship that had made the transit five hundred miles south of the typhoon's eye, he would be called to Fleet Weather Central in Guam.

He would be sworn to secrecy and shown a clear picture, the first of its kind taken from a satellite in space, of a fully developed tropical cyclone with a well developed eye at 12 North Latitude, and swirling feeder bands reaching down below the equator to 5 South Latitude, large and violent enough to blot out the entire Philippine Sea.

Also, what he did not know, closing his eyes, relaxing and drifting into that other state of consciousness, surrounded by the same combo's soft island jazz and under the same Polynesian bartender's baleful gaze, was that he would never learn the blonde girl's name. But his ship and the sea would continue to talk to him and to sing to him.

And he would continue to listen. He always continued to listen.

# SEA STORIES FROM THE JUNGLE'S EDGE

## PROLOGUE

Darvy Cohan

"Sea Stories From the Jungle's Edge" is just that. Sea stories.

A sea story may be maritime or nautical adventure fiction, and rousing good sea stories may even be literature. Herman Melville's classic "Moby Dick" and Garland Roark's modern nautical adventure novels "Wake of the Red Witch," and "Fair Wind to Java," are prime examples, all of which were adapted into major Hollywood motion picture productions.

Good sea stories of this caliber abound, and I encourage all who love "a tall ship and star to steer her by," the sea, and adventure stories to seek them out and read them. I can assure you that the sea stories included herein do not purport to be in the same league, nor by recitation to these authors and their titles even aspire to be as such, unless I am really lucky.

The sea stories I tell in this collection are the common type of story told and retold, embellished and remembered by all sailors. They are fiction told for entertainment, and as everybody knows, they are a nautical version of a fairy tale, told without moral lesson or social purpose.

However, they do not spring full grown into being, but like sailor psychology, they evolve over time. Sailor psychology is a unique nautical axiom that holds that it takes three repetitions of any task to train a sailor, when ordered, to do something automatically in the same manner and order. The first time it is done, an Officer tells the Petty Officer, let's call him Charlie, what has to be done and how to do it, which Charlie, in turn, relates to the Seaman who is actually doing the work. "Why are we doing it this way, Charlie?" asks the Seaman. "Because he said so." responds Charlie, pumping his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the Officer. The second time the task is done, when the Seaman asks, "Why are we doing it this way, Charlie?" Charlie hammers out "Because I said so." And the third time the task is done, when the Seaman asks, "Why are we doing it this way, Charlie?" another Seaman in the work party responds to him caustically, "Because we've always done it this way."

Similarly, a sea story must be told and retold at least three times, and sometimes more, to pass from fact to legend, and from legend into lore. It is generally just gossip, mere scuttle-butt, relating the exploits of men, their ships and the sea, with plenty of bad weather, hard drinking, fighting and sex, barely believable and the more unusual and entertaining the better. In the end, the credibility of a sea story, like a fairy tale, is highly questionable. The first time the unusual facts of the sea story are told, the listener asks, "No shit?" The second time the almost unbelievable facts of the sea story are related, the listener exclaims, "No shit!" And the third time the now fantastic facts of the sea story are spun, the storyteller begins the tale saying, "This ain't no shit . . .!"

This is why everybody knows and says that the difference between a Sea Story and a fairy tale is that a fairy tale usually begins with "Once upon a time..." whereas a Sea Story is invariably introduced with "This ain't no shit..." However, in almost every Sea Story, as in fact, in almost every fairy tale, there is some kernel of true fact, whether in time and events, people or places, against which the embellishments and fictions are spun.

Other than geographic places and historical events, if you can recognize the kernel of true fact in these stories, I sincerely apologize. These stories are pure fiction and figments of my own imagination told for your enjoyment. Any resemblance to persons living or dead is purely coincidental for the same reason, and the names have been changed to protect the guilty, for in a true Sea Story, there are no innocents.

However, at one time, I was accused of being a "Sea Story," and perhaps I can tell you about that later. . . . - Dream Interrupted Dark, but not black. Starlight stole through the open port outlining the limits of the small sleeping compartment in shadows of gray upon green, and bringing with it the balm of cool, salt scented sea air. Sleeping compartment was a euphemism because, although it had a bunk in it, he never truly slept. He merely relaxed, felt the ship's engines throbbing their life force, and listening to the constant hum of running machinery, and he drifting into another state of consciousness, an altered state, almost a hypnotic state.

He knew he was there now because his mind's eye played out the same slow dreamy scene. He sat nursing an ice cold beer in the same seedy bamboo bar. Dim red, orange and bluish light still spilled from glass floats which had been turned into lanterns hanging from the webbing of grey rotting fishing nets. Six large, slowly turning fans continued to stir the smoky air without any hope of cooling. The place still smelled of stale beer, whiskey and, strangely enough, a sweet background scent of ripe coconut so palpable it was a syrupy taste.

He sat with his back to the door, but there were neither doors nor windows, merely large openings to a covered porch and the tropical night. The shutters to keep out the wind and rain were propped open. The Polynesian bartender, large and ominous in a faded Hawaiian shirt of blue hibiscus blossoms on dingy white, slowly and methodically polished a beer glass with a dirty towel while he leaned against a bamboo cabinet holding about half a dozen liquor bottles. The sound of the towel squeezing against the glass kept slow time with the same three piece combo playing its island version of soft jazz from a slightly raised stage in the back corner.

The fight, when it started, interrupted nobody. The band continued to play, the bartender continued to polish, and he continued to watch askance the tall girl who continued to approach him as if she were floating down a fashion runway. He did not recognize the bar or the scene as anyplace he had ever been. Perhaps it was a premonition of the future, or a lost remembrance of the past. The one thing it was not, was sleep, for it rolled constantly with the rhythmic motion of the ship.

It beat regularly with the pulse of the main engines, and it whirred and vibrated with the whispering tones of motors and machinery as if it were the sound of the ship's nervous system. It sang a chorus to him in time with the ship's bow churning through the gently rolling sea, and the tattoo of footfalls as the watch paced across on the Bridge's deck above him.

And he listened. He always listened. She slipped, shoulder forward, sliding her hip up onto the wardroom green leather seat of the barstool facing him on his left. He turned his head ever so slightly, looking at her out of the corner of his eye. He felt transfixed at first by a pair of large, luminous grey eyes dissecting him from behind long, dark lashes. Her smooth, tanned, oval face was framed by honey-blond hair, cut in soft bangs sweeping across her forehead from left to right, and bobbed to cascade over high cheekbones, curling beneath her ears in line with her generous lips.

She wore a gray-blue print, wrap around dress, short skirted and tied at her right hip. A diamond solitaire on a fine gold chain around her neck hung into the vee of her neckline. He inhaled and the soft, sweet scent of Plumeria, like an Hawaiian lei, took his breath away. He knew he was not Mike Hammer, but he was trapped in a Mickey Spillane novel. She was definitely out of place, but he couldn't bring himself to use "What's a good lookin' girl like you doin' in a dive like this?" as his opener.

So, he decided on the direct approach. "Hi! I'm Dave." He said smoothly. "What's your name?" She rocked forward, leaning into him, flashing a smile that would melt butter, dropping her chin and lowering her gaze. Her bangs brushed against his cheek, sending an emotional shock coursing like electricity through his entire body. Raising her head, she said in an incredibly melodious, low and velvet voice, "Hi, yourself, Dave. I'm . . ."

The scream of the sound powered telephone shattered both the darkness and its illusion. He was instantly fully awake. He lifted the gray metal receiver from its cradle on the bulkhead just above his head, and he placed it to his ear. He did not speak for he needn't ask who was calling. The sound powered phone was only connected to one place, the Bridge. "Captain, this is Doug". The midwatch Officer of the Deck said. "We have a radar contact on a steady bearing with decreasing range. ETA is minute 45."

His standing "Night Orders" required all Officers of the Deck to notify him in just this situation. A collision course, he thought, instantly sitting up in the bunk. "Very well," he responded, looking at the luminous dial of his wristwatch, its ghostly green glowing hands pointing the time to be 0025. "I'll be right up," he said and hung up the sound powered phone. Rolling to his right and standing up, he pulled on a pair of wash khaki trousers, cold and clammy, and jammed his feet into his sea boots, not bothering to put on socks. He slipped his blue windbreaker on over his bare chest, grabbed his cap, and crossed the Captain's cabin in the dark, banging his left hip against its round table when the ship inopportunely rolled to starboard.

Pulling open the cabin door, he stepped into the transverse passageway, bathed in red light to protect night vision. Secured against the sea at night, the transverse passageway was as stale as unwashed laundry and the air clung to his skin like oil on an engineer's red rag. Turning left, he grasped the railing of the inside ladder leading up to the rear door of the Bridge, and the cool night sea air.

A Captain's place was on the Bridge in times of danger, he thought. Make your course change early and obvious, he thought. That's safety. That's what I do. As he climbed the ladder, he focused on the fancy work that wrapped the railing in sections, half-hitches practically tied on top of each wrap, creating a straight line of knots leading up the railing to assist your grip, and Turk's head knots proudly cast in pure conceit at the ends of each section. The fancy work was varnished and hot to the touch, contrasting with the cool polished metal of the railing where it was bare.

At the top of the ladder, he stopped and balanced on the balls of his feet, adjusting for the roll and pitch of the ship. In his mind's eye he still saw her. Damn, he thought, when am I ever going to learn her name? Well, perhaps next time, he laughed to himself. Reaching forward, placing his hand on and twisting the polished brass door knob in the gray metal door, he knew she came second.

Pushing the door open, he felt the pulse of the main engines beating as if it were his own heart. The whispering tones of motors and machinery seemed to tell him secrets only he could hear. The ship, his ship, churning through the gently rolling sea sang its chorus to him, and as he stepped through the door onto the Bridge, he listened. He always listened.