

Shut all Four

...and hit the SHORE.

LIFE IN THE NUCLEAR
NAVY

Introduction:

Why are we here?

The first thing you need to know is that this entire book is one big sea story. If you want to read a *factual* account of Navy life, I suggest you write a US Navy PAO (that's Public Affairs Officer- a Naval spin doctor) and get the approved, P.C. version of everything I'm going to tell you. Since this book and everything therein consists of my opinions and thoughts exclusively, I think it's safe to say that you're reading at your own risk. Nothing in here represents the Department of the Navy or its policies and procedures. Nothing in here may be considered the truth, either... If you've "been there and done that" then you'll quickly realize what's been altered for security reasons. If you start taking this seriously... if you are offended, outraged, or otherwise yipping around like a rabid schnauzer... too bad! You didn't read the above first. All of this is just what *I* think, and I'm all fucked up, so there ya go.

That said, let me tell you how you came to be holding this little chunk of slander, exaggeration and outright lies. When you tell someone you work on a submarine, especially a no-nothing civilian, they almost always think its a fascinating and exciting thing to do, and precede to ask you all sorts of questions. I got tired of telling them all the same thing- like any job, most of it's boring and repetitious. That's why it's called "work" after all- if they didn't pay you, you probably wouldn't do it.

The best books (and, about the only books) about submarines all deal with World War 2, and are usually written by the officers who were there, slugging it out with the Japanese Navy in tiny, cramped, smelly diesel boats. While these make fine reading, they sure won't give you a feel for what the every day monotony of life at sea can be like these days. And, they're from the officer point of view, which

has little to do with life as we know it. How entertaining would *Star Trek* be if they showed the enlisted men doing what enlisted men usually do: cleaning? The idea of nothing but officers driving a tugboat is spooky; the idea of them flying a spaceship without us blueshirts around is downright frightening.

So, after telling my tale like the ancient mariner to countless folks over the years, I decided to just write it all down. This saves me a lot of time, and my listeners' sanity as well; once they get the general idea they can toss the book away. If I was there telling them in person, I'd be much harder to ignore.

Here are some thoughts you can contrast to the Navy life you see on TV and in the movies. There has also been a recent surge in modern fiction about submarines, the operative word there is *fiction*. Like most all of the stories about the military, they deal with officers doing exciting things, while the blueshirts fetch them coffee. And there's no mention of nukes hardly at all. There is a very simple reason for this:

Nukes get no glory.

Nukes are more likely to see the captain at mast than at an awards ceremony. They're more likely to see a tech manual and a PMS card than a movie underway.

But, after a few years, you learn that you're being paid the big bucks because you're the dependable one, the one that the Navy's going to hold in a spotlight for your entire career. This naturally breeds a bit of resentment.

Why?

Because you watch the rest of the Navy chugging along at half speed, with only a vague impression of what accountability really means. To a nuke, it means he's going to bet his career on just about every decision and signature he makes. One mistake and all your training and credentials go up in smoke, along with one or more pay grades.

There will never be a movie made about nukes, and what we do. Even the recent interest in submarines (*Hunt for Miss October*, *Crimson Bile*) have so little reference to nukes that only nukes themselves know they're there. This is partially because we don't take our groups back aft, and partially because the only things exciting that happen aft are the things that give anti-nuclear power fanatics ulcers. We like it that way- excitement means less sleep.

But, you have to admit that nukes are very good at what we do. Cities that would burn the mayor's house to the ground in protest at the mere suggestion of building a nuclear power plant have no problem with a sub or a carrier sitting in their port- both of which have nuclear reactors humming away in their bellies. This proves that the Navy's track record in nuclear power is unequalled in terms of safety and reliability. After a few more pages, you may understand how they did it.

A nuke is like a Swiss army knife... with a college degree. The first few years of training focus mainly on nuclear physics and metallurgy and chemistry. But, once you strip away all the theory, the meat of the job is to keep the plant steaming, not design new ones. A nuke has to be as good at anticipating how shutting a steam valve will affect reactor power as he is at painting hard-to-reach motor foundations. He may be performing a reactor shutdown one day, and laying in a puddle of slime in the galley fixing a heater box the next. He has to know how to get a broke dick motor-generator running, as well as how to get his non-wax floors their shiniest.

In short, nukes are justly famous for what they refer to as "nuking it out", or figuring out how to do something on the fly. A nuke can be placed in any job in the Navy, and he will not only be able to do it, he will do it **better**. This is due, in no small part, to the amazing amount of confidence our training instills in us.

Nukes are strange people. No place is this more evident than in Nuclear Power School. The Navy's only going to hire the very smartest people to run her reactors, so nukes are strange because, in order to be a nuke, you had to be someone who really didn't need the Navy in the first place. Most of the guys I worked with in school either could have breezed through college, or already had. When you get to know them, you'll find they're people so self sufficient and so confident that they could easily rise to the top of any civilian profession. This fact is not lost on the civilians; many companies have realized that a trained nuke is a valuable asset in any workplace, and specifically target them when they get out. Just last year I watched Intel hire virtually every nuke who was getting out in our area. They were smart to do so.

The Navy's getting a hell of a deal. For basically the same pay as any other sailor, they get this country's brightest and most motivated young people, and then get to use them for anything and everything. If not for nukes, crisis management could only work in a real crisis.

As you will see, this relationship is not always a happy one. One of the most common complaints is that, while the non-nukes race off the boat as soon as it touches land, the nukes stay on board for hours and even days later. Nukes are the ones to show up at three in the morning before an underway to start up the reactor; who stay until eight or nine in the evening to make sure everything's good to go. Nukes work weekends, holidays, and nights. Nukes, when they're not working, are studying for the continuing training or their next qualification.

The officers have it even worse. While nukes don't like (to say the least) the over emphasis on cleaning and preservation, the officers are the ones who have to find some way to get us to do it. They get the same training, only they've got a whole world of equipment up forward they also have to be experts on. They get even less sleep than we do, and certainly get dumped on more by the Navy higher ups. But, as the joke goes, the smartest and best looking in the academy go to flight school, and those with glasses go nuke.

So, nukes get no glory. You'll never see Tom Cruise or Denzel Washington play one, mainly because it's hard to rationalize Kelly McGillis kissing someone who just crawled out of a scum-filled bilge. There are no benefits to being a nuke- we don't get special rooms or food; we don't have any advantage in promotion or butt massagers to sit on in maneuvering. Nukes get every shit deal that has to be done. On a submarine, they make up less than one-third the crew, but own more than half the boat and it's gear.

But, even for all that, there simply isn't a better job for people who are good enough to be nukes in the Navy. Sure, it sucks to work for someone who knows completely what you're truly capable of doing, but nukes do have one thing going for them- they are challenged.

Just that.

The Navy challenges them, and for many who coasted through our pathetic public education system, it's enough to change their mental engine into a tank. When they come out the other end of the pipeline,

they are literally unstoppable in anything they choose to do. Very few of the other programs in the military, or the country, can give a man that confidence.

While I have sorely regretted my choice to go nuke many times (not the least of which were sitting on the phones in maneuvering on Christmas Eve), I am glad I did. Nukes are amazing people and I take a great deal of pride in the fact I was good enough to be one.

Prologue:

Why Nuclear?

On a dark desert highway, cool wind in my hair

Hot smell of my engine

Rising up through the air

Up ahead in the distance

I saw a blue neon sign

Said "Navy Recruiting, next left"

Must be out of my mind

As I stood in the doorway

And bought the lies that they sell

I was thinkin' to myself

"They must have reactors in hell"

But I signed all the papers

And was off on my way

There were voices down in Orlando

Thought I heard them say:

You volunteered for the worst job in the Navy

Might look good at first

But it gets only worse

Drop out now from the worst job in the Navy

Working nuclear

Bone job every year

Hotel 717 - from the EM Log

Unlike 90% of the guys I've met in the service, I actively sought out a career in the Navy from the start. Both of my parents had been in the Navy for most of my life, and it seemed like the next logical step for me. It also eliminated a lot of useless worrying about college my last few years of High School, thus allowing me to concentrate on other, more important issues (like trying to get laid). So, when I saw a balding, overweight, and tired-looking geek in a Navy uniform slouched down in defeat by our principal's office, I saw my future. I guess I made his day, since I went right over and asked him to schedule me in for an appointment. To his credit, he tried to hide his astonishment; apparently 1987 wasn't a particularly good year for recruiters in Seattle.

That's how it starts; you go to a recruiter's office. You've probably seen them. They're typically in the low-rent areas of shopping malls and office buildings downtown. The one I went to was no exception. There was the usual crowd of losers milling about, all trying to fit it with the actual Navy guys there. The place was rather run down, with a totally overwhelming collection of Navy propaganda plastered to every bare surface, including the ceiling. It struck me as very similar to a used-car salesman's office, and having since been in several (As I will point out -often- enlisted men rarely make enough money to hang out in *new* car showrooms), I can assure you the recruiters are in the same business.

"So, you thinking about joining the Navy?" the bald guy asked.

"No. I want to join. I already decided." I respond. The bald guy's buddy at the other desk leans over .

"You want to go in?" He asked, incredulously "You mean, all we have to do is do the paperwork?"

"Uh huh."

They traded a suspicious look, but the bald guy pulled out the first of countless Navy forms which would bear my name, and started typing away. They were naturally wary, assuming I was joining for ulterior motives, like dodging the cops or a knocked up bimbo. Once they learned of my childhood (which included being in such Hitler Youth programs as JROTC and Sea Cadets, and of my parents, of course), however, they realized they had a live fish on the line, and went all out for me.

If you're thinking about joining, enjoy your recruiters. You should use them like shake and bake bags; it's the very last time you can expect a First Class (or a Chief, for that matter) to be anything resembling civil to you. If you join, they sure won't be asking you if they can get YOU coffee and doughnuts for much longer.

Now, I wanted to be an OS, which is an Operations Specialist. They are the guys who play the war games with the captain. But the recruiters gave me a pre-ASVAB test, and I scored pretty good on it. What the losers didn't know is that my dad, being a Career Counselor (the guys who try to keep you in once you're in, understandably a much more difficult job), had been giving me ASVAB tests to take since I was ten. I did exceptionally well on the test, well enough to make me eligible for the 'high class' ratings.

An ASVAB test is sort of like the military's version of the SAT test. Whereas the SAT is supposed to gauge how much useless information you could potentially absorb in a college, the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) measures how well you'll do as a garage mechanic. This should clue you in right off the bat what type of work you'll be doing, with questions like *A mop is used to (a) clean floors (b) wax floors (c) simulate your presence in a bunk after lights out (d) all of the above.*

Another interesting fact is that people who volunteer as nukes count double on the recruiter's quota. If you stop and consider what a recruiter represents; i.e., a guy who's been in the Navy forever and yet still thinks it's a good deal, you'll understand why they have to work on the quota system. Going back to the used car dealer example, they have to con a certain number of people into the Navy per month, their 'quota'. If they can get an exceptional amount in, they can even get auto-promoted to Chief Petty Officer, much along the same lines that you yourself tried to get that new bike by selling GRIT magazine when you were a kid. It doesn't matter if the guys they con actually succeed or not, once they're in the guy's gotten credit towards those anchors he wants.

I'm pretty cynical about life in general. However, I bought the whole pitch about how nukes were the best paid, best trained, etc... hook line and sinker. When they talked me into going nuke, I accepted with something akin to being handed a free pass to SEAL school: I was going to be one of the mental "Top Guns".

My next stop was the MEPS station, the 'gateway' to boot camp. They give you the ASVAB all over again, and toss in a military-style physical. You spend most of the day waiting around, though, so bring a book. Also, feel free to act up a little. You're not in the military - yet- so you can tell them to shove it if they bitch about you reading in line. Most guys are so overwhelmed by their first experience in a military building that they blindly follow one pointless order after another. Why make life rougher on yourself? I got a special bonus: while we were waiting around in the common "lounge" area (similar to a Greyhound bus station downtown; all the better to get you used to your upcoming income bracket), the only station on the 20+ year old TV was MTV. That would have been cool, except it was something called "Madonna Thursday", and they were showing the same damn video over and over. At one point I expected Rod Serling to start doing the *Twilight Zone* voice over, it would have added just the right atmosphere.

Having scored exceptionally high on the ASVAB (again), the next person I met was the nuke recruiter. Here was my very first live 'nuke', but I wasn't aware of it then. He gave me the entrance exam for nuke school, a multiple choice test covering mostly physics. I had absolutely no idea on any of the questions, so I did like Spiccolli in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*; I doodled in a surfboard in the answer sheet. I presented the completed exam, and started to leave. The guy instead sat me down, and started going over (once again) all the great things about nuclear power, and started handing me forms to sign he'd thoughtfully prepared. Knowing I'd tubed the exam, I thought "what the hell?" and started signing. We were having a good old time, me signing and him bullshitting, until I asked about the test: "Did I pass?"

"Hold on," he said, with a slight frown, and he disappeared into the back. I heard a shredder rev up. Then he reappeared.

"Congratulations!" He said "You passed!"

"What was my grade?" I asked suspiciously

"Forty eight" He said

"What's passing?"

"Forty eight,"

"Can I see it?" I asked. He looked at his typewriter.

"Nope."

Which was my first introduction to how things were done, both in the Nuclear Navy and in the Other Navy. While I was there, he also felt me up for joining the submarine force, though he couldn't commit to those orders. I raised my hand, took the oath, and was off to sunny Orlando, Florida.

I naturally called my dad with the news I'd enlisted, a little under month after my seventeenth birthday. He asked what rate I picked.

"I'm going to Nuclear Power School!" I said excitedly.

"Fuckin' nuke," he said, and hung up.

At least I still remember the first time I heard *that* phrase.

Chapter One:

"You have twenty minutes, and twenty minutes ONLY..."

So set condition one

Bring the shore power on

Scram the fucking reactor

And let me go home- I wanna go home

Why won't they let me go home?

This is the worst ship

I've ever been on...

I Wanna Go Home - from the EM Log

Actually, I didn't go straight to boot camp. I went into 'DEPs', which is where they cut you loose to finish your senior year of high school. They have you show up about once a month to make sure you're still alive, and send you all sorts of free Navy stuff, like cups and patches and all. Tax dollars at work. So, I didn't actually go to boot camp until the following August. In the mean time, I worked at getting into shape.

I had an edge, having been through boot camp already with the Sea Cadets. That was when I was about thirteen, and was about as much like real boot camp as masturbation is like real sex; You get a rough idea of what's expected of you, but it doesn't take as long. So I bummed around, and tried to work out a few times a week.

Finally, my carefree civilian life was over. After another long day at MEPs, they swore us in again, and packed us off to Sea-Tac airport for the night. For god knows what reason, the MEPs guy gave me the paperwork for our group, and put me in charge. As this would be the one and only time I'd ever be in charge of anything, I made the most of it. We all walked over to the airport, found out that our meal tickets worked just as good at the bar, and proceeded to get totally shitfaced. About 3 am we staggered back to the hotel, and took turns puking in the pool.

I called my buddies (all two of them; the rest were already at boot camp, which says a lot about my childhood, doesn't it?), and had them come over. "The Navy's throwing us a party". They didn't actually show, but we still had fun seeing how many sheets we could flush down the toilet at once. There were a couple of women in our group, but they spent the whole night crying with each other in their rooms. We finally passed out around five am, exactly one half hour before our wakeup call.

My next coherent thought was waking up hung over on the plane to Orlando. If I had any bags, they're probably still stashed somewhere in Sea-Tac airport. I showed up in the same clothes I'd had on the day before, which were soon taken from me. But I'm getting to that point.

The last movie I'd seen before going was *Full Metal Jacket*, which was what I thought about for most of that trip. We finally pulled in to Orlando about 7 pm, and crashed in the USO lounge another hour awaiting the shuttle to the base. Perhaps it was the jet lag, or the beer, but that whole last hour of semi-freedom reminded me of the myth of Charon, ferrying the dead across the Styx to hell. I distinctly remember the look of sardonic pity on the guards who opened the gate for our van, and my fellow

passengers' trepidation. The van stopped in a darkened alley, and we got out. The van left, and all was quiet. We looked at each other, already sweating in the humid southern Florida air. Then we headed into the only building that looked occupied.

This was RIF, or Recruit In processing Facility. Check your brain at the door; you're here to be brainwashed, make no mistake about it. The second you step in, they're already forcing you into a line. There's a bright red line on the floor, with arrows. Follow it like cattle. Don't hold stuff in your right hand. Stand up, don't look around, no talking. Wait. Stare at the guy ahead of you. Women, off to the other side of the room. Don't talk to them, either. Grab a chair.

Then, fill out the forms. You're a moron, so we're going to go through it one block at a time. Block one, your last name. No, not your first name. God, an idiot, already! Last name, special ed, LAST NAME. Good! Block two, your first name...

About four am they herded us into a dark bunk room, and told us to go to sleep. There's fifty half naked guys already snoring away like truck drivers, so it took some time. The same second my eyes closed, the lights came on, and we were getting rounded up for chow. God, what a great day it was, too. Apparently no one else in my group had the benefit of military school, since they all marched like drunken winos. Most of them smelled, too, but since I had the same damn clothes on I couldn't really complain.

Breakfast was a pleasant surprise. Most of the other guys seemed shocked by the room packed from end to end with blue uniforms, but what they were feeding us was what surprised me; it was real food. Even fresh fruit and doughnuts, stuff I'd never even heard rumors of in San Diego boot camp. The whole time I was in boot camp, the food was fairly decent. Of course, since we still had hair, and we still had normal, if not smelly, clothes on, we stood out. This was purposeful, as it encourages you to want to blend in. One of the primary tenants for survival in boot camp, and then in the Navy, is not to stand out. We were grateful, sort of, to get our heads shaved and to get issued a bunch of mothball-reeking clothes later that day.

Chapter Two:
Sick Call, and why you don't go there on foot

*Sometimes I venture
To the corners of my mind
Look past the pain and rage to find
Confusion about who I am
And where I want to go
While dreams fade like melting snow
Looking for answers
But I don't give a damn
Can't change the man that I am*

*The things I did when I was young
So fired up, and so high strung
Goals were simple, mind was clear
So how'd the hell I end up here?*

-Volunteer, from the EM Log

If you're going to join the Navy, and you're impressed by all those 'benefits' which are supposed to make up for the fact that you'll be earning less than \$2 an hour, keep reading. One of the biggest that your friendly career counselor will point out is your free medical health care. No lie, if you're on active duty, going to a military hospital is free. But, on the way, you might wonder about those "free" doctors & nurses... why would someone go all the way through those 8 years of school to be a doctor, only to join the military and earn 1/10th what he could on the outside? Could it be because, unlike civilians, military personnel can't sue for malpractice?

Another amazing program the Navy tries to sell young people is the 'sea fair' system: if you want in, but can't decide what you want to do, the Navy'll send you out into the fleet as a seaman, and let you work in several different shops till you find a job you like. Sound fair?

NOT!

In the fleet, junior sailors are in short demand, as almost everyone seems to be a non-commissioned officer. Who's that leave to do the dirty work? You can guess: the 'sea fairs'.

These poor, misguided kids... as soon as they get to the fleet, they get stuck in 'deck division', those luckless souls who spend all day either painting, or chipping back off the paint, or cleaning something. My job was lousy, but it was cake compared to the prison chain gang which is deck div. After a few months in deck div, the strikers indeed do know what type of job they want:

The easiest possible.

They typically try to get yeoman, or cook, or... corpsman. So, odds are the guy you saw last week hanging over the side painting the hull will be waiting for you in at the hospital when you get there. It's something to think about.

Now, in the Navy, you aren't considered sick unless you're either unconscious, bleeding profusely, or both. The simple axiom is, if you don't get to the hospital by ambulance, you don't need to be there. There are some annoying exceptions -we'll get to those later- but I wasn't aware of this when I enlisted. It's not like the civilian world; calling in sick is forbidden. You've got to get to the hospital, convince someone you're sick, get permission to go home, drop off that permission at your command, wait in line a few hours to pick up medication, then (if you've got the strength) you finally get to go to bed. Since it's close to 4pm by the time you get all that done, you should probably have just gone to work.

That's what the Navy was trying to get you to do all along.

My first experience with Navy hospitals was when I was only three weeks into boot camp. I was in pretty good shape before I got there, so I breezed right through all the exercise and marching. Then, they started giving us shots. Beats me what they were for (asking wasn't encouraged), but some of the guys I was in with looked like they needed some sort of treatment, starting with delousing. Anyways, these shots actually give you whatever virus they're supposed to protect you against. Everyone gets sick, and I guess the theory was that it was better for us to die at RTC rather than out at sea. I felt okay at first, but I woke up one morning feeling like total shit.

They marched us to the galley, but I couldn't eat anything. By the time we got back to the barracks, I was sick to my stomach, and it felt like someone had poured crushed glass into every muscle in my body. No kidding, even breathing hurt. I crawled under a rack, and passed out. The rest of the company was getting ready to go exercise (PT, short for Physical Training), and the next thing I remember was one of the CC's looking at me funny as two guys pulled me out from under my bed. I was sort of out of it, but they yelled long enough for me to figure out I was supposed to go to sick call. Okee Dokee...

I don't remember how I got there, to be honest. But, since I was convinced I was going to die any moment, I agreed that maybe going to the hospital was better than being catatonic under a bed. As soon as I saw the place, though, I changed my mind. Did you ever see that movie "Gone with the Wind"? Remember that scene where all the rebel soldiers are lying around in the street on stretchers, waiting for help after the big battle for Atlanta? That was my first impression of a US Navy Sickbay. Assuming that everyone waiting for help was sick, they had some really bullshit rules. The first was that, if you got to sit down, you couldn't sleep. If you got caught, you had to stand up. Then your only option, I guess, was to pass out on the floor. I lucked out and got a seat, but I hurt too much to even think about sleeping. But I saw lots of sick people they had to keep waking up- which must be a wonderful way to treat illness that only the Navy's thought of.

After a few hours, I did finally get to see a doctor. I will remember this jerkoff for the rest of my life, but let's call him LCDR Special. He spent a few minutes looking at my temperature, blood pressure, and whatnot, and then told me I had the flu. He didn't ask me anything. I was still out of it, so I went right ahead, ignored that he was a mighty and powerful officer, and told him that it was becoming

increasingly hard to move any part of my body. He said that I was imagining it; and told me once again that it was just the flu and to stop faking. I protested, and he told me to leave his office. I told him I couldn't, and the good Doctor Special threatened to call the MPs and have me thrown out. I got up, but it hurt like hell. I was handed some over-the-counter flu medicine, and told to go back to the barracks.

Instead, I grabbed a chair, and didn't even think about moving again. I probably would have sat there for hours, if another guy from my company hadn't happened to be in the area. As I would discover later, he was the exception to the rule, as I was neither bleeding nor comatose, and yet he believed me when I said I was sick. The guy almost single handedly carried me back to the barracks, and probably saved my life. I wish now I could remember who he was; at the time, I couldn't seem to make much sense of anything.

Well, there was no one around the barracks when I got there, so I just sort of crawled to my rack. The drugs helped a little, and I felt good enough to go to the bathroom when the rest of the company showed up a few hours later. What a surprise! I was pissing up blood! One of the guys next to me took one look, and puked everywhere. I actually found it sort of funny. The CC came running in, took a look around, and called the ambulance.

It's odd what comes to mind at times like that. I remember trying to tell him that I didn't want to go to the hospital, since I didn't think I could walk back after some other doctor told me I was faking.

Despite what I thought was a good argument, I was packed into the ambulance, and I woke up the next day in intensive care.

It turned out that my muscles had decided to spontaneously decompose, which was probably why they hurt so much. The ripped up tissue floated around in my blood until it stopped up my kidneys like dirt in a filter. End result- both kidneys were shut down, and that was why I had the fever & was delirious.

Perhaps, if good old Doctor Special had run a blood test, instead of trying to prove to me I was just being lazy, I wouldn't have spent a week in ICU.

They patched me up. good as new, and I eventually got to go back to boot camp. But, they never did figure out what caused the muscles to rip apart in the first place. I did learn, though, how they Navy treats you if you're not gushing blood and you go to sick call. I have never since gone to a Navy hospital without getting there in an ambulance.

Don't get the wrong idea; I have met some really top-notch medical people in military hospitals. I've been helped by doctors who's quick thinking probably saved my life on a couple of occasions. The hospitals the Navy owns are usually head and shoulders above their civilian counterparts, since they don't worry about making money. All I'm saying is that your odds of dealing with self-important zeros are greater on your way in.

Once I was discharged from the hospital I had to find a new company of recruits to join, as my own company was weeks ahead in training by then. While waiting reassignment, I got a particularly nasty view of boot camp: the MiniMo barracks. At that time, recruits who were having trouble adjusting to the navy were sent to a special company to be "motivated". There were various levels of this; sort of like Dante's circles of Hell. There was the IT program (for Intensive Training), where you and five hundred of your closest friends were packed into the auditorium at night, and subjected to various exercises. There was always someone watching you, and if you couldn't keep up, you'd get "stroked", meaning you'd be back again the next night to try again.

Remember when Richard Gere was getting worked over by Louis Gossett Jr in *An Officer and a Gentleman*? It was like that.

The next level is where I found myself that day: MiniMo, short for Mini Motivational Tour. These guys had such a fun day, its amazing the navy keeps it secret! They did lots of cool stuff like sitting in front of their beds all day, reading either the Bluejacket's Manual or the Bible. They all sang patriotic songs (even now I can never forget the words to "Proud to be an American"). If they went anywhere, including the bathroom, they were followed by a "chaser". Simply put, it was prison life without the conjugal visits. At night they got to do a private version of IT (we called stuff like that 'cycling'; at San Diego it was MASHing, for Make A Sailor Hurt), each recruit got their own CC to watch them. They also spent part of the day doing menial labor and listening to motivational tapes.

If you flunked MiniMo, your next trip was FullMo (more of the above), then ROF. In ROF you got all of the above, along with the Alabama Chain-Gang work experience thrown in. Guys there were on their way out, and the Navy knew it. I had to take some of these guys around, and they were simply pathetic. They got shipped home in the tackiest, most disgusting Kmart civilian clothes the Navy could find. That was incentive enough for me to never, ever, get sent to MiniMo for real.

A few days after getting the crap scared out of me (they assumed that I was there for MiniMo myself and I got the same treatment for a while until someone wised up), I was sent to my new company. I hadn't even unpacked before they started getting cycled for something or other by the CC's. After a while of this I wasn't feeling too hot, and ended up spending another pleasant week in ICU. Apparently their original diagnosis was a little off, and I was, in fact, still sick.

When I finally did escape the hospital after a month, I ended up back in a company with my original CC's. By now I had a ring of scratched out company numbers around the inside of my hat, and everyone who saw that assumed I was a dirt bag. I found this ironic, as this was probably the one time in my career where I was 110% behind the navy and tried to do everything right. So, the lesson I learned was that it's when you start looking out for number one that the navy starts treating you fairly.

If you're going in the Navy, you'll probably be most curious as to what you'll experience in boot camp. Since Hollywood only films what they think is entertaining, in this case screaming DIs and human suffering, you might feel a little wary from the movies you've seen. Don't be. Navy boot camp is like home ec, with pushups. You don't need the brains god gave a small soap dish to get through it. Most of the exercise you get is from standing around, then marching somewhere in a hurry so you can stand around some more. For guys, all you have to be able to do is run a mile and a half, do forty pushups and fifty sit-ups. If you're a girl, you don't even have to do that. The Navy is very accommodating when it comes to out-of-shape women who want to be sailors.

Unlike the other boot camps of that time, Orlando was the only one with women in it. Not great looking women, sure, but with no hair, smelly clothes and a weird sunburn us guys were no prizes either. They were kept in different companies and different barracks, but you couldn't help notice they were there. You couldn't talk to them (or do anything more satisfying), but you could write them. As getting letters was like Christmas morning for recruits, this was a win-win situation. The goal of writing them was to make a date for the first uncontrolled liberty we looked forward to.

Boot camp, much like the rest of the Navy, is an endless series of advances which seem more important before they happen than after. During your first three weeks you can't wait to get to the forth, or 'work'

week. After a week of 14 hour days of slave labor in the galley, you can't wait for the seventh week's half day of liberty. Then you can't wait for uncontrolled liberty.

It is pretty much the same thing for the rest of your career- you can't wait to finish school and get out to the 'fleet'; then, after a few weeks of misery on your first ship, you can't wait to go back to shore duty.

I'm not sure if this is a military-wide practice or not, but one of the strangest things I remember about boot camp was the yearbook. Yep- you heard me; after eight weeks the Navy gives you a yearbook-like book about it. I suppose that's so you'll always treasure those fond memories. I remember it, not for it's obvious inanity, but because the girl who took the pictures for it was always roaming around the RTC. She was the only civilian most of us saw while we were there. From what I heard from the CC's, she liked to date recruits on their uncontrolled liberty- the recruits had two months of pay and were docile enough to fork most of it over without getting laid at the end of the evening. That plus they left the next day for the other side of the world.

Yeah, my two CC's were pretty cool. One of the things all Navy guys share is the ability to remember the names of their CC's for the rest of their lives. They might forget some of the other plebian-like material we had to memorize (Like the eleven general orders, or the chain of command up through Reagan), but they always remember those two names.

Our CC was even cooler for two reasons- he smoked, and he liked Star Trek. That he smoked meant that he was always thinking about smoking, so he sympathized a little with us other smokers and gave us chances to light up whenever he could. Smoking has since become taboo in Navy schools, or so I've heard.

And, the fact that he liked Star Trek meant that he let us watch it, too. TV and radios are among the hardest privileges to earn in boot camp (when sitting on anything other than the floor and using the phone are hard enough to earn), so it looked like we'd miss the début of *Star Trek- The Next Gyratation* which they'd been hyping all summer. Then, to our amazement, he came walking in with a TV under his arm that day and plugged it in. Not that his having duty that day had anything to do with it- I'm sure he was thinking only of our morale. But it was the first and only TV I saw during my vacation in sunny Orlando.

Our CCs were also very concerned for our health; they wanted us to sweat some of the sugar and caffeine out of our system while we were in their care. We didn't get permission to use the candy bar and soda machines (referred to in the Naval vernacular as 'gee dunk'- draw your own conclusions) until we were almost ready to leave. It was a sight that would have done credit to Willie Wonka's diabetic factory: a hundred fully grown men in America's fighting forces frantically shoving change into vending machines in a feeding frenzy to consume as much candy and soda as they could before the CC changed his mind. Then, our bellies bloated with snacks, they marched us straight to the galley for lunch.

However, some guys got the revolutionary idea that, were they to take their hard-won chocolate back with them to the barracks, they could wait and enjoy it at their leisure. This was a big no-no, but that just added to the overall excitement and danger of the enterprise. Our intrepid yeoman and his sidekick managed to smuggle over thirty dollars in candy and soda back to our barracks without the CC's catching on.

Or, so we thought.

There isn't a lot of practical hiding places for twenty pounds of candy bars in a barracks, so they stashed their booty in a washing machine until the food could be distributed later that night. But our CC's had seen everything before, and could barely suppress their amusement when they summoned the yeoman twins into their office.

The yeoman left a minute later, visibly worried, and made a beeline straight for the laundry room. The CCs had told him they wanted to do a barracks inspection within the hour, and we all knew the washing machines were a favorite of the CCs for discovering uncleaned filth. With no other recourse, the yeoman and his pals attempted to eat the evidence.

The CC's came in about a minute after they'd finished flushing the wrappers down the toilet, and several of us (me included) followed behind at a safe distance to observe. The CCs found some insignificant little dust ball right off the bat, and went ballistic. They began cycling the shit out of the yeoman gang; a series of rapid exercises like pushups and eight count body builders.

As the CCs already knew, it was inevitable that someone was going to puke. Someone did, creating a nice sized puddle of half-melted chocolate. The CC just shook his head, squatting down to admire his handiwork.

"Didn't even bother to chew that one, did ya, my little dickless wonder?" he commented pleasantly.

They then walked off, as if nothing had happened, content in the knowledge they'd set off a chain reaction vomit-a-thon in our happy bathroom. No one wanted "gee dunk" in any form for a week after that, least of all the yeoman twins.

Chapter Three:
Welcome to the Nuclear Pipeline

*Well, you walk into a bar downtown
To buy yourself a beer
And the women judge the man you are
By the hair above your ears
You pretend you've gotten used to it
But they wish that you weren't here
Most times, you can't talk to them
Other times you can
Just use that old cliché:
"Would you like to go and dance?"
But you know they'll shoot you down again
So why 'd you take the chance?*

-Feel the Rage, from the EM Log

One of the most ironic points in my life occurred when I was just a week from graduating boot camp. There were a few reasons why I didn't go to college right out of high school, but the foremost was money: I didn't have any hope of raising the tuition to go to college. My parents had always had a simple policy: If you want it, you can have it, providing you pay for it. While this may sound practical, it seemed at the time to be a clear message: once high school's over, so's the free ride. Looking back at it, perhaps it was for the best.

But, as my wonderful stay at club RTC drew to a close, I got a letter from a lawyer which said my great Aunt had set up a trust fund for my college, which was mine when I turned eighteen. It turned out later to be over thirty thousand dollars... and if any of my family had bothered to tell me about it, I would never have enlisted in the first place. Such is life. But, back then, I was still enthused about my Navy career, and looked at that as some excellent party funds. Needless to say, it didn't last long.

Leaving boot camp, I suddenly found myself in Orlando, Florida. The nuke school is less than a mile away, but, it's also worlds apart from RTC. The rest of the base didn't exist while we were recruits. Now, everything seemed huge.

Somewhere along the way my orders, the ones based on my leaving boot camp with my original company, had never gotten updated. So while I watched the rest of the company drift off to whatever destination, I was hanging around the barracks with a lost-puppy look. For the first time, no one was telling me where to be. I eventually followed the last group as they checked in across the street at the 'basic seamanship' ATC barracks. These were the sea-fair guys, who would be at sea in a few weeks. Not great, but better than being in RTC.

It was a Friday, and after checking in the guy at the desk told us to get lost & come back Monday. It is a testament to boot camp that we just sort of looked at each other. "Now what do we do?" was asked. I've since heard that this is a common reaction, both among former recruits and former prison inmates. But, as we were getting ready to leave, a fat nerdish creature I'd ever seen grabbed me, and asked if I was supposed to be going to nuke school. I admitted that it had been mentioned before.

He said that he'd been looking all over for me. I looked at my buddies going on liberty, and sighed. It was the first time I had the nuke-nonnuke liberty factor demonstrated for me.

There are three basic 'rates' which work in the nuclear field: Machinist Mate (MM), Electrician's Mate(EM) and Electronics Technician(ET); they're more commonly referred to as "Knuckle Dragger", "Wire Biter", and "Homo". When the recruiter sells you on nuclear power, he tells you that he can only guarantee the MM training, if you want it. I was admittedly naive during that process, but I knew enough about how the Navy worked to realize that I didn't want to accept something that they were giving away: it only stood to reason that no one wanted it. And, as you'll see, the word NAVY stands for "Never Again Volunteer Yourself". I chose to take my chances with the nuke detailer later in basic training.

While you're in boot camp you get an interview with the guy who decides what rate to train you in. Well, he might consider it an interview; I was at attention the whole time and thought of it more like cross examination. I do remember him reading aloud that I'd lived in California a while, and yet had denied prior drug use...

"What the fuck do you mean you didn't use drugs?" He asked. "Why not?"

Ahh... a trick(?) question, thought I.

"Ahh, probably because I couldn't afford them" I replied.

"So," he intoned "You're saying that, once we start paying you, you'll start doing drugs?"

"Not on what an E4 makes." I replied. He turned red, for a moment, then started laughing.

"Dismissed" he finally answered. The witness was excused.

Now, how he determined my learning potential from that is beyond my reasoning. At one point we were asked to rank our choices for rates, though, and everyone put the same thing: ET, EM, and (lastly) MM. Inevitably, most everybody ended up with MM.

There is no easy way to describe what any of the three rates do. In the nuclear world, we all do everything. But, on paper, MM's are the ones who work with pipes and valves, EM's work with electric power generating and distributing, and ET's work with the electronics related to the reactor itself. There is a sub branch of MM: ELT, which is Latin for "he who plays with chemicals and radiacs". A-school (as in 'A *not-related-to-life-in-the-real-world* School') is where we were to learn our rate, or job, in the fleet. I somehow got chosen for EM, of which only two other guys in my company got. I

was relieved, because it had been in the back of my mind that I didn't want MM, and knew I was too retarded to be an ET. Since the navy existed long before nuclear power, there are also 'conventional' MM's, EM's and ET's out there, who never got to experience the joy of nuke school. At one time they used to send us to their A School in Great Lakes (near Chicago), but I guess that was too easy. By the time I finished boot camp we were all going to the new 'nuclear field' A school, written especially for nuke-hopefuls.

It was like a college prep school, or 'nuke school lite', as they described it. We ran into several of the unpleasanties of nuke school there, like 'putting in hours' and 'ack boards'. Unlike most navy schools, this is NOT learn at your own pace. Every day was a full 8-hour lecture schedule, with at least four hours of 'home' work. After school, you were expected to put in study hours, which were carefully recorded and tracked. There were several instructors roaming the halls, watching us, to make sure we were actually studying.

Tests were all essay-question types, and were taken very seriously. If you failed too many, you were in for a painful trip out via the dreaded Academic (or ack, as Bill the Cat says) Board. Most people who fail out of the nuclear training pipeline end up in the worst jobs the navy can find for them in the fleet.

There was a little pressure, to be sure.

Not a few guys develop serious phobias and superstitions about tests. One guy I knew would only eat anchovies on a test day. Another would ceremoniously destroy his calculator if he failed a test. I suppose we were all a little insane back then.

Living conditions weren't too bad. Unlike most of the rest of my boot camp peers, we nukes lived in little four-man rooms. They had open-bay, best described as a 98-man room. There were lots of inspections and petty rules to deal with, but there was also some dignity. You could even have a refrigerator, if you did all the paperwork first. But, looking about one night, I realized that the whole nuke barracks complex was really a huge nerd farm. Whereas all these geeks had used to live at home, hidden from the rest of us, when you put them all together they rejoiced in their nerdness. It was common to see Dungeons & Dragons being played all weekend in every hall. Those of us who preferred to hang out in the bars at night couldn't resist joining in the occasional game ourselves; when we came staggering in drunk and surly at two am, we played ogres, slapping the geeks and their faggot

games every which way in an effort to get to our bed before we passed out. The twidgets even played along: "Ahh! It's an EM troll! use your magic missile spell! Roll for damage!!!"

Our instructors were all guys who had been at sea for a few years, and it was from them that we began to pick up the stereotypes which surround each of the rates. Machinist Mates were the apes, the knuckle draggers, the first generation walking upright in the family. Electricians were the wire-biting-carbon-dust-sucking sparkies who weren't strong enough to be MM's, yet too dumb to be ET's. And ET's were 'twidget' and 'tweaker', sensitive fellows; the sworn enemies of EM's. It might sound funny, but there's a some truth to all this. If you walked into one of our rooms, you could tell which of the rates lived there. ET rooms were always full of computers and other electronics gear. EM rooms typically contained empty beer bottles, used car parts, and various nudie posters. And, MM rooms usually had straw on the floor, a tire swing, and one of those metal mirrors on a nail. (MM's being fascinated as they are by bright, shiny objects).

It was at this point that I found myself in the hospital again. This time I managed to wreck my brand new, babe-magnet of a car. It was an '85 Grand Am Black Widow, a special edition that I bought way below blue book and patiently restored. Then, while driving down to Miami for the weekend, I had a run-in with an armadillo and rolled it into a ditch doing about 100 mph. That was bad enough, the car sinking into a small lake on the other side of the ditch just added insult to injury. We swam to shore and hitchhiked to the nearest truck stop.

Here's a piece of advice: If you ever find yourself in a similar situation, i.e. sans car, about the only way to get someone to stop for you (unless you happen to be a girl with long legs) is to be standing next to a vehicle. Several cars and trucks ignored us, until we found an abandoned VW and put the hood up.

The very next car stopped for us.

I wasn't feeling all that great by the time we made it back to the base (a long, twisted story in itself), and my room mate was kind enough to notice I was leaking blood from a few bodily orifices. Since there was blood, he figured I had a good chance of being seen at the navy hospital and took me there. I told the orderly what had happened, then preceded to pass out in the waiting area. My good buddy Stump got tired of waiting and started raising hell with the staff. Finally a doctor came over to look at me. He

asked what was wrong. Stump told him I was pissing up blood. The doctor asked me for a sample. I provided one. He asked if I knew why I was pissing blood. I said that I was no doctor, but it might have something to do with being in a 100mph car wreck. He looked a little odd, and asked why we didn't say so sooner. Stump kindly informed him that we had, two hours ago. He looked even more puzzled, but at least admitted me then.

It turned out I'd popped open a kidney with the seat belt when I wrecked, and I got a nice little vacation out of it. So, with the above considered, let me amend what I said earlier about what qualifies as "sick" during sick call; you not only have to be bleeding, but be bleeding from a visible location to get prompt attention.

A school, in retrospect, was a great deal easier (and more fun) than power school. But we were located right next to Power School, and began to also pick of the beginnings of the Rickover mythos to which we were the newest initiates. At the time, we were all enthusiastic about it; wanting to graduate and move up to the real school.

I was surprised, at first, by A School. My impression was that it would be far too hard for an idiot like me to learn all that information. But, like many things, the material sounds more impressive on paper than it is in reality. All the classes we had started off simple and slow, gradually building up to the hard stuff at the end. None of it was rocket scientist domain, as I had feared. And, the navy (rightly) assumes you don't know much more than how to write your name when you show up.

As it dawned on me that it wasn't as difficult as I had been warned, my confidence grew by leaps and bounds. This actually worked against me: at one time our section advisor (sort of like the class's big brother) had asked me if I was ready for electronics theory, which was coming up. I told him "no sweat- I'm ready". He pointed out that most of the electricians who fail out do so during the electronics phase. I replied, a little haughtily, "that's what I heard about basic motor and generator theory, too, and I did okay with that". He just nodded, and I didn't think about it any more. But, after I left, he put something in my student record about being 'overly cocky'. This followed me all the way through my different schools, and kept coming back to haunt me. Apparently none of the other section advisors

bothered to form their own opinions. I didn't care; they set the standards- if I thought they were easy, that was my own business.

In truth, the whole nuke pipeline isn't that hard, academically. They make a big deal out of the advanced college-level classes, but the only thing that's hard is putting up with all the little BS rules and regulations they heap on you at the same time. Guys were always getting busted for stupid shit like walking on the grass or forgetting to wax the deck in their rooms. In retrospect it's amazing that I didn't get in more trouble, because the stuff like that always tripped me up.

An example? Okay... For a little while I was assigned to stand a security watch in one of the school buildings. After a few weeks I was the senior guy and responsible for my shift. One day, when I was returning from dinner, I drove up and found the entire population of the building emptying into the parking lot. We had a lot of problems with fake bomb threats in those days (the guy phoning them in later turned out to be one of us security guys, but not one of mine, thank god). Now, there are two parking lots for the school: one next to it (for the staff), and one a good hike away (for the rest of us). The staff parking was open to anyone after 4pm. Since it was 3:50 pm, and as it looked like my section had an emergency, I pulled right into the (mostly deserted) staff lot and jumped out. A wheezy station wagon was backing out next to me. It caught my attention because it stopped right behind mine, blocking me in. A old, crusty master chief hobbled out.

Master chiefs are the most senior of the enlisted ranks, and much more feared than your average officer by the working class sailor. In school, they are virtually gods, evil mean-spirited gods whose attention you definitely DID NOT want. Yet there I was, and there he was.

"What are you doing parking here? You know this is a staff parking lot" he asked.

"I'm NFAS security, and.." I began

"You're not staff" He insisted "I don't think anyone ever told you that you were staff."

"Well," I reasoned "it's almost four.."

"Don't get smart with me, mister" he barked. Having been in this position before, I did my humble moron peasant routine, looking down at the ground and apologizing.

"I'll move right away," I answered. But that wasn't good enough for him. He took my ID card, and copied it while telling me what a loser I was for trying to talk back to him. Then he left, and I went on with worrying about why fifty-odd people were milling about outside.

I told my boss, the MAA (Master-At-Arms, the guy who mainly worries about how clean everything is) chief what had happened. He told me not to worry, the Master Chief was a well know penis and that he'd take care of it. And, he did- I never heard anything about it until I classed up for power school a few weeks later. The old bastard waited until I was in 'his' kingdom to fuck me. And fuck me he did, most righteously. But that's what they do best in Nuclear Power School.

Chapter Four:
The Light and the Dark Side of Nuclear Learning

*Nuke school was just the beginning of my nuclear
hell*

*Fucked over time and time again
Can't seem to do well
And I studied for hours
Just to fail every test
No way to escape now
I fucked up like the rest
So I was called by the captain
Said "Please, don't waste our time
We haven't seen a rock like you since 1969"
And still those voices are calling from Olyville
Keep me up in the middle of the night
And I want to kill*

-Hotel 717, from the EM Log

In the center of the Nuclear Power School is a small circle of grass where none dare walk. In the center of this crabgrass stands a tiny, withered, pathetic little tree. This was known as Rickover's Circle. And, as I learned later, it was aptly named.

If you talk about nuclear power with a nuke, the name Rickover will come up. It's inevitable. From day one you start learning the legends and horror stories regarding the man most responsible for bringing us into the nuclear age. As he is righteously known as the Father of Nuclear Power, as nukes we are all his begotten children, and thus conceived in his image.

Rickover was a most unusual person. He hated the navy, and that was unusual because he was one of the highest ranking and most powerful officers in it. He decided to form his own, personal navy, peopled by men like himself. He disregarded rank, and ignored the sacred tenant that all officers live by: Rank Has Its Privileges. In the name of 'safety monitoring' he created his own private Gestapo, the dreaded NRRO (Naval Reactors Regional Office). He made sure only nuclear officers could command one of 'his' nuke boats, making them loyal to him first, and the navy second. He personally approved each of these officers, and those interviews are legendary. As a result, ours is one of the few navies where the captain is more judged by his engineering skills than his ability to fight and defeat the enemy. You might argue that this system has worked so far, but, then again, we haven't fought a war with nuke boats yet.

There are many myths and legend surrounding the man, and we all learned them with the same fervor with which a priest studies his saint. One enduring legacy was his conviction that 98% of all work is done by 20% of the population, and that he was running the 20%. Nukes get the first taste of this syndrome in power school.

I do remember one of my original forbiddings about being a nuke was that I wasn't much good with things mathematical. "No problem" said the nuke recruiter "There's only a little math, at the start."

"But," I continued "I wasn't really that crazy about school and homework and all that."

"That's okay. Everything in nuke school is classified, so you can't take it out of the building. They can't give you homework." he smiled.

I can already hear the groans from some of you, but I bought that hook, line, and bloody sinker. But, he didn't lie, really: you can't take the books home with you. The navy conveniently gets around this by having you stay at school to do the assignments after hours. So, literally, it's not HOMEwork.

That's the hours system, as I mentioned. In A School this was somewhere around 15 or 20 hours per week they expected from you. In power school the typical requirement was 25-35 hours extra, in addition to school from 7am to 4pm and whatever extra BS duty you might have. They have lots of different types of 'hours' you can put in, too. There were 'mandatory' hours (or Mando, as in Mando-25); missing these would result in a quick non-judicial punishment vacation. There were 'suggested' hours; these were the same as mando hours, except you could miss these -once- and not go to mast the first time. Of course, if you were on 'suggested-20', and you only put in 16 of them, the section advisor would rip you a new asshole and put you on 'mando-25' the next week.

Lastly, there were the holy 'voluntary' hours. Few people ever got those, but for those chosen few that meant that they really could decide how much to study, without fear of reprisal. But, if they were to tube an exam, with only a few hours recorded... you get the picture. Hours are somehow linked to effort in power school; if you're doing bad, but logging 40 extra hours a week, then by navy logic you must be trying. In reality, once you get your homework done, you tend to practice sleeping with your eyes open, or just stare out the window. Just like any other school, most people wait and cram the night before an exam.

Most guys had a system for hours. If you do the math, you'll see that we students were expected to hang around school until eight or nine at night, every night, and then come in some more on the weekends. I promised myself that I'd always take the weekend off, and 'suck it up' during the week instead. So, I stayed there 'til eleven every night, and caught sleep when I could. If you guessed that I didn't learn much in those 'study' hours, you'd be correct. But the system is Rickover's way, never to be questioned, amen.

There are separate barracks for nuclear power students, which are a little nicer than those we had in A School. I checked into my new room one sunny afternoon, and met my new roommate. I'll call him 'Tezzio'; he dropped out during the first few weeks of Power School and is probably in jail somewhere now. Tezzio had a strange idea of decor: naked pussy. No, not nudie posters (which in those pre-Tail hook days was okay), but just the vagina. He had already papered every surface in his locker with cutouts of gash, and nothing but the gash. He was a greasy little twerp, and he eyed me like a chief eyes doughnuts. I made up my mind right then to live off base.

You see, when we were lowly A school students we were all E-3 firemen and seamen. But, when we graduated, we were all promoted to Petty Officer, lowest of the non-commissioned ranks. E-3s can't live off base unless they're married. E4's and above can. But, unless you're married, the Navy still expects you to live in a barracks. Go figure; a guy with ten years in gets to share a bathroom with seven other slobes and get inspected twice a week, while an E-1 nobody right out of boot camp, who happens to stop by the base chapel on his way home, can live in a normal home like anyone else.

I will come back to this prejudice later, but I guess you get the idea. The navy wasn't going to give me any money to pay the rent.

Now, integrity is the biggest single trait they harp about in nukes (an odd hypocrisy compared to the fleet). And, while it wasn't technically 'wrong' for us to live out in town, my roommates and I agreed to not mention it to our section advisor "just in case". So, when he eventually found out, he asked us about it in such a way as to test our sense of integrity. He seemed a little disappointed when we admitted it honestly, but he held the threat of moving back with ol' Tezzio over our heads the rest of the year. With an iron-clad lease, it was probably the only reason I hung in there and graduated: I couldn't afford to let my grades slip and have to move back on base. That's what the section advisor's supposed to do, you know, keep us from dropping out.

The drop out rate is as bad as they said; out of thirty two guys we started with, only fifteen of us actually graduated. Some guys dropped on psych reasons (attempted suicide is rampant among nuke students), some for BS like parking in the staff lot out of season, and some by choice. But most were ack boarded out. We lost most of those in the first three months, on the 'light' side.

There are two parts to the six-month long power school, and they're taught in different buildings. The first half is more review than anything, hence the name 'light'. The guys who fail out here are the ones, for the most part, who can't handle the copious amount of note taking and lectures that make up the course. On the average, though, people tend to do well despite the new pressure to succeed.

The dark half is another matter. In the second half you start learning all the technical aspects of nuclear power; the whys' and hows'. Many times you have to push the old "I believe" button; it's nuclear physics theory and you have to take their word for it.

And, since we were dealing with theory (vice practice), the navy figured that our instructors could also be knowledgeable in theory (vice- you guessed it: practice). Virtually all the instructors were officers, true, but not real nuclear officers, with experience in the fleet. Nope, these ensign wonders were little more than students like us. I'm not saying they didn't know the course; if it was in the curriculum, they knew it like gospel. But, the curriculum dealt with a reactor plant design which had become obsolete even by navy standards twenty years ago. So, were you to ask a question like "What will this do on a real plant?" they just stared at you, then ran off to find a 'real' nuke to ask.

Is this wrong? I assumed that the navy was using officers as instructors because it sounded better on paper to say that we were being taught by them. Despite what they may say in public, most officers still regard enlisted men as somehow less intelligent than they, and god forbid they would teach each other something as political as nuclear propulsion. So, when it may have helped to have someone tell us in class "This is what the notes say, but this is what you'll see on the job", we instead had odd mutant nuke ensigns. They were technically 'nuke' officers, but they would never work on a real plant. This is who's training us nukes- something you probably didn't know.

Most of them, though, weren't as hung up on rank as normal officers were, being new to the service themselves. I considered that a plus. Perhaps now is the time to bring up a strange form of 'double-think' which Rickover's philosophy breeds. He believed, somewhat, in judging a man by what he knew, not how long he'd been in the service. Make sense? I tend to think that way, too. In the conventional navy of his day, though, enlisted men were more like cattle to be led, not listened to. Enlisted men did whatever their officers told them, without question.

Rickover thought that might not be so great around a reactor; what if the officer gave a fucked up order, and the blueshirt knew better, yet blindly obeyed anyways? So he trained all nukes to question orders, to evaluate for themselves whether or not the order was safe. This is perhaps the best thing there is about being a nuke.

But, the doublethink comes in when you try to force all the rest of the military discipline on a sailor. On one hand, he's taught that officers are always right, and on the other he's taught that you should think for yourself. How do you reconcile this? I don't know if I ever did. But there's a startling difference between how nukes do business and how conventionals operate. Nukes tend to be outspoken, and very few are intimidated by rank of any kind below E7. Conventionals are more like you see in the

movies, blindly following whatever they're told, and fearing everything above their own rank. A nuke (quite often) will tell an ensign "That's all fucked up, sir, pull your head out of your ass", and get away with it.

I actually felt sorry for the officers, as they were expected to not only know our jobs, but to learn what everybody else on the boat did. They're taught to enforce discipline, but are often lost and clueless, forced to admit perhaps the blueshirt does know what he's talking about. They're supposed to be the knights of the sea, with us as their peons; yet they find out that we're all the same and that they're only nominally in charge of everything.

So, while the instructors may have only known what their instructor guide said, all in all they were a lot more friendly and personal than your average non-nuclear trained zero. And, quite a few were women, and good looking at that. I guess naming names would be improper, but there was a certain math teacher which held my class rapt every moment she was in the room. Since she was a math instructor, I theorize she actually taught math; I don't recall much she said. I remember every detail of those white skirts she wore like it was yesterday, though.

We studied, and took hundreds of pages of notes, and studied some more. Everything was classified, but I think this was more to get us used to handling classified material than anything else; 9/10ths of what we learned was available in civilian textbooks at the bookstore in the mall. And we learned something that is just as available to the public: nuclear power is SAFE.

I, like just about everyone, was always suspicious of the whole idea. After the (hushed whisper) Three Mile Island incident, just about all of John Public decided that it was unsafe; that we'd all glow in the dark if we kept splitting those atoms. By the time we left nuclear power school, though, there wasn't one of us who couldn't refute the most adamant argument of the most whacked-out Greenpeace nut in existence. In this instance, it wasn't navy brainwashing. They just gave us the facts, the numbers and the equations, and let us figure it out for ourselves.

TV and the movies don't help. Do you remember a certain commie bitch traitor who made that movie about nuclear power soon after Three Mile Island? Why is it that the same screen that gives us alien

invasions and giant lizards should suddenly be taken as a truthful, informed source? I laugh my ass off when I see it on a re-run; it's all BS.

But, I've had to deal with people who think like that ever since I went to school. We had protestors occasionally outside the base; they seemed to be more interested in organizing their chants and appearance for the camera than anything else. There are the Greenpeace freaks who hear a catchphrase like 'critical' and fly off the handle. And then there's your average Joe who just "knows it's bad"

Here's an example: Right after I graduated from the pipeline I went home to spend some time with my folks. We were all having dinner with some of my mom's computer-geek friends, when she happened to mention to one of them that I had just graduated from the navy's nuclear power school. The geeks all stopped talking, and stared at me. One particularly revolting example that nonstop junk food does NOT do a body good looked down at me and asked "How could you do that for a living and sleep at night?"

"Do what?" I asked, innocently.

"Build nuclear bombs!" he exclaimed.

"Hah," I snickered "I don't build bombs. I run nuclear power plants."

"That's just as bad. They blow up, too. It'll happen eventually." He said, undaunted.

"Oh, really?" I ask "And, how much of the total core is fuel, and how much is poison?"

"Uhh. it's all poison," he stammers. The other fruitballs, who had been smiling up to this point, went back to staring at their plates.

"Right." I sarcastically nod "Do you even know what I'm talking about?"

"No, but I know that all that radiation will kill you, so it's like a poison."

"Uh-huh" I rolled my eyes, as I tend to do with such idiots "And how much exposure do you think I get? Would you like to know that you get more radiation on the beach in one day than I get all year at work?"

Now geek boy is looking around himself.

"And," I continued "That your average coal burning power plant dumps out more radiation in a day than a nuclear power plant puts out in a year? Smoking, x-rays, even the sun give you a dose a hundred times bigger than anything you could get from a nuke plant."

He didn't say anything more, but I could tell he remained unconvinced. He got his ideas from TV, so I couldn't possibly be right. I really don't go looking for morons like this clod, but I keep running into them. I may not say nice things about the navy in general, but I'll back up nuclear power whenever I can. I'm firmly convinced it's the only ecological solution to our power (and water) shortage available. Before you listen to one of these nature freaks, just ask him (or her):

- a. Do you own a car?
 - b. Do you use electricity?
- and, c. Do you use stuff like paper or plastics?

They will most likely answer yes to all of the above. They want us to leave nature alone, yet like their air conditioning and TV as much as anyone. Does this pass the sensibility test?

After six months of school comes the last (well, there anyways) test: the 'comp'. It covers anything and everything we were taught in school. The tension in the room is nearly unbearable the night before; if you fail the comp you fail, period. It was all or nothing. It wasn't unusual to see people just lose it, to go off the deep end. Many of the merely amusing superstitions took on scary new dimensions. There were chants, prayers, and lucky pencils. There was even a little voodoo, if you can accept that a nuclear trained technician would resort to waving chicken bones around in a moment of need.

I didn't take the exam with my class, unfortunately. The week before the comp, when everyone is more relieved that it's almost over than anything, we were given a lot of free time during the day to study. We, of course, tended to just screw around and bullshit. We started shooting rubber bands at each other, and got quite a war started there in our center of higher engineering practices. I was a casualty of the fight, taking a shot to the eye. I know what you're thinking; yes, ma was right when she warned you that you'd put your eye out doing shit like that. I'm here to say it hurt like a bitch, and resulted in my being laid up in bed a few days.

After everyone finishes their exam, they usually go back to their rooms and sit around quietly, trying to guess how much they put down that was right. But, once it gets dark, they all sort of gravitate to Rickover's Circle, where they park in the grass and wait for the scores to be posted in the auditorium. No one drinks, or talks much. They just wait.

Once the scores go up, though, people hesitate to look. It's understandable. But look they eventually do, and then the yelling starts. I often wondered what the locals thought about that: once every three months the sound of riot, death & destruction coming from the usually somber campus.

People go wild. Since very few actually fail by this point, there's a virtual stampede to the base nightclub. Some guys pull stunts like riding their motorcycles through the barracks, or stripping naked and jumping in the lake. The underclassmen always look on jealously, if they're dumb enough to hang around on comp night. No one sleeps much that night, but it's a well earned celebration.

When I say things were usually somber around the campus, that's not so say the stuff you remember from Animal House doesn't happen. One day two girls decided to do an impromptu striptease on a balcony in the center of the barracks. The word quickly spread, and soon hundreds of screaming MM's and EM's were gathered beneath them. The ET's did finally get the word, and they (true to form) showed up with video cameras and laser spectrum analyzers and other tools of destruction. Base security was eventually called to break up our BreastStock '88 festival. Our instructor's only comment the next day was that he was pissed none of us EM's had brains enough to even get a picture. The ET instructors were watching the video replay in their office and apparently weren't sharing with them.

Another scene from Power School I'll always remember was the shuttle launch. After the Challenger disaster, we kids had grown up sans space shuttle. Then one day in school we where all unexpectedly relocated to grass outside to watch the first shuttle launch in years. We stood around, hundreds of us, just shooting the shit. The word was passed that the shuttle had launched, but none of us could see it. Then, like nothing I'd ever seen, it broke through the clouds in front of us: a long yellow tear in the sky. We fell speechless. There simply were no words to describe it. It vanished in a few moments from view, but all of us just continued to stare, transfixed, off into the horizon.

I don't know who started it, but someone started singing the national anthem. We all joined in, practically screaming it in the still of the Florida morning. Then it was over, and we drifted back inside. No one ever mentioned it again while we were there.

Our class happened to be in school during the holidays, and got to see our normally reserved instructors do some crazy stunts themselves. Right before Christmas they dressed up like Santa and the elves and went around handing out candy canes. They even made security photo badges with Santa pictures on

them. We also got to watch a parade the TM school down the road organized past the school, though we got the expected scrooge-like staff member who threatened to sign us out if we didn't get back to work.

One Christmas the CO decided he wanted to have a snowball fight. Since the odds of snow during winter in sunny Florida are fairly low, he had to truck in a couple tons of snow from a colder climate. This he promptly dumped in a huge half-melted mound front of the school. Within an hour, most of the occupants of both Nuke School and Power school were busy heaving ice balls at each other. I have to wonder what Rickover would have thought.

There was wet and wild day, too. Every class, as it gets ready to graduate, takes over a tourist attraction on I Drive called Wet & Wild for a day. I think a lot of us showed up because we thought (from the name) it was a nudie bar. Nope- it turned out to actually be one of those water slide extravaganzas. My roomies and I would have turned around if someone hadn't spotted our voluptuous math teacher walking in wearing a butt-floss bikini. We grabbed our beer cooler and gave it a try. For me, the best part was watching our instructors lose various articles of clothing on this five-story slide called the Matterhorn.

The fact that Orlando is only forty minutes from Daytona and three hours from Ft Lauderdale was not lost on us. There were four of us living in our 'crash pad' apartment, and there was usually a 2 or 3 more guys from our class hanging out at any one time. With all those teenagers, the occasional weekend road trip was inevitable.

But let me say a bit about life in the party pad first.

Out of the four of us, we had all the personalities one could reasonably expect from a mediocre sitcom. There was me, the planner and worrier (as the guy who does the bills always is), there was Mark, who was the face man (who contributed most because he could sweet talk our lady landlord into overlooking our many faults), there was Mike, the heavy duty party monster, and there was Papa Stump, the adult (we say this because he had ID and an peculiar wisdom about him). We had other roommates from time to time, but those were the main ones.

We did the typical things, like the beer-can pyramid and using female underwear as trophies. We had a fridge which contained beer more than anything. We even had a pet ferret. We had an upstairs

neighbor who didn't speak much English, but who was a great conversation piece at our parties. And, we had fun.

Not always at other's expense, but it wasn't unheard of. There was the 'Larson Situation' (as it came to be known), for example. Now, Larson was an okay guy, when sober. Kind of a geek, but not so that you'd notice around other nukes. He also was away from home for the first time, and a little eager to try out those forbidden fruits.

The first time he got truly wasted (about two and a half beers, by our reckoning) he turned into an annoying drunk. Real annoying, which amazed us because we were hard to annoy when partying ourselves. We eventually got Mark to take the putz home when he passed out. We also agreed that maybe Larson wasn't the right image for our group (to paraphrase).

But, when he came back again the next weekend, more drastic steps became necessary. He was building up a tolerance, since he got through his third beer before pissing us off. I was in my room (being 1/2 owner of the franchise, and the guy doing the bills, has it's perks) reading some porno or another when I hear the doorknob rattling. I open it up, and what to my wondering eyes should appear but a butt-naked Larson, staring vacantly, with a beer.

I just sort of nodded, snickered, and shut my door. This time I locked it, not wanting to be mistaken for whatever he was looking for that had required him to be in his birthday suit. He rattled the door a bit, then wandered off down the hall.

About an hour later I went out to get some munchies, and noticed a noise from the hallway closet. Inside, I found two empty hangers, a box of laundry soap, and our hero: Larson. He was passed out, and still very much naked. I checked out the living room, and found everyone else watching cartoons. They too had seen Larson streaking around, and decided to let him do his thing. I eventually got Stumper to help me drag him out of the closet, lest he start eating the soap (our only box) or do something equally perverse with the hangers.

Sometime while we were dragging his dumb, naked ass into the living room he woke back up, ready for a fight. He swung a few times, and finally hit his target- the wall. We laughed. He then ran into the kitchen (don't ask me why) and started rooting around. Not much more in the kitchen than the closet, but he eventually found our valuables- the beer.

If he had merely grabbed a few, we would have let him, since he was only a few sips from passing out again. But, instead, he decided to start throwing them.

I was pissed because I was going to have to pay for anything he broke. The other guys were pissed because the beer was getting warm. Larson didn't care; by the time we wrestled him out of the kitchen he'd passed out on his own. This time he made ominous retching noises. Without a word, we agreed it was time for him to leave our happy home.

Luckily for us, this happened on a Sunday, so most of the neighbors were already asleep. The four of us lugged Larson out to the big sign in front of the apartments, and proceeded to stow him for sea. In other words, we taped him to the sign. I took a picture (for posterity, and possible blackmail), and then we ran away giggling. We weren't too worried about him catching a cold, even though he was still naked, because Florida summer nights are very warm.

When our landlady found him the next morning, he wasn't especially clear about how he got there, or why he happened to be naked. As the apartment complex was also home to several other squids, as well as a few college-type people, we escaped direct blame. Larson himself couldn't remember exactly where we lived, but that may not be the only reason he never came over to hang out in our closet again.

Before we even had an apartment to throw weirdoes out of, there was 'the motel'. It was a motel in the middle of nowhere about ten miles from the base on Colonial, which was just barely far enough to avoid running into any of our staff buddies. Remember, we were making a habit out of breaking most of the rules they set for us, and we heard stories about less fortunate souls to be caught in just such a way. No one had ever been nailed in the motel (except for a female or two) as far as we knew, and we came to rely on it for weekend hangover recovery.

The motel was great for passing out in, but lousy for drinking. That's why the good people of Orlando had thoughtfully built a Drive-In movie theater right next to it. For a modest five bucks, you got a nice dark corner of the lot to unload a car full of dorks, including all their munchies and beer, in addition to the movie. If you could follow it, that was. Most of the time we just wandered around, trying to pick up the local girls who were there to do exactly the same thing as we were.

One time, though, we had more ambitious plans. Our buddy Mike had yet to get laid, and we felt a certain obligation on his birthday to help him out. We couldn't just meet a girl, and hand her off to him;

something in his face made women either run away (which was bad), or tell him all about her last five boyfriends (which was even worse). We had, therefore, considered hiring some 'professional' help, but we were all a little short on cash. It was Mark who thought up a workable plan with our meager funding and high ideals.

First part of the plan had us get Mike shitfaced (but not puking) drunk at the drive in. Easily done. We even pretended we didn't know it was his birthday, despite the birthday cards that were rather conspicuous in his room. (If there are any grandmas out there, please think twice before sending your sailor grandkids a birthday card, especially a mushy one. It will probably be stashed or trashed within seconds if the guy has roommates like us)

Meanwhile, one of our other buds was down at the motel, renting a room. Into the room we placed the only present we could afford- a blowup doll. This one was so cheap it didn't have the prerequisite holes, or even nipples. However, once the lights were disabled, and with Mike well on his way to being disabled himself, the illusion was judged by us to be passable.

Yes, I know you've heard this joke before. We had, too. But it didn't work out that way after all. We loaded a loaded Mike back into the car, and headed off into the night. A few hints and a porno book were circulated with equal fever amongst us. We arrived, psyched, and ready for the real partying to begin.

Mark was a god at convincing drunk people. Once Mike was in position by the door, he turned to him and told him that we felt bad about his near-legendary virginity and all, and that we had rented him a whore.

"She's right inside, Mikey" Mark said, handing him the key "Knock yourself out!"

Mike looked at us, his eyes showing just a hint of a tear

"You guys," he said "I love you! You're my best friends! I'll never forget this!"

And, with that, he staggered into a dark motel room, and his own fantasies. That was great timing, too, because I couldn't keep a straight face much longer. Those of us not laughing uncontrollably were hunched by the door, trying to hear what ol' Mikey was up to.

Nothing. Not a sound.

We soon got tired of waiting for him to come back out and be rightfully pissed at us. The joke was on us; he wasn't making a sound. We tried knocking, then banging, but it was no use. The door was locked. Giving Mike the only key was mistake number one.

Mark had us split up, in search of some way (at three in the morning) to get into our room. We couldn't afford another, and we still had a whole weekend ahead of us. Mistake number two was having us wander off on our own. It wasn't until the next day that Mark finally rounded us all up again. Here's what happened, as near as I can recall:

*One guy was noticed puking over the second story balcony, right into someone's convertible. That someone happened to catch him, barfus interruptus, and chased him around the motel for over an hour before giving up.

* Two guys made it as far as the pool, and passed out there.

* One guy actually managed to cross the highway, which was kinda like a live version of that old game *Frogger*, no matter when you tried it. There was an all night fast food place over there, and he ended up sleeping in the grass behind it in defeat after discovering he'd left his wallet back with us.

* I passed out on the roof of our car. I don't know why, or how, I got there. At least I didn't puke in anyone's car, that I know of.

* Mark met a coed, got laid, and spent the night in her room. He was so good at seducing women that we didn't bother to be amazed at his luck anymore.

Mike, though, was the hero of story I was telling. We finally got in to see the aftermath of his first conquest the next morning. He was sprawled on top of our air filled beauty, pants at half mast, and dead to the world. We removed the doll (unlike real women, this is easier to do if you deflate them first), and made a breakfast/ aspirin run. Mike was up and around by the time we got back, regaling us with the story of his 'birthday present'. He laid it on thick, describing so many different positions that I

started to wonder if we'd let him into the wrong room and there was a tired (but apparently well satisfied) female guest in our vicinity. But, one thing was clear: He honestly thought he'd gotten laid for the first time that night.

We had some compassion (finding out Mark had, once again, managed to score in the most unlikely of places made us sympathetic with our perpetually unladen friend), and we never did let him know what had happened. Mike, if you're reading this now.... Sorry, bud. It was done with the best of intentions, after all.

In retrospect, Power School was a lot more fun than the majority of my career turned out to be. At the time, though, I almost wept with joy when I found out I'd passed my comp and was going to graduate. The staff had carefully fostered this drive to make it, even to the point that holding up our orders was used by several of the support commands to get our attention. Medical was one of the worst- the head of the Dermatology department had built his career on threatening students, until Derm was the most dreaded of all the hospital appointments one could make.

You see, somewhere along the way the command had decided that people with zits couldn't go to prototype. Since there has never been an instance of this in the fleet, or it even being hinted at in the instructions, I have to assume it was an image thing. After all, the prototypes were in the middle of civilian communities, and having class after class of the perfect nerd- glasses, pocket protector, 500-function calculator, and zits living and working around civilians was simply bad for the Navy's PR. So, if you had zits, you had to go to derm. And, if the joker at derm found out you'd been popping them (who doesn't?) he'd order you to walk around with white gloves on all the time. This sort of humiliation is usually reserved for guys they caught in boot camp whacking off, so it was generally loathed by us students. But, if you couldn't get rid of those pesky blemishes, you didn't get to graduate. Dental in Idaho had a similar scam going on (making work to justify their existence), but I'll talk about that in a while. Like I said, I was more than relieved to finally escape Orlando NTC.

Within a week of the comp, those of us who graduated were handed our orders to the next (and final) stop before the fleet: prototype. At that time there were several different prototypes you could transfer to: New York, Connecticut, and Idaho. There's always one plant that everyone wants in each class; in

mine it was Idaho Falls, Idaho. I was no exception. From day one I'd heard stories about the PI (Philippines) and Australia, and just had to see for myself. The only way to do that was to be on a West Coast boat, and the only way to get the West Coast was to go to Idaho. There were three plants at the site there, but one was closed so only a few of us could go. We ended up drawing names out of a hat, and I lucked out. So, slightly older and (questionably) wiser, I said a final goodbye to Orlando and joined the convoy of fledgling nukes on their way to Idaho Falls.

Chapter Five:
S1W: Something Isn't Working

*When we moved up from Power School
There were lots of morons who
Pushed the Navy any way they could
By pouring out their bullshit
About life on submarines
"It's just such a good deal"
I gotta see it to believe
Well, I hope when they got home at night
Their fat-assed Idahoggin' wives
Would squish 'em within inches
Of their lives...*

*We don't need no propaganda
We don't need your life control
Re-enlistment ain't the answer
Hey! D'wiggins!
Leave those squids alone*

*All in all
It's just another sig in the qual
All in all
We're just another weld in the hull*

- Another Sig in the Qual, from the EM Log

Idaho in December is one thing: COLD. I was, at first, enchanted with the snow we saw along the way there from Orlando. By the time we'd reached Pocatello, I was sick of it. I had little experience driving in that white crap, and my nerves were shot from trying not to kill us all during the trip.

Most of the students who go to prototype in Idaho live in Idaho Falls, where our support office is. We made the mistake of assuming Pocatello was the same thing, and rented an apartment there instead. It was a great little house, three bedrooms with a garage and all utilities paid for \$350 a month. The rent in my last one bedroom apartment in Orlando was around \$600/month, so I was overjoyed. Most everything around Idaho Falls is cheap (including the women) due to the lack of industry. No kidding, when you drove through the town it was like watching a Bruce Springsteen video for "Your Hometown"... everything was drying up and blowing away. In fact, the Nuclear Facility was one of the main sources of income for the town. That meant that this was one of the few cities in America where the majority of the population not only accepted, but actually appreciated, a military presence.

Out in the desert to the west of Idaho Falls is the INEL complex, short for Idaho National Engineering Laboratory. It's a vast compound with lots of nuclear power related plants, including EBR-1, the first reactor to make electric power. On the way there is Atomic City, the first city powered by nuclear power plants. All in all, a very historic place for us fledgling nukes to work. The Navy's three reactor plants, S1W, S5W and A1W are located on their own site: NPTU (Naval Prototype Training Unit). Not all the history in Idaho is triumph. You might wonder why none of the other services use nuclear power... well, back in the early sixties they did try. At EBR-2 you can see what's left of our attempt to build a nuclear bomber with nuclear powered engines. After a few early mistakes the government decided it would be cheaper to build ICBMs, so that's what they did. The army, too, experimented with nuclear reactors- they wanted a portable one they could use to power forward bases. They built a prototype called SL-1, which promptly ate itself one winter's day. The remains are still visible if you know where to look on the way in to INEL. So, nuclear power is pretty much the Navy's dominion these days.

There was a lot of history in our plant, as well as the other two. But S1W was still the first. There were some odd things in the plant which showed Rickover to be as nuclear as they come. For example, our Main Feed Pumps (huge water pumps) were appropriated from the local industry- one had started life

as a Heinz Ketchup pump. The other was from a farm water well. The clutch on our propulsion shaft was from a locomotive. Lots of other gear was liberated by the original builders as the need arose, a steam generator from a destroyer here, a controller from a cruiser there. We learned them all with a mixture of amusement and admiration. If you know a nuke long enough, you will see that no one can outdo them at improvised repairs, especially if the repair is a Liberty-Dependant Item.

There were two other plants on the Navy's little corner of the world- A1W, the prototype for the Enterprise reactor, and S5G, another prototype submarine design. Until the invention of the Float-o-Types in the early 90's (retired subs welded to a pier), S5G's claim to fame was that the whole plant was built in a floatable hull in the middle of a small dry dock. That it had never been floated in recent memory was irrelevant.

But INEL was huge. The Navy's world was about the size of a parking lot compared to some of the other facilities. They also had quite the little army guarding it. We gave the site guards shit, but the ones driving around in the desert were the real deal. It was like a living GI-Joe adventure, including these Airwolf-looking helicopters and futuristic dune buggies and snowmobiles. Nobody fucked with those guys. Having seen up close how radical the anti-nuke radicals can get, I understood why they were so equipped. To a radical, it makes perfect sense to demonstrate how unsafe nuclear power is by blowing up a plant with plastic explosives.

Like I said, the Navy support facility was located in Idaho Falls. The nearest Navy base was in Washington state, so this place had to handle all the paperwork on us. When we checked in, they were less than pleased that we'd rented a house without sitting through their training on the subject first. Having rented for the last few years, I let them know that I had a clue what I was doing, which didn't endear us much with the staff. We were eventually issued security badges and told when to report for duty.

Later, we found out why they disapproved: most of the staff at NPTU lived in Pocatello, whereas the students were supposed to live fifty miles north in Idaho Falls. We were, in fact, the only students living in Pocatello, and we found there were many advantages to doing so.

Idaho was great, probably the best single assignment I've ever had in the Navy. Sure, the hours were long, but once every three weeks you got 4 days off due to the way our shiftwork system worked.

There were always parties going on, and very little indication the navy even existed in the middle of the desert. You could live, quite comfortably, on what the navy pays there.

When I said the women were friendly, I meant it. Most nukes who marry at that age do so in Idaho, as the women are looking to get out of there with a passion. All you had to do was be able to answer a few simple questions about your plant (the local guys, catching on to this, had been cutting their hair short in an attempt get in on the action. Bet you never heard of that before! So, you had to prove you were really a squid first), and you could meet five or six new friends a night. Only, you had to be careful. Most women up that way are Mormon, with very strict parents. Check their ID first. Also, beware the common law marriage; there were about fifty different ways you could wake up and find yourself owing half of everything without ever saying "I Do".

My plant was S1W, which meant it was the first submarine prototype reactor, built by Westinghouse. This was, perhaps, the most famous of the prototypes, as it was the first navy reactor ever built. Yes, it was Rickover's baby, the plant that was built for the Nautilus. Talk about recycling, the thing was over 30 years old and still in business. After all that time, though, there were several systems which seemed to have their own distinctly anti-Navy attitude. It was never anything important, just auxiliary systems which really didn't do much, yet we needed to finish our quals. We grudgingly admitted to the plant's nickname: "Something Isn't Working".

Unless you're staff, you have to ride an INEL bus to and from the site. This is at least an hour ride each way, which means you're guaranteed 2 hours of sleep a night. Most of the staff rides the bus for that reason, too. Prototype is more or less run by guys on temporary shore duty from the fleet, so it's much more like life at sea than Power School was. The staff worked some long hours themselves, since they had to do the maintenance as well as stand watch and teach us.

There's a lot of history at S1W; on many self-prompted tours we students found all sorts of interesting features. There was the one room which had primary coolant pipes running across the top, where they used to irradiate things to see what happened. My question upon seeing this was "why are there chairs in there?", and it earned me a long stare from my staff guide. There was the room where they used to use robotics arms to chop up old reactor cores. I found the light switch for this one day and turned it

on. When my TC (the staff guy in charge of us) found out, he read me the riot act; apparently, if one of those lights burns out they have to go in and change it, and the contamination levels inside are exceedingly high. My question, "How would someone know a light was out if we never turn it on?", earned me yet another long stare.

The first few days at prototype are spent in "out hull", getting classroom style lectures on the plant and how to work safely therein. Most of the officials who came by to talk to us told us basically the same sea stories, we eventually numbered them for later reference. We were warned about guys who had dated under age women, about guys who had got caught drinking under age, and about some poor schmuck who froze to death when he ran out of gas outside town (this story always ended with "the guy had ripped up his car's carpet trying to stay warm; always have a blanket in your car when you drive"). We got our very first set of qual cards then, and I have the dubious honor of being the very first person to get one signed off in my class.

It's different working at prototype, once you get "in-hull". You get up about an hour before the bus is supposed to show up, and spend a few minutes trying to get your car to start. My room mate was an idiot, and always seemed perplexed that my little ford Escort would start in the morning, whereas his huge Cadillac never did. Little did he know that I kept an oil pan heater on mine at night, and I'd go down when I woke up and spray some "quick start" in the carb. I loved watching him glare when, after cranking his caddy for minutes with no success, mine started on the first try.

You don't want to miss the bus, since that makes you AWOL for the day. I seldom did, unless the bus schedule was screwed up. Then, one of the staff guys who was waiting with me would usually take pity and sneak me in with him in his car. But, there were guys who were kicked out of the program for simply missing the bus a few times. Its all part of learning to put up with nuclear BS. One student I knew was so bad about missing the bus that his TC had other students escort him to the bus stop each morning.

There were a lot of students attached to the plant, so you only got to stand watch a few times. Most of the qual cards were about how things worked and where they were located. The shift we worked was 12 hours a day, for seven days, followed by a few days off. Most of that twelve hours you were supposed to sit in your little desk cubicle and study for checkouts, which gets old very quickly. Every

signature on the qual card was worth an amount of points, and there was a certain amount of points per day required from each student. Once you had those, most guys would screw around for the rest of the shift.

There were the occasional 'uly' tours, where you looked for little stupid shit in the plant. This was our parody of the qual program itself; a student would ask something like "Where's the duck?", and another would reply "Above the deep pit" (where there was, in fact, a large duck-looking stain on the roof). At one time, I must have found hundreds of things like that.

Sometimes we'd go out and chase the rabbits around the plant. One time we actually caught one, but let it go when we were caught ourselves by the staff. We also caught a mouse once. No one cared about that.

Sometimes we'd hide out in the "rat's nest", the student lounge above the training rooms. Since we all carried around these huge white vinyl boards to draw stuff on during checkouts, it was only a matter of time before someone figured out how to use them for games like hangman and chess.

But, most of the time we hung out in the tiny smoking pad behind the building. As long as you were ahead on your quals, the staff guys wouldn't bother you too much. We even took the initiative to paint that worthless broom closet one day, only to get yelled at for it by the plant manager because only the civilian contractors could paint outside of the plant itself. How's this for waste, fraud and abuse: the navy had to pay to have some civilians come in and repaint the smoking area to avoid a contract violation because of us. It took those guys two days and probably cost a few thousand. More of your tax dollars at work.

The staff guys themselves used to do stuff to keep from dying of boredom. One time they staged a huge toilet tissue tossing competition, throwing rolls all over the place. There was the guy who used to sneak out and shoot at birds with a slingshot. They slipped some goldfish into the sea tank (a huge open water tank around the reactor that was used for shielding), and actually kept them alive for weeks before someone noticed. One time on the midnight shift, we were startled by a loud yell from the staff offices. Suddenly, about twenty of them burst out, playing hockey with brooms and a dip can. They raced around the training area for a few moments, then ran back into their offices. It was beautiful! The

building was silent again, as students' heads popped up like prairie dogs from their cubicles. "I *know* I didn't just see that!" was the only comment.

Another fun event was the occasional anti-terrorist drills. Security for the site was maintained by a private security force, which earned our general disdain for their appearance and attitude. These clowns always acted like big time enforcers, while they were usually overweight and slow at everything they did. Every now and then our staff guys would get to play terrorist against Security, and they normally won. The drills were amazing; one minute, you'd be quietly studying, and the next there'd be all sorts of staff guys running around waving toy guns and going crazy. We always ended up under our desks in the dark, laughing our asses off.

Idaho was also our first taste of life with NRRO. If there was ever an undisputed enemy of nukes everywhere, it's NRRO. That stands for Naval Reactors Regional Office, known as IBO (Idaho branch office) in prototype. These guys are real navy nukes, though they wear civilian clothes. Their official job is to provide independent monitoring for the plants, as a way of maintaining safety. But, Rickover established them as his own personal Gestapo; intimidating everyone from the captain on down with their presence. They wander around the plant, making little hit lists about cleanliness and such. Sometimes they check the logs, and ask the watchstanders questions. If they find anything they don't like, they can shut the plant down on the spot, so the captain will always pay close attention to them. Any complaints they have go to the CO's boss, getting him (and the rest of us) in trouble. If there's anyone you don't want to fuck up in front of, it's NRRO; being on their hitlist means you'll go to NJP within a week.

In Idaho, all we knew about them was that they walked around like Darth Vader in the beginning of *Star Wars*, and all the staff feared them. It was unnerving to look up and find one staring at you when you were supposed to be studying, and downright scary to have one walk up and ask "What are you doing?".

My first (of many) run-ins with the Gestapo was when I got caught playing hangman with my friends up in the Rat's Nest. We didn't actually get caught; hearing someone coming up the steps we quickly erased the game and replaced it with notes. But the IBO guy came up and saw that most of us were

not eating, which he didn't like. He told our TC, and he bitched us out for being up there without food in hand. It would have ended there if this weasel of an MM hadn't run back in and tattled on me. A second later, the room was shattered by a bellow of

"NEWBERRY! GET IN HERE!" from the TC.

Since I wouldn't tell him who I was playing hangman with, he heaped all sorts of unpleasantries on me. Then again, since he was a submariner, he also fucked over the little snitch worse. Perhaps that had something to do with me volunteering for subs.

Standing watch is an important event while you're trying to qualify. For one thing, it doesn't happen that often, so you want to make the most of it. You get a staff guy all to yourself for four hours, whereas the usual ratio is twenty students for every staff guy. You want to get as many signatures as possible, so you study like crazy beforehand.

While you're a UI (Under Instruction), the navy loves to run casualty drills on you, to see what you'll do. Since they don't want to actually break anything, they have creative ways of simulating problems without risking plant safety. The very first one I encountered was standing AEA (aux electrician aft, sort of a glorified nuclear gopher). Over the loudspeaker I heard: "Loss of battery airflow indication. AEA: investigate and report to maneuvering."

The staff guy looked at me: "Well, what are we going to do?"

"Uhh check the power supply?" I asked

"Where is it?"

"Uhh..."

"Follow me, dumbass" he said, darting down a ladder. We get to the power supply, and one of the fuse holders is lit. I stared at it. He stared at me. He cleared his throat impatiently.

"Looks like the fuse is blown" I said.

"How do you know?" he asked. I didn't, so unthinkingly I pulled the carriage out of the panel.

"It's empty!" I exclaimed "There's no fuse!"

"Okay, what do we do now?"

"Report it!" I yelled, happy to finally be getting something right. I ran over to the phone, and growled maneuvering.

"Maneuvering," acknowledged the EO.

"Maneuvering, AEA, I have found the problem with the battery airflow meter."

"Well?"

"Sabotage! Someone pulled the fuses out!" I exclaimed.

"Newburry!" the staff guy yelled, pulling the fuses from his shirt pocket, "They're right here!"

"The saboteur is Petty Officer Reilly..."

"GIMME THAT PHONE, YOU IDIOT!!!"

Needless to comment, my grade for the watch could have been better...

Another drill that I remember quite well was the loss of a generator casualty that I got to start myself. Long before I was even "in hull", I used to make tours of the plant to try and find where things were located. One day, a staff guy comes up and asks me if I could do him a favor. I said "Sure, I guess..."

"Stand right here," he explained, "and push down this button when I tell you to"

"Okee Dokee"

He runs off, and I'm standing by the turbine generator, feeling rather foolish. I don't have a clue what I'm doing, having only been at prototype a few weeks. He comes back, and waves at me. I nod, and push the button.

A few seconds later, the generator starts slowing down, and all the lights go out. The plant got real quiet for a moment, and a heard a lone voice from the level below began singing "Yellow Submarine" by the Beatles.

Then, all hell broke loose.

There were people running all over, yelling at each other. The guy who stood watch on the generator came over, and asked me what had happened. I told him I'd pushed this button. He asked why, naturally, and I said "Cause that Petty Officer told me to"

"Which Petty Officer?"

"That guy over... there?" I reply. The staff guy had vanished. *Oh, shit!*

"Wait right here." the watchstander said sternly. My life flashed before my eyes. I was taken to maneuvering (where they operate the plant from, I hadn't been in there before), and presented to the U/I

EOOW, who proceeded to bitch me out something fierce for tripping his generator without permission. I was good and scared, and didn't even try to explain myself. He ordered me taken to the Plant Manager's office.

I waited there for about an hour, during which my initial nervousness changed to anger. *I hadn't done anything wrong, damnit!* But, when the plant manager saw me, I was ready to explain my side. He just asked if I'd been the one who tripped the TG off. I admitted as much. He took my qual cards, and signed off the one for "Secure a TG by Tripping the Control Oil Dump", and sent me on my way. It made for a hell of a story on the smoking pad the next day!

One of those advantages to living with the staff came when it was time to do the PRT, a semi-annual physical readiness test which is not based in reality. Failing one, however, is bad news these days. The PRT for students was being held in Idaho Falls, and I asked if I could do mine with the staff in Pocatello so that I would be able to catch my bus afterwards. My TC okayed it, though if he'd thought about it more, he would have said no on the spot. I show up for the test, which was being done at a high school football field, ready to go. I got out of my car, and noticed that everyone else was still inside, keeping warm. I also notice that I'm the only one in workout clothes. Eventually, one of the staff guys comes over, and informs me that the PRT is now officially over, and we all pass. He also informs me that, under pain of dinkness, I am not to mention this to anyone. I didn't, and actually felt stupid later for even showing up in PT gear in the first place.

Another advantage was during parties. There were a lot of parties, probably because it was the first time many of these fledgling nukes had lived off base and away from mommy. And, most of them were under a lot of pressure at work, and under age- a bad combination. The cops would eventually show up at every student party and bust half the people there. This didn't endear us to the command when they found out, and several of us went to mast at first.

Then we realized we were missing the obvious- we should invite the staff guys to our parties! Then, if the cops show up, the command won't do much because then they'd have to fuck over the staff as well as the lower-that-whaleshit students. Plus, it never hurt to suck up to the guys who could sign your qual cards.

Here is another one of those examples of things sounding more impressive on paper than they really are. There were literally hundreds of signatures to get in our qual cards, and if we had to meet all the knowledge requirements for each, I'd probably still be there trying to qualify. This is made worse by the fact that there's just not enough staff around to do check outs with every student. What really ends up happening is that you study in depth for the important ones, and get the others "graped off" (signed with an easy checkout) when you can. I know, that sounds horrible, and a few staff guys got most righteously busted for doing just that. But the requirements on paper are severe and unrealistic, just so that people who see them will be impressed. There's a big difference between being "qualified" and being "good", most of which comes from experience. Prototype is more a test of whether you can qualify and can survive in an engineroom than a real qualification program to operate that plant. In fact, very few of us actually did stand watch by ourselves after we qualified for that very reason: you can't build a house with your kid's toy tool set.

After you get all the sigs on your card signed off, you start getting ready for your "board". Talk about shooting craps! All your efforts in the nuke pipeline are riding on this one checkout; if you fail, you're out. And, the board can ask you anything about the plant, in any detail, which means there's no way you can cram for it. You have to either know it or not by then.

My board came as a shock. I finished my cards off, and was told it would be a few weeks before I would get a board. I felt helpless, so I just hung out on the smoking pad and tried to think peaceful thoughts. But, the guy who was supposed to get his board that afternoon wasn't ready, and I was suddenly informed that I'd been bumped up. Honestly, I expected to fail, and so did my division LPO- he still remembered my little IBO incident and this was his payback. I went over to the bunkroom and slept a few hours.

The board is done with three staff guys asking you questions while you stand in front of them. Not many people in my class had been through one, so I had no idea what to expect. I don't recall exactly what was asked, as I was so nervous at the time. It seemed to take hours at the time, but only minutes when it was over. Finally, it was done and I was sent out in the hall to wait for my results. Lots of students came by to see how I'd done, and I kept thinking that I would be kicked out within a day. Finally, the staff guy in charge of the board comes out, with a sympathetic look on his face. He chased all the other students away, and sat down beside me.

"Don't take it so hard," he began, as I stared at my boots. "You'll just have to try harder on your next board"

"My next.. board?" I sobbed

"Yeah, when you get to your boat. You'll have to requalify there"

The truth dawns. "I passed?" I asked incredulously.

"2.95, buddy. Congrats!" he said, holding out his hand.

I shook it, then wandered off in a daze. I don't think that it really hit me until I got off the bus in Pocatello. I'd graduated... I'd qualified... I was... a *nuke!* Probably the single happiest day of my life was that day. I was told I didn't have to come back into work the next day, as the staff probably anticipated my next move: getting abysmally drunk in celebration.

Even now, after I've regretted becoming a nuke more times than Michael Jackson's gotten plastic surgery, I still look back on that day with respect. If there's anything I can say I did in my life, it was surviving that training program against all odds.

I had qualified a little earlier than most of my class, so I got a small taste of what being an electrician was really like. The staff electricians put me to work fixing the sound powered phones around the plant. Before deciding on the relative difficulty of this, and if an idiot like me was capable of such, they could have mentioned that the phone system had never, and would never ever work properly at S1W. Nobody knows why. It took me about a week to discover for myself the reason for the general distain with which every staff member viewed our communications system. By Friday afternoon I was a beaten man. The only thing I had successfully fixed was a pencil sharpener which just happened to be in the same area as one of the phone stations. I was beyond frustration with the whole job. My sea dad just sort of nodded, and let me go home.

But, despite the sound powered phone fiasco, those last six weeks were a holiday compared to the rest of the nuclear pipeline. I got to stand some watches by myself, and even some with a U/I with ME as the real watchstander. That did wonders for my ego and serious damage to my confidence- I was scared to death I would screw up on watch and get disqualified. Compensating this was the occasional staff-like treatment I got; like being told ahead of time what drills were coming up. Getting to go to staff training, and hang out in the E-Div office between watches... things I would soon despise at sea were back then unique enough to make me feel like I was getting somewhere in seniority.

Seniority is very important to the average sailor, because it's about the only award you get for doing your time and, more importantly, doing your job. Most civilians make the mistake of assuming that this is tied unquestionably to rank, and that's only true in the most basic sense. Sure, when you compare an O-6 to an E-1, it looks like rank is its own reward. But, what happens when you compare an E4 to an E5? As far as pay goes, there's only about \$50 bucks a month different. In the submarine world, they will most likely live, eat, and work in the same place. So the Navy's unofficial system to reward those who deserve it is the seniority system.

When you're in boot camp, seniority is what week you're on. Those closer to graduation are senior to the RIFs, the new guys, and get a few more breaks from the CCs. In school, staff guys have all sorts of advantages compared to the students- better barracks, better hours, and even little shit like having reserved parking. Senior classes get to look down on junior classes. That's how it goes.

When I was nearing the end of my nuke training, seniority was in the badges. Pink nametags for students, blue for qualified students, and yellow for staff. Getting that blue badge was like a 'get out of bullshit free' card- the staff treated you like you belonged. Like you served some sort of purpose. And, to feed that grudging amount of acceptance, those of us who qualified early went out for every job they'd trust us with. Maybe that's why qualifying was such a big deal.

By the time I had donned my hard-won blue nametag I already knew I was picked up for subs. Only about 10% of my class was. I think around half of us volunteered back when we first got to prototype, but the CVN Lincoln was about to be commissioned and was sucking up nukes like a Hoover vacuum. Most of my class went surface because of the Lincoln and other near-completion carriers.

Three months into the program we were told who was accepted for subs. I was sort of surprised to get picked up, since my grades were less than perfect and my attitude wasn't as enthusiastic as most of my fellow students. Who knows how I got it... maybe it's random. But, I was honored nonetheless to be invited into the elite of the elite.

Sure, that's how I saw it then. Submarines had always interested me as a kid. I remember my grandfather, who was an MM in world war II, taking me on a tour of the USS Cod, a vintage diesel sub in an Ohio museum. There was something about it, some mystique, which I recognized even then. I saw a few other subs growing up, but my real interest came from a video game.

When I was about 13, I became really hooked on computers. Even now, I am still just as addicted as ever. I just kinda fits the geek persona that leads one into the nuclear field... Anyways, one of my favorite games when I was young was Sid Meir's "Silent Service", in which you played the CO of a WW-2 submarine. It was much more interesting than the typical shoot-em-up games that were out then; you had to plan each attack carefully, trying to anticipate what the enemy was doing while taking into account your own boat's limitations. I played that game for months straight.

In the quest of higher scores I began reading books on submarines in WW2 and their tactics. The more I read the more fascinating it was. Even today, submariners look back to that time as the glory years, when submarines first came into their own. I must have read fifty or more books growing up written by the men who fought in those slow, clunky diesel subs.

Now, my reasons for joining the Navy were not related to wanting to be on a sub- I remember thinking at that time that I wouldn't qualify even if I volunteered. Even when I filled out the forms in prototype, I was less than hopeful. Being a nuke and getting subs was like winning a double lottery for me then. Most of the staff I'd met in Power School and Prototype were submariners, and they too were a powerful motivation to want to join their club. The only things I heard from them were the sea stories- the ports they'd seen, the jokes they'd played, the danger they'd faced and survived. Of course, I realize now why I didn't hear much negative feedback on the conditions I'd find on a sub: these jokers were on shore duty. They were happy because they weren't anywhere near a sub. It makes me wonder if former prison convicts ever get together and reminisce about their fond memories, too. Most likely.

When I said my attitude was less than optimal, I don't mean I didn't want to succeed in school. Quite the opposite. The program wasn't near as challenging as I'd been led to believe, at least mentally. The real reason I think so many people drop out is that they can't handle the pressure, or the scrutiny to which nukes are subject to. The actual material is just about spoon-fed to you until you're in prototype. In my case, that was the real problem.

You see, once I realized I wasn't quite the retard I'd always assumed, I got a little contemptuous of the whole situation. My Section Advisor's remark in A School about my cockiness was due in no small amount to this. In prototype most of my problems came from following the staff guy's example a little

too close. I hadn't realized then that they earned the right to screw around, while I had yet to. This bit me right in the ass a few times.

Before we transferred from prototype for good I got to try my hand at some PMS. That's Preventive Maintenance System, about half of what every engineering division spends its time doing. Some of it is downright stupid (The quartermasters have a PM to sharpen pencils- I've seen it and gagged), and some really tests your skills. All of it is designed to keep the equipment from breaking down when you least expect it. And, naturally, the equipment will then find some other reason to go tits up just to spite you. PMS is very political in the Navy, and with nukes in particular; saying you completed a PMS item without actually doing so is one of those unforgivable sins, like spitting on the flag or selling dope.

The first PMS item I ever did was an inspection on the Emergency Propulsion motor at prototype. This is a huge DC motor whose purpose is to move the boat without using steam. And, in the S1W hull, it's a real bitch to get to. The staff guys wisely paired me with one of their own, such that I was more along to hand him tools and nod knowingly whenever I could.

Since this is a huge motor, as I said, you don't want to drop anything in it. The staff guy with me showed me a trick to avoid doing so- he tied all the wrenches to his wrist with string before he leaned down into the top access cover with a flashlight. His whole upper body was inside the motor, so I couldn't see too much of what he was doing. I was crammed between two lube oil pipes, trying to follow what we were supposed to be doing on the PMS card when I heard a loud WHAAG! and a muffled "goddamned sonofawhore!".

I asked "What? What?" several times before I heard anything besides cursing come out of the motor casing.

"I dropped the wrench" he finally said.

"So?" I asked "Just pull it back up"

"I can't, you dick stain" he cursed "It's stuck on something"

"Can I help?" I said, peering down into the dark cavern of the EPM. His head turned slightly, and he stared at me with one sweat drenched eye.

"Go get Tom" he said "And don't you dare tell anyone why"

"Okay" I said, squirming out from on top of the shaft. I found the other staff guy easy enough, but he wouldn't come without hearing why first. He was in the middle of a cigarette, after all, and I could understand that.

When I told him, swearing him to secrecy first, I could see it was a lost cause. There was a glint in his eye I only saw right before he and the rest of the electricians did something particularly vile to the ETs. I went back to the EPM, and found the electrician was jerking the hand with the wrench attached back and forth violently in desperation, his legs twitching with the effort. Most of his body was now inside the cover, and there was a nonstop stream of epitaphs rattling out. He calmed somewhat when I told him the cavalry was on the way. I also avoided his repeated inquiry as to whether anyone knew he was stuck.

He found out for himself a few minutes later when most of the E-Div guys on our shift showed up with a camera and a grease gun.

In respect for that poor guy, I won't go into the details of what followed. It's something you have to be on a sub to really appreciate. But let me say that the other staff guys were kind enough to let me get on the bus for home before they got him free of the EPM. The next day they sent me over to ProPhase, more so I could keep a low profile and avoid retribution of a certain spiteful electrician than anything else.

ProPhase is a little class they ran for early qualifiers like myself from all the plants. We were taught some basic hands-on maintenance, like soldering and changing bearings. We also got to hear hours of new sea stories about the Navy supply system. That's what made the course valuable in my opinion- how to get parts from people who's job it is not to give them to you.

I did have fun with the bearing changeout lesson. For those of you lucky enough to have never done this, you have to heat the replacement bearing before it will slide onto the motor shaft. In a classroom it's fairly easy to get it from the oven to the motor before it shrinks too much. On the boat, it took on the aspects of an Olympic event- you had to grab the bearing from an oven in the galley and run like crazy to wherever the rest of the motor was, dodging cranks, nubs, stressed out officers, and other obstacles.

Well, my team was pretty good at it in ProPhase. We got the motor taken apart and the old bearing pulled in record time. My partner even conned our "supply" PO out of a new one in less than an hour (The staff guy was simulating an SK to the hilt- he was smoking a cigarette and watching a movie when we found him).

We got the bearing heated up and it slid on like it was buttered. The instructor was impressed. We were feeling like studs. Then, an MM instructor from the ELT class next door wandered in, and started watching us put it back together.

"Hey, what's this?" he asked, holding up a piece of gray metal.

"The bearing shroud" my partner answered. I don't know what it's really called, but the MM probably didn't either, so that sounded okay.

"Doesn't it go on the motor?" persisted the MM

"Yeah", I said, taking it from him "I goes right here... aw, fuck!". It did indeed go on the motor, under the bearing. We forgot to put it on before putting the new bearing on, and now there was no way to make it fit. The machinist mate walked back out, smirking. I looked at my partner, he looked at me, and we both looked at the instructor. He just shook his head and wandered off.

So, we had to do it all over, and were the last ones home. But, with nukes, that's how to do business- do it until it's done, no exceptions.

Like the derm power trip in Orlando, the Navy dental detachment in Idaho (a trailer in the middle of nowhere) had some influence with us soon-to-graduated nukes. Before they'd sign you off, they wanted to yank a few teeth. Not just any teeth: the ones furthest in the back, and the hardest to get to. For no reason.

Well, that's not exactly true. They had a reason: if you're going to a submarine, you can't have wisdom teeth. When I asked why, the dental tech working the desk said that, due to the pressures subs worked at, wisdom teeth had a tendency to explode. She wasn't exactly sure why that was, or why the other teeth didn't, but she knew those puppies had to get yanked before I could transfer.

I only had two, but they were in perfectly and I'd never had a problem with them. The dentist didn't mind; in fact, he was actually glad to hear so, as it made them easier for him to remove. Not wanting to hold up my transfer, I grudgingly submitted. It was the stupidest thing I'd ever done to my body.

He went ahead and yanked them, and I was in misery for a week afterwards. I don't want to create the wrong impression; Navy dentists are about the best in the world. They are far better, and faster, at stuff like this than the civilian ones I've been to. But that doesn't stop it from hurting, and I was still short two teeth for no particular reason.

We have dental exams once a year, whether anything hurts or not. And, every year since then, the dentist has wanted to yank my last two wisdom teeth. My other two never did come in, probably out of fear after seeing what happened to their brothers. But all the strange and weird things they keep warning me will happen if I leave them in have yet to occur. Every year they try, and every year I refuse. Once, they even tried threatening me with dental class four (meaning I couldn't go to sea until I had them pulled), but they'd waited too long with that one. By then I was pretty happy with the idea of not going to sea and took it more like a potential favor than a threat. I think, after eight similar attempts, they're finally realizing they're never going to get to yank them.

The reason they feel the need to yank wisdom teeth is that a sub doesn't have much more in the way of medical and dental equipment than the first aid kit under the dash in your car does. If your teeth act up while at sea, there's not a lot they can do about it. You would think, with this line of reasoning, they'd also want to yank out your appendix and tonsils too, but it's just the teeth that worry them.

Maybe that's why they try to get all these body parts when you're still a student; afterwards you're likely to be so frustrated the Navy and with life in general that only the highest authority makes any impression on you. While you're a student, you're impressed by everyone. The very first time I ever got in trouble in the Navy was the day I stopped being a student, and coincidentally stopped kissing everyone's ass.

Chapter Six:

Captain's Mast and Beyond

*We'd like to hear a little bit about why you're not qual'd
We'd like to hope you'd learn this shit yourself
Look around you; all you see is qualifying guys
Just roam around the boat, there's tons that you don't*

know

*Cards are in a hiding place where Danny never goes
Looks like Dan's a little slow on the uptake
It's not a secret, all the sigs that just aren't there
And you think Senior's going to hide it from the Eng...*

*Standing by the wardroom in your brand-new jumper whites
Your Captain's Mast, today's the date
Whine about it, bitch about it, if you're in the mood
But it's too late for you, YOU'RE SCREWED*

-Danny Robinson, from the EM Log

It was during prophase that I finally got my orders. This was an important moment I'd long anticipated: My first ship assignment. Most of the other guys in my class (even some of those not qualified yet) already knew where they were going. With less than a month until graduation, I was getting nervous. After bugging my TC for a few days, he gave me a number for admin I could call and check. They actually had them, but hadn't forwarded them for some bureaucratic reason or another. They were, however, very interested in getting my household possessions and car packed up as soon as possible. After living on my own for a while, I did have some possessions to ship, but I remembered what my dad had told me about his first ship: If you've got more than a seabag's worth of stuff, leave it behind 'cause there won't be room. So I made arraignments to sell or give away most of my stuff, and planned to leave the car with my folks in Seattle. I had two seabags left to my name when I drove out of Idaho that summer. Admin didn't have to ship anything, just cough up the plane tickets.

You see, I was bound for famous Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, to do a three year tour on the USS Olympia. I considered that good luck, because The Oly was in the only picture of a sub I'd seen in our plant. Of course, the fact that it was the only picture, period, hanging in the repair & maintenance office should have clued me in what it's claim to fame really was. If the guys in charge of keeping a forty year old prototype running describe your future boat as "a worthless broke-dick piece of shit", you should stop and consider the ramifications, right then and there.

The only thing I knew about Hawaii was the name Pearl Harbor, so I asked around in the office. Most of the descriptions began with a sad look and a pitying pat on the back. This was yet another piece of information I selectively overlooked. I had requested a fast attack, out of San Diego, as my first choice. Hawaii was my second choice. I asked for a fast attack because most of my instructors (and their sea stories) were from fast attacks, and in their opinion a ballistic missile boat submariner (a 'boomer fag') was only marginally better than a skimmer (a 'surface puke'). I might have also been partially influenced to ask for a fast attack by Mr. Clancy's books, even though these too were generally sneered at by our sea-returnee instructors.

I asked for the west coast because of my overall determination to see Australia and live the adventure. To me, Hawaii wasn't any worse than San Diego- better, as it seemed closer on the map. Besides, had

I gone to the boat I wanted in the first place in San Diego, I would have ended up in Hawaii anyways when they started consolidating the attack boats in Pearl a year later.

To say I was enthused about my career and the Navy at this point would be an understatement. After less than two years I'd been promoted to Petty Officer, earned one of the toughest NEC's (the nuclear trained 3354), and was on my way to a 688 class fast attack submarine. I never in my wildest dreams thought I'd reach even half of those goals. There was little hesitation in my next move: Star.

STAR stands for Selected Training and Retention. It's a special reenlistment deal made only for sailors in hard-to-get ratings on their first tour. What it basically does is give you an automatic promotion to second class petty officer, a guaranteed 'C' school (advanced training in your job) and a few thousand bucks in exchange for six more years of your life. Had I known just how much STAR's are resented in the fleet, I might have reconsidered.

The main reason is the auto-promotion. The Navy can only advance so many people per year to second class billets, and the STAR's take first priority on them. That means the third classes trying to get promoted by the normal system have a much harder time winning the few remaining billets. They naturally resent STARs. The 1st and 2nd class nukes dislike them because they dislike anyone who reenlists, as well as anyone who got promoted the easy way.

My staff buddies sort of warned me this was the situation when I brought them the request paperwork, but they couldn't tell me the whole story. For one, they were on shore duty & thus tended to remember only the good times they'd had, and for another, they were instructors. Naval instructors are carefully screened, so that those with possible 'bad attitudes' are not given the chance to negatively influence us gullible students. I know about that because I too am a qualified instructor and saw first hand the screening requirements.

So I put in the paperwork, and waited for graduation to actually reenlist. And, started deciding what to do with all the bucks I'd soon be receiving. In addition to the five thousand from reenlisting, I also had a couple of month's advance pay to help me relocate, and my enlistment bonus. That is what seems to annoy non-nukes about us the most when they hear of it: all nukes get around four thousand dollars just for making it through the program. I don't think I ever considered it either an incentive, or

compensation, for all the crap we went through on our journey down the pipeline. But, it was a nice extra to look forward to on graduation day.

As you can imagine, those last few days for us was a lot like the last days of High School had been two years before. We screwed around a lot and generally strutted all over the site like we owned it. Aside from a small cafeteria and a weight room, there was nothing in the way of entertainment to be had, unless you made it yourself. Non-plant books weren't allowed unless you were on the bus; the same went for walkmen and portable computers & video games. So, the only cure for boredom was to wander around our little site, sightseeing.

The last day started off great. We showed up at the plant, did some last minute paperwork, and then wandered around until lunch comparing our transfer destinations. The busses only ran every four hours, so we expected to be at the site until four p.m. at the least. Our staff pals got tired of having us hyper ex-students under foot, and decided to sneak us out at lunch.

The first we heard of this was while we were goofing around in the cafeteria, and one of the MM's quietly passed the word. We sprinted back to the plant, with about ten minutes to empty our lockers and get on a bus. Since I had got rid of all my school related (i.e., classified) material the week before, I just jammed the contents of my locker into my gym bag and ran. I didn't want to hang around a minute longer than necessary.

But, in my haste, I had made a small mistake, and ended up staying at the site until eight o'clock for it. It all began as we were going through the security checkpoint.

Naturally, the bored security forces we had went to extreme lengths at the entry and exit points. There was an x-ray/visual search of your stuff, as well as a metal detector, a radiation detector (lest we take our work home with us) and a security card scanner. I was in a rush, like everyone else, and was rather annoyed when security started searching through everyone's stuff ahead of me. I tossed my bag on the x-ray machine and muttered hasty prayers while the sound of busses starting up drifted into the room. "Is this confidential material?" I heard one of the guards ask her supervisor. I looked around, wondering who'd be so retarded as to try and sneak a...

"This your bag, son?" the supervisor asked me, holding up the guilty package. My heart sank. It was.

"Yes sir," I said, now positive I wouldn't make the bus. He grabbed the bag and myself, and took both into an adjacent office room.

"Why you have this in your bag?" He began, holding up a blank Water Break qual card. I was immediately relieved; it wasn't a handout or anything with actual data on it; the card was just a bunch of requirements to get signed off during quals. The water break was just that- a fancy paddlewheel on the end of the propulsion shaft to simulate pushing a sub through the water. Nothing important.

"I guess I forgot to put it in the shred bag last week, and I was in a hurry to pack up my locker." I explained, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean any harm."

He stared at me sternly. "You're sorry, huh?" he mocked, "let's see what your plant manager has to say" he said as he dialed the phone. Having had my parents called by the principle a few times while I was in school, I was a little amused to find myself back in a similar situation. While this guy was only doing his job (if a little too enthusiastically), I was sure my boss would tell him it was nothing and to let me go. They talked on the phone a few minutes, and the guard seemed a tad disappointed to report it wasn't nuclear bomb blueprints he'd intercepted, but a meaningless little qual card. He finally hung up, and decided to lecture me himself since the staff guy he'd talked to didn't seem to think it was as criminal as he did.

Now, I had done wrong, and did feel bad for screwing up. I couldn't have been through the nuclear pipeline without picking up this behavior trait to some degree or another. If you make a mistake, honest or not, you automatically felt bad about it. But this guy was laying it on thick. And he wasn't even in the military; he was just a gate guard earning minimum wage. I got tired of apologizing quickly.

Finally, I had reached my limit "Look, dude!" I said hotly "Just chill out! It wasn't a tech manual; it was a blank card, and I sure didn't try to take it out on purpose like you think."

His face turned red; one of the few times I've actually seen this phenomena first hand.

"Dude!?! Dude!?! Does this look like a 'dude' to you, mister?" he spat, thrusting his collar device at me.

While he was wearing lieutenant bars, that sure didn't make him a Navy officer.

"No," I shot back "It looks like a fucking rent-a-cop!"

Had I kept my cool, and swallowed a little pride, I probably could have got out of there in a few minutes. There was no way now; he wasn't going to let a lowly student get away with insulting him like that. He hauled me down to the plant manager's office, and ranted a bit behind closed doors. He left with a smug look, once his sense of self-importance was reassured.

I sat there for about an hour before the plant manager called me in. The guy was a civilian himself, and usually relied on our staff instructors to deal with our behavior. Mine were unfortunately long gone by this time. We talked for a bit about what happened, then he sent me back out to wait some more. His secretary eventually sent me home, with orders to report to the admin building the next morning. I was being written up.

Talk about nightmares coming true! Having lived around the Navy my whole life, I had never even considered that someday I might be put on report. That was for non-motivated criminal types, guys who smoked pot and went AWOL. How they could make so much out of an honest mistake was beyond me. I hoped this was all a big misunderstanding somehow.

So I got on a bus that night, walking sullenly past the smug guard and his accomplices, like a whipped puppy. My life was over. If I went to mast I knew I'd be de-nuked; they'd done it for much pettier reasons to some of my classmates in Power School. That would mean the last two years of my life were wasted, after all. I wasn't going to my submarine, I was probably going to end up a striker on a crappy little minesweeper in the Indian ocean.

As soon as I got home, I called my TC, since he was the closest thing to a boss I had. He already knew, of course, but let me snivel a bit before telling me so. He promised to look into it while I was at admin, which was reassuring. I may not have been the best, or brightest, but got the impression from him that I had a chance to make it in the fleet. I hoped he'd let someone know I wasn't a terrorist dirtball like they were thinking. Other than that, and treating myself to a good bout of self pity, I didn't do too much else that night.

Captain's mast, for the non-military pukes among you, is the nickname for Non-Judicial Punishment. You see, while the Navy's rather weak in the 'positive reinforcement' department, over the years they've refined 'negative reinforcement' to an art form. On the lowest level is your 'attaboys' (for good work) and 'aw shits' (for screwing up). These are meted out by your immediate supervisor, da' Chief. The

navy's official program at this level is based on 'counseling chits'. Every time the boss sits you down to let know how you're doing, he's supposed to fill one out to document it. In my career, I've only had one good one. While I have frequently been a bad little boy, that isn't the reason. The chief has so much to worry about that he usually finds other ways to let you know you've been a stud monkey. My good one was done as a joke by an LPO I had on shore duty, by the way, and it was promptly shitcanned. You might expect that negative counseling chits are abundant, but this hasn't been my experience, either. And, it's for the same reason- the chief doesn't have time to do it. If you're late, or don't shave, or something else along those lines he'll usually just yell at ya and give you more work to do. There is an official program for that, too: EMI. That stands for Extra Military Instruction, and it's not supposed to be a punishment (in theory). But, if you piss off a chief enough for him to go through all the trouble to fill one out on you, you better believe it isn't going to be eating ice cream and watching a movie. EMI is normally some sort of humiliating work; if your uniform's a mess, you might end up inspecting everyone as they came to work that day. If you're late, the EMI might be to do extra work to make up the time. You get the picture.

The next level up (on the badness meter) was Captain's Mast, the dreaded NJP. It's called non-judicial because the CO acts as judge, jury, and executioner. After that is the various forms of Court-Martial, which bears some resemblance to a real trial. If you've seen *A Few Good Grunts* or *The Caine Mutiny*, you've seen what those look like. However, did you notice that the defense lawyers in both movies were told specifically what they could, and could not ask of the witnesses? That's real, and why military and justice are not always synonymous. Then again, they're fast and usually fair, so there may be a point to doing business that way.

As far as careers go, though, NJP was plenty bad. Depending on his mood, the CO can do all sorts of nasty things, including reducing you in rate, restricting you, taking away your pay, de-nuking and de-submarining you, or all of the above. He can also just pass it along to a Court-Martial.

Sometimes, a sailor can make this last option work for him. While you're on shore duty, you can request a court-martial instead of captain's mast at any time. When two of my friends in prototype were accused of selling drugs, that's exactly what they did.

What they told me sounded too ridiculous to be anything other than true. It seems one of their old roommates from Power School, who had flunked out and was since sent at sea, had popped positive

on a drug test. In those days, before Tailhook, drug use was the big no-no. (They go in cycles- first it was discrimination, then drug use, then sexual harassment, and now it's harassment of any kind. You can always tell what the latest taboo is when the CO re-writes the CNO's latest policy sheet and reads it to the command). And, now that Mr. Dropout was going out the hard way, he decided to try and cut a deal. He told NIS (military secret police) that my friends had been his 'source' all along.

Now, the NIS would have been fools, to say the least, if they let a possibility like that slip by unchecked (and, after the Walker fiasco, they couldn't afford to anyways). But they seemed determined to rack up a kill at any expense. They spent a few weeks covertly watching the suspects' home, and were convinced after seeing one of our four-off parties there that they'd managed to crack the Columbian's main link to the Navy. They started rounding up everyone who had been at the party, until they found out half of them were staff. Then they just grilled my pals. One of their pieces of 'evidence' was the fact the suspects been seen shooting off fireworks one night, for no reason, and that with some drugs fireworks might be just the thing to sit and watch while you're wasted. Never mind that repeated drug testing came up negative; the NIS had their criminals. I wonder what they would have thought when, only a month later, my whole shift snuck up to the roof of our five-story high plant building to watch the 4th of July fireworks in Idaho Falls.

Anyways, NIS turned all the evidence they'd gathered to our CO, who promptly ordered the suspects written up. Had they gone to mast, with no lawyers and no jury, the CO could have ended their careers then and there. But these guys were fed up with all the abuse (they were temporarily removed from the plant, which was quite a setback for a student) and demanded a court martial. That made the command take another look at the accusations, since a CM is a major deal. They grudgingly concluded they might be a tad hasty, and dropped all the charges. Other sailors facing captain's mast for bullshit reasons have had similar success, though it's a crap shoot at best if you're no-shit guilty. If the command calls your bluff, and you get convicted by a CM, you're going to be a felon for the rest of your life.

Okay, back to my own trial. With a captain's mast, there are three 'rounds' to face in the game. The first is an interview with the investigating officer. His job, officially, is to investigate the charges and decide if they're valid. Since most of the captains mast's are ordered by the CO himself, though, you can imagine how often the investigating officer's opinion ever gets someone off the hook. That's round

one. In real life, the investigating officer is a chief who just makes sure all the paperwork's in order, and that they've charged you with the right violations of the UCMJ. Several of the articles of the UCMJ are vague enough that it doesn't really matter; if you're guilty of Conduct Unbecoming, you're probably also guilty of Violating a Direct Order and Dereliction of Duty. It's all just a paperwork drill.

When I got to admin the next day, the master chief in charge of the place (the same one doing my reenlistment paperwork, by some coincidence) was waiting. He read me my rights, mentioned court martial enough times to have me near fainting, and did lots of other paperwork I'd only seen in police movies. I knew that I was guilty, and let my guilt show at every opportunity, especially when filling out my statement. He left me to stew in an office for a while, and went to arrange round two.

Next up was XOI, which stands for XO's Interview. Officially, the CO wasn't supposed to know about the case until after the XO reviewed it and decided it was worthy of his attention. After a break for a reality check, you'll see the real XOI outcome is usually determined when he and the CO decide your fate at the start. He knows whether or not he's forwarding it before you walk in- the CO's already told him what to do. The only exception could be if he was going to dismiss it, and you said something to piss him off so he forwarded it of his own volition. This would not be a concern for me; I was willing to submit to keelhauling under the plant if they wanted to by that point.

Unbeknownst to me, the real CO was on leave, so the XO was playing CO and some warrant officer (a rank somewhere between chief and officer) was playing XO. I'd never met either and didn't know the difference. The master chief escorted me into XOI, and since he didn't seem too upset I had a fragile shard of hope someone had realized I wasn't a dirtball. No such luck.

The acting XO chewed me out something fierce. It wasn't an interview, it was just him yelling.

Towards the end he assured me my career was over, my life was over, and that he was going to recommend I be charged with Treason and Attempted Espionage. Then he all but threw me out in the hall. Now what little self control I had vanished, and dark, icy fear crept into my heart for the first time. I swear by all that's holy if I ever feel that low again I'm going to shoot my worthless self on the spot. Had I been more aware of my surroundings, I might have noticed sooner the master chief hadn't come back out yet, and that the XO was still yelling. When I finally did notice, it sounded like the XO was chewing out the master chief for having allowed a loser like me to almost graduate in the first place. I

slunk back to his office, and did some more well-earned sniveling. I considered briefly why I'd yet to see my TC from work, but assumed it didn't matter.

When the master chief returned, he looked pissed. I feared for my very life, having never seen an angry master chief, before or since. He slammed around the office a bit before he saw me, and when he finally did he took me outside to the smoking pad. I was too nervous to smoke, equating it subconsciously with the fabled 'last cigarette'. He puffed enough for both of us, but didn't talk for the first two smokes.

"Catch the bus home" he said at last, looking outside with his back to me "and be at the SUPGRU at eight tomorrow morning". SUPGRU was the support group in Idaho Falls, where I was supposed to have been with my class that day to get my orders and separate. "And," he continued "Bring a set of whites; you're going to Captain's Mast after you get there".

I paled slightly, but was so strung out by then it couldn't evoke much more dread or self-loathing from me. I just gulped and nodded. Then, he did surprise me:

"And don't forget to bring a set with a second class crow for your reenlistment" he said, so matter-of-factly that my first thought was he had mistaken me for someone else.

"How can I" I blurted "I'm going to mast! I can't reenlist with NJP on my record!"

He turned around, stared at me for a moment like the ghost of the ancient mariner himself, and just walked away.

If the previous night had been hard, the night before my captain's mast was simply unbearable. All I can say is that, unless you've waited for sentencing in jail, or for a loved one to come out of life-threatening surgery, you'll never understand how it feels. I got my uniform ready, but it was more mechanical activity than anything else. I didn't sew on a new crow; I guessed that the master chief was simply being more optimistic than he should have been after the scene in XOI.

Then I just chain-smoked the night away. I thought about getting drunk, but I was already feeling like a dirtball; with my luck I'd get picked up for underage drinking as well. No, as I saw it, I was better off to sit quietly at home, and not think too much.

The next morning I got to the SUGRU building an hour ahead of schedule, and spent my time in a hallway. None of the overrated secretaries on duty seemed to know me, or why I was there, and I sure

wasn't going to volunteer a confession for their amusement. I decided to play it low key, and was looking for a good hiding place when I ran into another student from the plant I knew. It made me feel more comfortable in the officious atmosphere that was SUPGRU to see someone else from the 'real' world.

I had formed almost no opinion about the student officers, other than that they were just trainees like us. They were friendly and didn't act all standoffish like 'real' officers; they hung out with us a lot and did the same things we did. So, when I saw an ensign I knew, it didn't seem in the least bit improper for me to go over and shoot the shit for a while. But, upon closer inspection, he looked even more depressed than me. The civilians had him sorting their paperwork at a card table, which made me feel sorry for him for no specific reason. Maybe it was that, if he was so depressed as to do menial crap like that for civilians, he must be in worse straits than I.

We shot the shit for awhile; it turned out he had failed his last board and was being thrown out of the program. Having seen what they expected from officer students (and knowing I could never memorize that much information in twenty years), it seemed unfair to fail any of them so highhandedly after all they'd been through. What really pissed me off was that he was still sorting those fucking flyers, and that the civvies were taking full advantage of his despondency. I finally just about yanked them from him, and told him he shouldn't have to do crap like that just to feel useful. That just made him sadder, however; I was unintentionally criticizing him for not acting like a supervisor. It's something senior officers are always harping on them about. I didn't learn that until I got to the fleet, though, so I didn't know what I'd done wrong. He just walked away without saying much. I had started to go after him when a staff guy grabbed me. He told me he was going to drive me to the site for my mast. My own problems came back full force, and I meekly followed him to the sedan.

This guy wasn't depressed, no sir. He talked the whole way. In an odd twist of fate, it turned out he was something of a celebrity at our plant- he was the instructor who'd dared to say some of our quals were meaningless. I wasn't there, but from the story floating around he'd walked into the student study area one day, and announced loudly that "the following sigs are bullshit", and that he'd sign them off now if you didn't already have them. The students there at the time thought he was joking, until he actually did start signing them off. This went on for a few minutes before the TC pulled him into an office.

Once a story like that circulates, you know someone's going to get busted. One of the sacred hypocrisies in any Navy school is that no instructor shall *ever* criticize the curriculum in front of students, no exceptions. The fact that the Gestapo (IBO) also got wind of it just brought the impending doom into greater focus; ass would definitely be chewed now.

But, from what he said, all they did was send him over to the SUPGRU to await transfer back to the fleet. They did take him to mast, but told him beforehand that if he would just apologize the CO was willing to dismiss that charges. Staff guys are real nukes, in short supply at any plant, and he was one of the more senior ones. He refused, and was mast'ed with a suspended bust.

I took some comfort from his brazenness, but he was a sea returnee, while I was a nobody. But then he let slip the ultimate world-rocker: he knew I wasn't going to get busted; he was supposed to have me back before noon so I could reenlist and transfer to my next command. I stared out the window, my mind stormy with the implication of this. First off, he knew, which meant other people also knew, that I wasn't going to be tried for treason or even de-nuked. That was along the lines of saying "Yes, Virginia, there's no Santa Claus"; my tried and true belief in the good intentions of the Navy was utterly ruined. I had just taken on faith what we were taught about NJP, that everything happened like it said in the book. That the CO didn't even know who I was until the XO forwarded me from XO1. That I was getting a fair and impartial trial.

My next thought was that it felt an awful lot like a setup, an act which was done specifically to scare me as much as possible. As I vividly remembered my sleepless night I started to get a little angry; some at the command for doing it, but more at myself for being suckered.

Then, while we continued to drive through the endless Idaho desert, and the staff guy continued to chatter away, I realized that the main feeling coursing through me was relief. I was still a nuke, would still get my sub, and that I would soon be a second class. But, in my heart, I never really forgave the Navy for that little two day joyride with my soul.

Later on, when more of the staff from S1W made it to Pearl, I got the rest of the story behind my brief stint as a suspected traitor. It turns out that NIS (the Navy's version of secret police, remember?) had recently caught a student at another plant smuggling out whole textbooks. This guy was no more a spy than I was; he just had a bone to pick with the rent-a-cops out at the site. He wanted to prove he was smarter than they were, so he made a game out of smuggling out various and sundry classified books.

Rickover made everything related to naval nuclear power at least a confidential-level security classification, so just about any paper in the plant (short of the toilet variety) was stamped 'confidential'. Most of it was so outdated that even the cheesiest third world country has better information. The guy wasn't risking our nation's secrets, really, he was just being an idiot.

That's how NIS found him, by the way. He'd managed to get a complete set of tech manuals out, but no one in his class believed it. So, he started showing them to guys over at his house. Word spread, and the ever-diligent NIS jumped on him with both feet. Seeing's how he was sitting in the bottom of a very narrow barrel, they didn't even bother shooting the fish that time.

So, the CO (to who's career the real damage was done) and the Security Farce (who where looking rather like Deputy Dawg) promised swift and terrible retribution on the next idiot they caught trying to slip one over on them. Three guesses who just happened to be that idiot, and the first two don't count. I also learned later that the master chief (and lots of staff guys who knew me) had already figured out I wasn't trying the same stunt; I really was just a moron without hostile intent. They decided that taking me to XO should scare me enough to keep me from any other fuckups like this one in the future. The only flaw in the plan was the (acting) XO.

He was supposed to dismiss my case, but must have thought I wasn't scared enough yet, so he kicked it upstairs. That's why the master chief was arguing with him right afterwards. Another thing in my favor was that very few guys in my class were reenlisting; if they busted me they'd lose me as a point towards their silver anchor award (see how those quota systems keep popping up when we talk about personnel manning?). I also heard the real XO had a piece of the acting XO's ass for his impromptu performance, but I never found out for sure. If the real CO (with the embarrassment from the first guy undoubtedly still fresh in his mind) hadn't been on leave I might have been busted anyways. I'll never know.

The third act was the only one left: the actual mast. It would remind most people of one of those 'secret society' things; the CO sits behind a table covered with a green felt tablecloth. All the officers and chiefs who are involved stand on either side, looking solemn. The accused stands at attention in front of the table, so scared you couldn't pull a pin out of his ass with a tractor. The door is shut, and a ceremonial guard is stationed outside. Then the CO tells you what he's going to do to you.

If you happen to know in advance what he's decided, as I did on that sunny morn, the safest course of action is to fake ignorance. No reason to make him up the ante by stealing his thunder. I only mention this because one slob, knowing the captain was going to reduce him in rate ahead of time, went and sewed his new crow on his uniform before he went to mast. He then attached the old one on top with Velcro. When the captain told him he was reduced in rate, he just ripped off his old crow and tossed it in front of the flabbergasted CO. The room went silent at such audacity, until the CO said "Let's see you try that again," as he reduced the dork another pay grade.

What lessons can be learned from all this? If their intention was to scare me so I'd never be careless with confidential material again, it worked. I have been damn near paranoid about it ever since. If they decided to dismiss it because (as I hoped) they thought I'd turn out to be worth something as a nuke to the fleet, it was a good call. What else is there to say?

Well, if they had dismissed it at XOI, I probably would have avoided doing anything which could have even remotely resulted in another mast like a religion. But, by letting me see how it really worked, they only managed to change my fear of NJP into contempt. Sure, I know you can get fucked there, but it lost all it's value as a discipline tool with me that day. I was neither scared of it nor a supporter of it's use when I was in leadership positions myself. I also had my biggest misconception removed: I thought as long as you work hard, the Navy would know and forgive you when you screwed up. I have never be so ignorant since; no matter what you do, you can still get sent to mast. It's not just for dirtballs. Tiny seeds of discontent with my chosen profession were planted that day. These, as you'll see, were soon to blossom and bear sour fruit.

Without further fanfare, I picked up my paperwork, a new ID card, and my plane tickets for Hawaii. For years afterwards I had to explain my expression in the photo, due to having just gone from dirtball to graduate minutes before they took it. The stress of the past week was washed away with anticipation for my new future in the submarine community. I felt confident and ready.

But, first I decided a vacation of sorts was in order. I had my pampered little Ford Escort equipped with the very latest car stereo system (three thousand dollars worth; I could drain the battery in ten minutes if I didn't leave the engine running). The system was so unique the guys who installed it (the

Pocatello version of Larry, Darryl & Darryl) spent a day showing it off to their friends and family. I also had them put in a fancy radar detector; laser speed traps were still years away from street use and this system was enough to counter any monitoring I'd meet on the roads.

With my kick ass little car, I bid goodbye to Idaho, and went home. Idaho was only a few hours from Seattle, but I rarely made the trip because I hated driving through the mountains during wintertime.

After one brief encounter with automobile bobsledding, on the freeway, I didn't go anywhere that the snow hadn't been chemically blasted off the road first. Life's too short to die in an Escort EXP.

Once home, I of course went looking for friends from my school days to show off. However, every time I came home from wherever the navy had me, less and less of my old gang were still around. It was depressing. The only good thing was telling my old physics teacher (who'd failed me and said I was too slow to ever learn physics before he kicked me out) what I was doing for a living these days. I also went to some of the old haunts, like the laser show at the science center, and the market downtown. It was all too tame now. I had get back on the road as soon as possible.

A lot of the guys in my class at prototype were from the West Coast, so I planned to drive down I-5 and party with them along the way, with the ultimate destination being TJ: Tijuana, Mexico. TJ was the closest thing to the sea stories I'd heard about wild liberty nights in exotic ports, and I just had to try it out for myself. I wasn't on any schedule, and did whatever I felt like on the drive down.

One of the highlights was stopping outside LA to spend the day at Magic Mountain. I had lived in San Diego for part of my youth, and Magic Mountain was one of those monoliths of childhood happiness I enjoy revisiting occasionally. If you've never been there, it's a huge amusement park build in the middle of the mountains; you do a lot of hill climbing on your way to and from rides. It was a blast.

The day did have an ironic end, though. While waiting for a novelty picture I'd ordered to be made (I couldn't resist dressing up like an outlaw, what with my criminal past and all) I plunked a few bucks into one of those sideshow ring-toss games. Imagine my surprise at actually winning; I had been watching a most delectable member of the female of the species across from me when I threw my ring.

But, this wasn't some little toy I'd won, it was a life-sized stuffed panther. It was huge, and awkward to carry. With no other recourse, I headed back across the park to drop it off in my car.

I got a lot of attention as I staggered up one damned hill after another, but I didn't notice. I was hot, and tired, and pissed by the time I finally got the frigging thing back to my car.

It was at this moment, while I was trying to figure out how the hell to fit it in my compact gnome-mobile, that a van rolled to a stop in front of me, and a grotesque fat woman leaned out.

"Do you want that?" she asked, pointing at the furry albatross of my day.

"Excuse me?" I said, absentmindedly; I was trying to shove it in the sunroof, and it wasn't working.

"If you don't want that, my daughter would love it!" she replied.

I stopped trying to defy certain laws of physics (I'd only recently learned) and looked at her closely.

"Lady," I said "I just hauled this piece of crap over five miles of hills. I wouldn't give it to you if you blew me".

"Sorry", she spat, sarcastically "Excuse me for living!" and then she pulled her beefy arm back in the van, and drove away.

"There is no excuse for you" I shot back, shaking my head in amazement. Sometimes people can make you wonder how we ever managed to evolve in the first place, if we ever did.

I had a great time screwing around all along the California coast, and TJ was everything I'd remembered from my earlier days. We had some trouble in the middle of the evening; apparently the Navy commands in San Diego had made it off limits after midnight to sailors, and we had to dodge the MPs for a while. We ended up in a sleazy whorehouse called the Isis lounge.

There are times when this sort of entertainment is expected, as part of the overall liberty experience.

After copious amounts of cheap tequila, we decided that this was one of those times.

The place was the epitome of a ratty whorehouse, but at least I got half a bed. One of the other guys had to use a table, and he didn't get the show I did.

Yes, I only had half a bed. There was a curtain dividing it, with another couple getting busy on the other side. After listening to them a while, I just had to stop and see what the hell they were up to.

There was a marine, probably just out of boot camp in San Diego,

pumping away like mad. He had the girl's legs pinned almost up to her face with his arms, and he marked time with an endless chant of "Semper Fi!". You have to wonder about that, I know I did.

What was even funnier was the girl's expression: she looked extremely uninterested in his exertions, to say the least. I was laughing my ass off; that scene was worth the price of admission alone.

I did finally get back to Seattle, after another week of cruising around the Pacific coast. I dropped the car off with my dad, the panther (whom I'd grudgingly come to respect for his ability to attract girls at the beach) with my little sister, and I left for exotic Pearl Harbor. My dad managed to drive my car a whole two weeks before running into a parked car with it.

I didn't care, having no possible need for my car on a submarine. I had my seabag, my crow, and my NEC. What else did any sailor need?

Chapter Seven:

My Sentence in Hawaii Begins

*In a rundown, lonesome barracks
West of Waikiki
You can read your girlfriend's letter
Or you can watch your small TV
You can think about the ports you've seen
Or the man you used to be
But your thoughts will soon be wanderin'
The way they always do
When you spend another night alone
'cause there's nothing much to do
And you don't feel much like drinkin'
You just wish your hitch was through*

-Feel the Rage, from the EM Log

My first impression of Hawaii that fine August afternoon was to prove accurate: "Damn, it's HOT here!". I was sweating my ass off just in the baggage claim area, and had soaked through my shirt by the time I finally flagged down a cab. Like in every big city, the cab driver don't speak English, resulting in more frustration.

My original plan was to spend my last two weeks in Seattle, just bumming around and going to laser shows at the science center. But my mom happened to re-enlist while I was there, and I got to hang out with my first non-nuke sailors since boot camp during the ceremony. It was discouraging; while there weren't a bunch of second classes running around, even the most junior seamen at her command had rows of ribbons and medals. All I had was a nifty black nametag. The officers were especially interested in my future assignment, as none of them had been on subs. When I told them I was going to the *Olympia*, one of them did some looking and told me I'd better get to Pearl in a hurry as they were supposed to go to sea soon. How he found this out, I don't know, but he was right. So I rushed off to Hawaii.

I wanted to get a hotel room for the night, but without being able to give the cab driver a specific hotel name he wouldn't drive me downtown. That was probably because there is always a shortage of hotel rooms in Waikiki and he didn't want me to spend all night finding out. Instead, I had him drive me to the sub base.

Not being familiar with the area was a major disadvantage. He actually dropped me off at the quarterdeck (place where the duty officer for the base hangs out) for the surface navy base, and of course they had no clue where the *Olympia* was. It took them an hour to find someone at sub base who could come fetch me from skimmer hell. And another half hour for my ride to actually show up; I was hot, frustrated and tired by this time. It would be the feeling I most associate with Pearl Harbor for the rest of my life.

Getting to see a real submarine for the first time was exciting, much to the embarrassment of the squadron flunkie who was driving me around. It's not good form for submariners to act excited around subs, though I hadn't realized this yet. The first time you see Pearl Harbor, it is overwhelming, especially if (like me) you had yet to see any Navy vessels your whole career. The base is huge, a collection of the typical faded brown ugly building, narrow bumpy roads, and herds of sailors roaming

here and there. The piers are crowded with men and machines, cables and hoses scattered almost at random. Most of the submarines I saw had men doing unfathomable things all over them. The boats looked like sleek black aerodynamic weapons, which they were. Even today, I still think that subs are about the only aesthetically pleasing warships.

But I had missed the Oly's departure by a day, to my disappointment, so I was sent to a transient barracks and told to come back to Squadron the next day. Squadron One is the command which owned the Oly at that time, so I worked for them until the Oly came back from wherever. Transient, of course, is traditional navy word which has its root in the Spanish Armada. Its meaning roughly translates to "galley slave". Our quarters reflected our status in the Navy food chain.

If you are stationed at Sub Base, there are 3 main barracks complexes you can be stuck in. In 1989, they were: The Horseshoe Barracks (bldg 654, built in the early 1900's), the High Rise (bldg 1770, newest barracks but with the smallest rooms), and the dreaded Hill Complex. These barracks on the hill were a mixture of old semi-condemned cinderblock uglies and new semi-overcrowded cinderblock uglies. The transients got the top two floors of Bldg 1335 of the Hill projects. These were shabby, dirty, wrenched accommodations, but better than living on the boat, which is probably the mentality involved in their maintenance. These had four man rooms (which, in the old days, were eight man rooms) with one bathroom shared between two rooms. The furniture is designed to survive drunken abuse, not look pretty, so it naturally does neither. There was the standard Navy laundry facility- five washers and one dryer (with an OOC, which means 'broke dick', sign on it) .

Let me digress a moment to talk about the laundry facilities I'd encountered to date. This is one of those annoying things every sailor puts up with at sea, and single sailors have to put all the time. Simply put, there is about one dryer for every three washers. Which do *you* think takes longer to do, wash, or dry? The Navy apparently thinks it's faster to dry clothes than get them wet, hence the ratio. It was especially bad during A School, because we had to wear these white uncomfortable uniforms which attracted dirt like wet wax does on a deck. Even with seven complete sets, the staff mania for perfect uniforms had me washing and ironing them once a week. I made the mistake of going over on the weekend once to the combined barracks laundry area. Here's how it looks then: Imagine a flea market, crowded with people all trying to do the same things. You didn't have to wait long for a washer, but the

dryers were being auctioned off to the highest bidder by enterprising students and handed down from generation to generation. I waited about four hours for one dryer (which subsequently broke), scared to death to leave the room, lest someone take it. I vowed to never again go back during the day.

So, I took to doing laundry on Thursday morning, around 1 am. For the first two months this worked great; there was no one there so I could wash and dry all my clothes at the same time, as well as having room to iron them without moving every two seconds like in the barracks rooms. But I made the mistake of telling someone (who was considering suicide when he staggered home with an armload of wet clothes) my secret. Within a month it was just as crowded at night as during the day. I ended up sneaking over to the staff barracks to use theirs, but I never dropped the covert night mission approach to laundry.

My first day in Hawaii ended with me, barely unpacked, sitting in front of a fan and sucking down soda like it was being prohibited within the hour. I had been wandering around my new home all afternoon, and the Pacific sun is a killer in August. I was beat, a combination of jet lag and heat exhaustion. I also had a nice little sunburn, the first of countless in a vain attempt to tan. Probably the strangest thing I saw that first day was a line of Japanese destroyers tied up on the skimmer half of the base; the only thing I knew about Pearl up to that time was that they'd bombed the hell out of it during WW-2. I didn't expect to see them back again so soon.

I ran into some of my old friends from school, but since I'd flown out early there wasn't many guys from my class there yet. It was sort of strange to travel alone; up to that point in my career we'd all traveled in a group from boot camp though prototype. It was also strange to be living with non-nukes and real submariners. Until then the sea returnees were always staff and way above me on the social ladder. To put it another way, I started to feel very much out of place in Pearl Harbor.

The next morning I got totally lost looking for the building I was supposed to muster at. All I could remember was the dive tower (a tall metal tube which is visible from almost everywhere on base) was next to it. I ended up behind the Squadron building, with the shop 51 people. I knew was I was supposed to muster, and they were doing just that, so I fell in. Right off the bat we got inspected, and having just come from school I naturally got an outstanding. (Real sailors have to work in their uniforms, not just iron the hell out of them, so mine looked brand new)

This confused the shop supervisor when he congratulated me afterwards, because he didn't know who in the hell I was. He finally figured it out and sent me upstairs to where I should have been all along. He also passed along to the squadron's MAA (my temporary boos) that I'd gotten an outstanding, which caused no end of amusement among the 'real' sailors up there.

I was sent with two other guys, also going to the *Oly*, to do our check in paperwork. This is an inevitable part of changing duty stations- going around to everyone and telling them who you are so they can put you on their list. Right before lunch we got some shots at the base clinic, and headed to our next appointment: the DAPA.

Have you ever noticed that, whenever a character in a movie goes into a bar, there's always a few sailors in the background? Eventually the Navy got tired of this image, and looked into whether it was accurate. Sure enough, they discovered that nearly every bar in the world has at least three sailors in it at all times. They decided this wasn't nearly as good as the other service's stereotypes (i.e., the bloodthirsty Army soldier, the napalming Air Force pilot, and the dimwitted gung-ho Marine), and went about fixing it. At about this time, they also had a bit of silliness on an aircraft carrier called the *USS Forrest Fire* (or something similar) when it turned out half the guys lugging around live bombs were stoned out of their minds. Thus the DAPA (Drug And Alcohol Abuse) program was born.

These guys are the ones who tell you to "just say no", and give you three chances to do so before showing you the door. That the Navy's never bothered to fix the *reasons* sailors find a drunken stupor preferable is one of life's little ironies.

While waiting to see the DAPA I started to feel a little out of it. Then I felt a lot out of it. I asked the other two guys who'd just come from the clinic with me, and they felt even worse than me. All of us were then ushered in to hear the latest Navy anti-drug spiel. Somewhere in the middle of his undoubtedly stirring speech, the DAPA noticed that, not only were we not paying attention, we were all shaking and close to unconscious. You can imagine what the official Anti-Drug guy thought about *that*. He immediately called the squadron corpsman, probably so he could get the drug testing started as soon as possible.

But the corpsman, a scruffy old chief, knew better. He told the DAPA we were going into shock for some reason. The DAPA claimed ignorance, but noticed on our checkout sheet that we'd just come from the clinic. We were loaded on stretchers, shot full of something, and woke up in the Tripler

intensive care ward the next day. I still wonder whether the DAPA signed us off for the "just say no" speech; if not, then I never did finish my check-in.

Tripler is an Army hospital and it's about a million years old. It sits in the right in the middle of nothing on the side of Red Hill, and is always painted a nauseating shade of pink. But the staff is pretty cool, especially because my being an E-5 (which doesn't mean shit in the Navy) was like being a sergeant in the Army. I got a much nicer corner of the room than the E-2s I'd come in with. The corpsmen was also friendly enough to tell me why I was there: bad shots. They thought the girl who'd given us our shots in the Subbase clinic might have left them out of the fridge too long. They'd seen it before, and it was no big deal. The doctor, on the other hand, thought all three of us were allergic to flu vaccine. Perhaps my earlier hospital stay after getting a shot was what gave him the idea, but how did that explain the other two guys in there with me?

After a few days I felt just fine, and was just hanging out during the day. There was a lot of old retired guys trapped there with us, and we'd sit out on the smoking pad all day listening to them tell war stories. It was strange that my first two weeks on Hawaii were spent in a hospital, but not all that different in pace than I had originally planned. Eat, watch TV, shoot the shit, and sleep.

After the first few days this got a little boring, so I started exploring the gigantic facility. This place was the single largest hospital I'd ever seen, including snack bars, it's own post office, and a store. In the back of my mind, always, was the fact that all I had was what I'd brought with me. To put it bluntly, the hospital didn't sell smokes anywhere, and I was getting dangerously low. I started making discrete inquiries amongst the corpsmen about where a suitable supply might be had, but most were militant anti-smokers. There was a store down the hill, but I couldn't go out in my hospital pj's and the only other clothes I had were my dungarees.

The Navy, unlike just about everyone else in the world, doesn't want the public to see us off base in our working uniforms. I don't have the faintest idea why, when they insist on having us inspected in those same uniforms. They are certainly more presentable than what I've seen the civilians wear over in the shipyard; were these the populace who weren't supposed to see dungarees?

Anyways, I found an E3 corpsman who smoked, and was willing to smuggle me out if I'd get him a couple packs. It was close to payday, so he was broke like most of them and considered it worth the risk. Yes there was some risk, as my chart said I was on death's door, even though I was out shooting hoops every day at lunch. He might get busted for helping me, and I'd get busted on GP. I changed into a set of hospital orderly's clothes and we walked to the nearest cigarette machine. In order to ensure silence, I also had to bring back some 'bribes' for the other corpsmen on duty. All in all, it was a profitable journey, as I had been scrounging quarters for two days, and got enough for me as well as the old war heroes on the smoking pad who would bum you dry in the course of a story.

The hospital had us tested for allergies, and we had none. Not to be deterred, our doctor nevertheless attributed it all to being allergic to the flu vaccine. I don't know if this was to keep us from getting pissed at the Navy clinic, but he gave us a great consolation prize: a get-out-of-shots-free card. Since that day, I've never gotten another vaccination shot from the Navy, and coincidentally have never gotten the flu or spent anymore time in the hospital. I highly recommend that any of you out there considering enlisting get one as soon as you can. The only times I was ever sick in the Navy was after getting a flu shot.

When I got back to squadron, they had already forgotten who I was. I was also on medical hold, as the doctor was still trying to figure out the cause of our mysterious ailment. That meant he wasn't going to let me go to sea until he was sure it wasn't going to happen again. Since I had yet to see the inside of a sub, being on hold was very disappointing to me. After all the hell I'd been through, and they still weren't going to let me go to sea.

So the squadron MAA, knowing I'd be around longer than most of the transients, sent me over to be the piss boy for Logistics. This was an office which handled engineering related problems on the subs owned by Squadron One. You know your job is to be a pissboy when you look around, and the most junior person in the office (besides you) is a senior chief. My main job was the 'boy' work: making copies, answering the phone, taking out trash, and fetching message traffic. I also made the coffee, until someone figured out I didn't drink it, so I didn't know I was making it lousy.

I have heard that 3/4ths of the work in any office is done by only 1/4th of the people: the so-called fireballs. After being the pissboy for a week, I came to realize most of the work was really done by bored people. And I was bored. Way bored. I started coming up with easier ways to do stuff, but that just made it go faster so I had more time to be bored.

For example, I had to do all the shred in the office. That meant I had to sit there and feed page after page of confidential material into the shredder. Well, I built this cool slide I could dump the shred into, so that it fed itself. It got the shred done faster, so (of course) more offices started bringing me their shred to do. That was okay, until the shredder ate itself one morning. I took it apart, fixed it (I *was* an electrician, not just a yeoman), and was putting it back together when one of the chiefs from down the hall saw me and freaked. Apparently, you have to be a crypto whiz or something to work on shredders, lest you secretly disable the shredder part like a commie spy. My boss told him it was okay, though I had to pay later for pulling him away from a game of solitaire to save my weenie ass.

I found myself a real important-looking desk in storage, and appropriated it. I also got a bunch of other nifty desk things, so that it looked like I had a real job. Knowing where everything was stored in the Squadron building paid off big once I got to my boat, but I'll talk about pack rats in a while. At the time, I was actually making work for myself, to keep my sanity. I came up with some great ideas, some of which they still use now.

But the best part of my job came when one of the lieutenants blew up the copier (as lieutenants are wont to do), and we got a brand new whammadyne replacement. All the khakis in the office were admiring it while the civilians finished setting it up. When they were done testing it, they asked the engineer who the key operator was.

"What's a key operator?" Chief Watson asked.

"You know, the guy who puts in toner and paper and fixes it..." the civilian replied.

And, to a one, every damned khaki in that room turned and pointed at me. Then they left. And I got to hop a bus downtown later that week to go to 'key operator' school.

Which turned out to be a good deal, as they taught us office flunkies how to do all sorts of fancy tricks, in addition to how to clear paper jams and put in toner. Soon I was showing this off around the office, taking clippings from the phone book and making signs and stuff. I made a bunch of blowups of cars

and planes for one of the chiefs to color in, which he did during office meetings. The engineer didn't like him putting them on our fridge with magnets, though.

I only had one room mate in the barracks, and he was nice enough to show me where things were on the island. I realized, almost the same instant I walked out of the airport terminal, that leaving my car behind was a big mistake. I had always paid cash for my cars, so I had fallen into that strange Catch-22 that applies to automobiles: You can't afford a new one unless you can trade in an old one. I wasn't going to be able to raise a down payment on my pay, and it would be almost four years until I got another car.

So, like many young sailors at their first commands, I learned the bus routes by trial and error. In Hawaii, that was 'da kine bus', which went the two places I'd found: the Pearlridge Mall, and Waikiki. I also discovered a flair for bus surfing.

I'll eventually get around to complaining about the strange and vaguely disturbing traffic habits unique to Hawaii, I'm sure. But, for now, I'll focus on the bus. Da Kine Busses apparently have only two speeds at their disposal: balls to the wall fast, and oh-my-god-were-gonna-die-hit-da-breaks stop. This results in a rather rhythmic lurching of the bus, and the sport of bus surfing. What you do is, basically, try to remain on your feet in the center aisle without holding onto anything or anyone. Your friends, who were smart enough to sit down in the first place, judge your performance in the best Olympic fashion. For 75 cents, you can surf almost an hour... at only slightly less risk to your life than, say, making homemade explosives.

It was on one such surfing safari that we found ourselves somewhere in downtown Waikiki, waiting for a transfer to get us to Sandy Beach. The busses travel in herds (for protection, I guess) and we were between cattle drives, with nothing much to do. We got to talking with another guy at the bus stop, and it turned out he wasn't just a tourist (as everyone downtown appeared to be) but the owner of a rental car place. He hung out at the bus stop, which was behind his lot, because it was the only place his wife would let him smoke.

After talking with us for about a half hour, he invited us over to see his lot. I had expected a typical rent-a-wreck scooter lot, of which there is no shortage on the island of Oahu. Nope- he rented rebuilt

and custom built vintage cars. Everything from Model-A Fords through '65 Corvette Stingrays. He was making a fortune off the status conscious Japanese tourists, charging about \$500 a day for the privilege of driving around in something other than a Pontiac Sunbird. So, you can imagine our surprise when he offered to let us rent one for \$50 (the cost of the daily auto insurance) for the day.

I mention this because, driving around in a Model A (with a 270 under the hood and a custom automatic tranny), I realized that I'd been buying the wrong cars all my life. I had never seen such attention-getter. We got mobbed when we rolled into Sandy Beach, with the soundtrack for American Graffiti playing full blast. Women, for reasons known only to themselves, seemed impressed with the car in ways mere money by itself could never have achieved. It was the first time I'd ever got laid in a rumble seat, and (at my income level) I was sad to realize I wasn't likely to do so again in the near future. But, if you're going to play tourist, there's no finer way I can imagine to travel between souvenir stands.

Whoever says office work isn't exciting should have been around when we went to war that Fall. For a few days running I had been seeing the scariest things in the message traffic, which were talking about engagements between our fleet and an enemy fleet out in the Pacific. I knew I wasn't supposed to see the messages, other than to read who to give it to, but stuff like that sort of catches the eye. I wanted to ask the chiefs "what the fuck?", however, I didn't want to explain *how* I knew to ask. Instead I watched the news on TV, very closely.

The fact that all these incidents were not being reported was even more frightening. Remember, in '89 we were playing tag in the gulf with the rag head's tankers, and the Soviets were still the Evil Empire. Around the office, I overheard lots of things which sounded plausible, like discussing how fast the boats could go to sea, and how long switching weapons load outs would take. I was excited, but also sort of disappointed, since I wasn't with my boat where I was supposed to be. I was also dying to ask someone what was happening.

When I was told that Friday we'd all be working through the weekend, I couldn't resist asking any longer. I asked one of my bosses what all the excitement was. The chief just replied "We're going to war, son", in a deadly serious kind of way. I was firmly convinced then that we were watching the

opening stages of the next world war. The irony of being in Pearl Harbor wasn't lost on me, either. I went home, and packed up a seabag with supplies, just in case.

But, when I showed up the next morning, all the real office staff were in civilian clothes and just sitting around bullshitting. They seemed surprised to see me, until Chief Cooke told them he'd asked me to come in.

"Jesus, kid" Chief Beaver said "Get the hell out of here, and enjoy the weekend"

"But," I asked, "Aren't we at war now?"

I got dead silence for an answer, as they looked at each other. Then everyone started laughing their asses off.

"It's a fookin' exercise, you dimwit" Chief Cooke replied, snorting. "Now get lost until Monday!"

Not having to be told twice, I split. And, in the rest of my time in the Navy, it was the only time that I ever gave a shit about war and the enemy and all that. Since then I've had a real job, so I had more important (and real) things to worry about. When you've got an engineroom to work on, the whys and howcomes of the sub's mission don't seem to matter so much.

My first roommate got his orders and left after a few weeks, and I had the barracks room to myself for the rest of the time I was in port. With no transportation readily available, and nearly broke from the high cost of Hawaiian living, I spent a lot of time fixing up my little room. One of the first bright ideas I had was to try my hand at cooking.

Of course, Navy barracks have nothing in the way of a kitchen; you're just happy if the beer cooler works most of the time. But I had noticed all the fixings of a barbeque at the little mini-mart on base, including self-contained, disposable, aluminum hibachi's. My next door neighbors, who wandered around on the balcony a lot at night, were skeptical when I approached them with my plan. Once I got the disposable grill going I found out why.

Oh, it's 'charcoal' caught fire readily, just as the box advertised. But it gave off a cloud of billowing black smoke of the kind usually associated with oil fires, and smelled like a burning wax-coated turd.

Looking at it with resignation, I realized that was quite possibly what the fuel was. My neighbor stopped by to help out; I found him pissing on the grill with a huge "I warned ya" grin on his face. My short career as a budding young chef was over.

Then there was the fire drill I screwed up. Well, it wasn't a drill, really, but if it had been I would have lost points. I was taking the trash out, and doing other stuff familiar to flunkies the world over, when I saw smoke coming out from under the Engineer's door. I knew he and a few of the officers were still in there, but all the chiefs were gone for the day. I froze, trying to remember what they had said to do in boot camp.

The word 'fire' drifted through my mind, and connected with 'extinguisher'. So I tore off down the hall, looking for one. I ran by three CO2 extinguishers (and two fire alarms) before I noticed one, yanked it off it's support, and ran back. I checked the door, it was cold. So, without further ado, I shoved it open and burst in, extinguisher at the ready.

Inside, I found the Engineer and a lieutenant trying to get the windows open and fanning smoke out like two kids caught with cigarettes in the bathroom. I yelled "where's the fire?", darting around the coffee table. The Engineer put up a hand.

"There's no fire, Newburry" he said, calmly. "Take the extinguisher back where you found it, and go home"

"What about all this smoke?" I asked. Adrenalin was now totally in my driver's seat.

"Don't worry about it. Go home. Now." he said, gently shoving me back out the door.

So I stashed the CO2 bottle, and went home. There was a nice little cloud coming out of the office when I got outside. Chief Cooke was unlocking his bike from the bike rack, so I pointed it out to him. He started snickering.

"They finally figured out how to work the new smoke generator we got," he said, and went on to explain they were playing with the idea of buying some for simulating fires on the boats during ORSE. I don't know if my reaction was a factor, but they never did use one on my boat. Perhaps because it was too real?

Just about the same time I was becoming really comfortable with my job as the logistics office flunky, the Olympia came back. The bull (senior enlisted) nuke, Master Chief Moore, came by to see me that week, and to inquire as to why the fuck I was still sitting in my air conditioned office. When I told him about being on medical hold, he seemed to take my regret over the matter as sarcasm, and wasn't

happy in the least. I agreed; I wanted to report aboard more than ever. I felt like a nobody, since everyone in my building except me had been to sea. But the doc over at Tripler was adamant about running more tests first.

What I didn't realize at the time was that no one who's already been to sea is in any hurry to return to the boat, and medical hold (like I was on) was a fairly common way to avoid doing so. MC Moore naturally assumed that was my reason, too, and thus I had earned a dirt bag label before even seeing the inside of the boat. I'm sure that has to be some sort of record.

Chapter Eight:

Welcome aboard; Station the maneuvering watch.

*Then I got to the Oly, SRB in hand, and they said
"You have just made the worst mistake
That a young sailor can"
And, on my first underway, I knew they were right
It's a really, really shitty job
And there's just no end in sight
Last thing I remember
I was running for the brow
"I think I've had enough of this
And I want to go home now"
"Relax" said the topside "we all need to relieve"
"You're the newest NUB on board, and you can never
leave"*

-Hotel 717, from the EM Log

One of the things which tags submariners, and military men in general, is their peculiar way of talking. Just like an accent will give away your home state, the slang words you pick up in the course of your career tell everyone you talk to where you've worked.

Nukes have their own mutant version of Navy slang, mostly related to the things we do in the engineroom. I always called it 'tech' (if I even noticed I was using it) when apologizing to some confused civilian. As we approach the engineroom world now, I thought it would be best to warn you dedicated readers the glossary is about to grow in leaps and bounds. The first word in today's lesson is "deal", which is modified by the adjectives "good" and "bad".

A "good deal", to a nuke, is anything which results in getting more time off the boat. While the Navy generously gives each sailor 30 days off a year, it's the sailor's command decides whether or not you can actually take them. So, good deals do not include taking your leave (this vacation time), since you automatically earn it. A good deal is something like a school, or temporary duty in the barracks, or virtually any other excuse to not go underway. Once you're trapped on the boat at sea, good deals become much more modest in nature- then a good deal is getting to sleep more than three hours a day. Therefore, the ever-present "bad deal" (otherwise known as a "bone job", a "screw job", or just "your job") is anything which takes away your expected time off, or sleep. Having to clean when you were supposed to sleep is an example of a "bad deal", as is getting called in on your day off to do work. To make it simple, just consider everything you hear about the boat to be a bad deal, unless otherwise instructed.

Now, my very first official good deal was wasted on me, because I didn't even know it was one. My job dumping trash in Logistics, while repulsive to me at the time, was a good deal. So, when I was given an even better deal, how could I be expected to recognize it?

Master Chief Green was my squadron's senior master chief, so that made him the "Command Master Chief"(CMC), or 'Top Goat'. His office in bldg 661 started life as an elevator foyer, but at least he had one to himself. They've since converted that little cubbyhole to a snack room, in a vain effort to get some of the food machines out of the hallways.

One day I found myself, as well as three other transients, packed into his office to hear about our new job in the exciting field of VIP driving. He wanted to train us as drivers for the occasional VIPs we got

on Subase. Since there was only four of us, we would have to be port and starboard (i.e., every other day) duty. He apologized for that, though, and promised us some more guys in a week. Then he took us down to show us our vehicles.

In the Navy, having a driver is a big status symbol to an officer. Nothing strokes their pride more than being chauffeured. Once they get promoted into the higher ranks, they actually have some poor sailor permanently assigned to drive them around 24 hours a day. You have to wonder if those career chauffeurs feel "its not a job- it's an adventure". In our case, though, we were being offered up as rental flunkies for those VIPs who forgot to bring one with the rest of their entourage.

So, while we were waiting for business, we sat around in the squadron building in our snazziest dress whites. After a week, the only thing we'd done was wash the sedans a few times, and practice or newly-learned VIP ass kissing procedures. Then the CMC decided to put us at the disposal of the boats. The very first one to snap us up was the Olympia.

There was a Japanese submarine in port, and the Oly was supposed to supply drivers for their officers. Of course, everyone on the Oly wanted to be a driver (to get off the boat), so naturally they got outside help rather than give out an unnecessary good deal. That was us.

Here's how the deal worked: I'd show up at 4pm on the Oly, and sit around in the crew's mess watching movies until I felt tired, then I'd go to bed in berthing. They woke me up at 6am, fed me breakfast, and then I went home. I didn't have to show up again until the following day at 4pm. While that was an awesome good deal (showing up, doing nothing, and getting the next day off) what made it even better was the fact that the CMC felt like we were getting a bad deal because we were doing port and starboard duty. The guys on the Oly, too, appreciated us for covering their driver job, so they always treated us nice. All around, the only way this good deal could get better was if we didn't have to show up for work at all. The best good deals, after all, are the ones that look like bad deals to the command. This is a simply a modern version of the "Bre'r Rabbit and the briar patch" story.

Perhaps the best part of this good deal was the times, infrequent as they were, that we'd actually get to drive someone someplace. I bombed terribly at first, having no clue where anything was on the island except one shopping mall and the nightclubs downtown. I felt sorry for those poor bastards I was supposed to drive to various hotels and stores; I usually got lost and ended up driving aimlessly for hours.

One place I did know how to find was the airport. This was a good thing, too, because one day I had the distinct privilege of driving an admiral there. Admirals, as most people know, are to the Navy what kings once were to medieval Europe- strange, rare creatures of unexplained doom and random wrath. Admirals, even the lowly ones, are political creatures by nature and as such are feared by other officers for their implied mastery of that religion. Admirals can end careers with a simple word, stripping a junior officer's past and future achievements in a heartbeat if displeased. Needless to say, they are both feared and respected. Commands go to great lengths to appease admirals who condescend to visit their humble abodes.

I knew nothing of this. While I was a second class, with some experience in the nuclear field, I had been sheltered from the actualities of the "real" Navy to a great degree. I wasn't afraid of admirals any more than I was any other officer I'd met, which is to say, not much. I liked most of the ones I'd met in school, after all, and the ones at squadron were pretty friendly in their own right. I guess you have to be screwed over by one before you can truly appreciate (and fear) their power.

So I picked the admiral up from a room in Lockwood Hall, which is the zero quarters on Subase. He was a crusty old bastard, with the look of someone very used to being catered to. In this I was prepared, and did all the boot-licking as I'd been taught. Aside from telling me his destination, he said nothing for the first few minutes. Then, after he got bored watching the road, he spoke.

"Turn on the air conditioning, son" came a voice behind me "It's too frigging hot in here".

We were at a stoplight, so I looked back at him.

"I'm sorry sir," I said "we don't have air conditioning in these cars."

To which he responded with a string of mutterings. I said nothing, having been instructed that was best.

Don't believe the TQL hype; enlisted men rarely have anything to say an officer wants to hear.

What I sure didn't want to hear was what came next: a loud, juicy, butt-smacking fart which thundered out of the back seat. It wasn't only loud, it stank. Looking in the rear view mirror, I noticed the admiral had a particularly satisfied look on his face. I started to roll my window down.

"Roll it back up, son" he ordered "I want you to enjoy it".

I might have violated as much as ten traffic ordinances getting him the rest of the way to the airport after that.

Aside from the admiral, though, everyone else I drove around were from the Japanese submarine. I didn't speak Japanese, and most of the people I drove didn't speak English very well, so they always had the one guy on their boat waiting for me topside who did. And, after a while, the only people I was asked to drive around were officers who wanted to sample the nightlife in Waikiki. I was never sure if I was supposed to drop them off (like we did with the enlisted guys) or continue escorting them once there. I opted to escort them, mostly because they seemed to expect me to. I did learn, after the first night, to ditch my dress white uniform in the first nightclub we stopped in. I know; in the movies you see guys wandering around in their uniforms on liberty, but in the real Navy you're only asking to end up rolled for spare change if you do. Not to mention the fact that the days when women found the uniform attractive are long gone.

I already had a working knowledge of the nightlife to be had in Waikiki, thanks to my old roommate's expert tutelage. While I didn't drink, I had fun just as much fun watching the Japanese guys tie one on. This was the best fringe benefit of being a driver I found- getting to party with the VIP's. Sure, they didn't speak English well, but they partied like any other sailor and all of them had huge rolls of cash whenever they went downtown.

The unwritten rule for good deals in the submarine world is that the receiver of one must be screwed over before and after said good deal is given. That is not to say a good deal always follows a bad one- far from it! But, if you find yourself suddenly getting a good deal, like I was, rest assured you'll soon pay for it. Looking back, the bad deal which followed this unusually "good" good deal was my release from medical hold and transfer to the USS Olympia.

When tied up next to pier, a submarine doesn't look like much. About four feet of the hull is out of the water, not counting the sail. There are cables and hoses running in through every hatch. There will inevitably be a few covers removed from the sail (the wing-shaped thing sticking out of the top center of the boat), and more often than not a few deck divers chipping paint. There are two guards, a pier sentry (IQ somewhere in the 80's) and a topside watch (also in the 80's, but makes more use of it) to pass before going below.

There are four hatches you can go through to enter a 688 class sub: one in the sail, one forward of the sail, and two aft. The one in the sail is only used to get in the little metal pit at the top called the bridge. The hatch forward of the sail is used to load weapons like torpedoes (after trying to get stuff like seabags down a hatch, you really got to admire the fact they can get a huge MK-48 in the damned boat at all); and the two aft of the sail are known as the escape hatches.

The term escape hatch is misleading- they are built like those sci-fi airlocks you've seen, only straight up and down. The idea being, of course, to transfer people from the air inside the boat to the water outside the boat, without killing everyone in the process. This is how we can escape from a sunken sub- eight men at a time.

But, the Hawaiian islands are really the tops of old volcanoes, so there is an abrupt drop-off of the ocean floor right after you leave the harbor. And, outside of war, the most likely time for a boat to sink (with enough air left to have anyone aboard in a condition to consider escape) is after getting clipped by a surface ship around the harbor. They even made a movie like that- *Grey Lady Down*, I think it was. Were that to happen, with the ocean floor so deep... no one would survive. So, the escape trunks would never get used for escape: if you're shallow enough to use one, they can get a rescue DSRV to you and get you out that way. If they can't get the DSRV because you're too deep, you're also too deep to use the escape hatch. Let's face it- unless you happen to be in the harbor, it's useless for rescue.

But, on the bright side, the Navy's only lost two boats, the Thresher and the Scorpion, since WW-2. Just using the law of averages, a submarine is one of the safest places to be, especially in a war. So, there are two 'escape' hatches aft of the sail. One leads down to the crew's mess, and the other to the engineroom. In port, the engineroom hatch is typically so clogged with cables that no one uses it. The hatch forward of the sail, the weapons shipping hatch, is the access hatch of choice on a 688.

The first thing you notice when you climb down the ladder into the sub is the smell. Submarines stink. Seriously; they smell horrible inside, until you get used to them. They have always been known as 'pig boats', and this is one of the reasons. The smell is hard to describe- it's kind of oily and metallic. The air tastes like it was machined, not created naturally. Airplanes smell a little like this, when you're walking down the boarding passageway.

The boat is divided into two halves, by construction and by tradition. The aft half includes the engineroom and the reactor compartment. The forward half is everything else. Unlike those old WW-2 boats that sometimes crop up in the late show, the forward half looks more like the inside of an airplane, with lots of fake wood paneling and scruffy chrome trim. There's no carpet, like on a plane, but otherwise that's the first impression most people get when they see it.

Inside, there are three main levels, or decks, running the length of the sub. The upper level in the forward end is like the brains of the boat. Here you find the CO/XO staterooms, the control room (which kinda looks like the one *Hunt for Miss October*, only not really) where they drive the boat, radio (where they spend most of their time playing video games), and the huge banks of antique computers for running the sonar girls' gear. Sonar has a quiet, dark little shack forward of the control room, where they can do their thing, whatever that may be.

The middle level in the forward half of the boat is the 'living' deck; here you find all the berthing for the officers and crew, as well as the Crew's Mess and the Wardroom (special officer edition of a crews mess). The wardroom also doubles as an medical operating room, if necessary. In respect for all the people who have died in the Navy's multi-purpose underway cafes, everyone takes off their hat when entering one.

Unless they're really, really mad about something.

Berthing, for everyone, is cramped. To get a feel for what it's like, find yourself a coffin and remove one side of it. Place a four inch thick foam mattress on the bottom. Cover the open side with a motel curtain. Then put it on top of the fridge and try sleeping in it. Lastly, for the total effect, have a guy from the local auto garage who isn't really into bathing to sleep in it when you're not. That is what it's like.

The sad part is that this crowded, tiny little hole in the wall isn't even yours- you get to share it with two other guys in what is commonly referred to as 'hot racking'. There are some guys who don't even get the "hole" part- they just get the mattress, and sleep amongst the torpedoes in the torpedo room. Not Holiday Inn, let me tell you. But, after a few days on your feet, that tiny cot seems more comfortable than two blondes on a waterbed.

On the lowest level, in more ways than one, are the machinery spaces for the forward equipment: the torpedo room and the auxiliary machinery room (AMR). Aside from the Reactor itself, AMR is the most important collection of equipment on the boat. This is where submariners make and purify their atmosphere, as well as housing the emergency diesel generator. The non-nuke MM's who work in AMR, known as A-gang, are about the only people up forward who get the same bad deals as us nukes. I feel sorry for them- they have pretty much the same job as we do, only they don't get any of the extras that nukes do, like pro pay.

Under lower level is another level of tanks and storage spaces. One of the biggest is the Battery Well, where the six foot tall versions of a car battery are stored. There is also a few cellar-like areas the cooks use to stash their canned foods; there are cans rusting away at the bottom of them that predate the Gutenberg bible.

The collective term for anyone who works in the forward half of the boat is 'coner'. About every two years, the command gets upset with the crew for using the word 'coner', but all it means is 'someone who works up forward'. If the term also summons the image of drone-like clueless geeks, that's what they bring on themselves.

If the coners work up forward, then the rest of the crew must work aft- the nukes. Or the “fucking nukes”, as we are affectionately known. There is only one hatch (watertight doorway) on the inside of the boat, and it's right behind the crew's mess. The watertight door marks the boundary between the coner and nuke worlds: forward and aft. Coners tend to stay up forward, even though a good chunk of the open space on the boat is back in the engine room. Their reasons for doing so are not unfounded- nukes are very territorial and predatory in nature. Coners are only seen in the engineroom *en masse* during field day or drills.

My first day on board consisted mainly of doing what I did for the last few weeks- sitting in crews mess, waiting. After a couple hours of nothing, I was handed my check-in sheet by the head yeoman, and sent off to my chief. He introduced me to the rest of the electricians, threw away the check-in sheet, and put me to work. About six at night I noticed that we were the only division still hanging around, and asked when we'd get to leave. It was only at this point that my new chief decided to tell me the boat was going to sea the next morning. He let me go home to pack, with instructions to get back before

4am the next morning. I went home, thrilled by the prospect of going to sea at last. I grabbed my seabag, opened my locker, and....

Nothing. I had no clue what to bring, or even how long we were going to be at sea. I was still living in the transient barracks, so there weren't any guys from the boat to ask. I fell asleep, still wondering just how much stuff I was supposed to take.

When the boat is about to leave the pier they station the maneuvering watch. Everyone has some sort of job to do, except for me that first time. Instead I just tried to stay out of the way while hundreds of people ran everywhere doing everything. It was alien, it was confusing, and I still didn't even know where I was supposed to leave my stuff. One of the nukes I had met yesterday went by then, and asked: "You feel right at home now?"

"Uh-huh" was my reply, in a meek voice.

Chapter Nine:

Introduction to Weasel's Warriors.

*I can still remember
When I was just a NUB
Mohr was our bull nuke then
And Taylor ran the sub
Well, there was Rich, and Jim, and Barry
Harv and Jumpin' Joe
'lectricians were a fucked up bunch
And Weasel ran the show*

-Nub on Nub, from the EM Log

For the next eighteen months, I was the E-Div nub, due to the fact that we got no replacement electricians during that time. On a submarine, out at sea, a nub is the very worst thing you can be. I hated every minute of it.

A nub, or *Non Useful Body*, is someone on board who isn't fully qualified. Depending on your rate, it can take up to a year and a half to get all your quals done. Anyone who has ever been a plebe in a military academy knows what the life of a nub is like. Now, in Clinton's new navy, there is no hazing permitted, nor is harassment of any kind tolerated. Many "old salts" found out the hard way the Navy is deadly serious about stamping out traditions like this; even relatively harmless pastimes like taping and pinning are forbidden.

These changes were still years away when I went through my period of nub-ness, though. At the time, I resented each and every injustice, and swore to never be a part of it when I got qualified myself. But, over time I realized the system, with all its faults, worked. The reason it works is that the drive to fit in, to qualify, can only come from within. No matter how much you threaten, plead, yell, or whine, you can't make someone qualify who isn't motivated to. An unmotivated, unqualified sailor is worse than uselessly taking up space; he is a very real hazard. Inside a submarine's closed environment, everyone has a job to do. If a crewman can't ignore his own fears and confusion at the alien world he's entered, he is likely to panic at just the wrong time.

Another thing the system did was instill the nub with an absolute fear of making a mistake. This terror of screwing up was to save my ass countless times, as well as that of my shipmates, during my years at sea. Even during drills, mistakes were never tolerated.

Nubs were not allowed to listen to walkmans, or read anything except tech manuals out at sea. Nubs did not, under any circumstances, watch movies. Nubs were taught to respect their qualified shipmates; to never assume they knew better. Nubs did not go home early in port. Nubs get all the lousy jobs, like compacting trash, doing wakeups, chipping paint, and cleaning precipitators. They are also constantly under surveillance; when not doing something useful they were expected to have their noses in a tech manual, learning the boat.

Since quals (or lack thereof) was what made people nubs, it was their progress in quals which was most closely observed. Nubs were expected to get a certain number of signatures per week, which was

tracked by a senior member of the division. If the nub was far ahead of the requirements (and thus likely to become useful sooner), he was a “hot runner” and received extra help and privileges from the rest of the crew. Were he to do the opposite, fall too far behind in quals (and thus appear to be lazy), he was considered dink. Being dink, when the system was still operating with all its traditions intact, was roughly the same as being caught sleeping when everyone else was working: bad news. The only way you could be in worse trouble with the crew was to be caught stealing (which submariners are so good at ‘correcting’ that the only thing likely to be stolen from your rack was food, and only if it was laying out. Every other valuable: money, jewelry, electronics, etc. was safer on your rack than in a bank. Someone caught stealing on a sub would be better off to hang himself than face the wrath of 149 other men with nothing better to do than “help” him down ladders and such). Being dink, whether it was your fault or not, meant constant harassment from practically every person on board.

As I found out, the qual system is not voluntary. It’s not a game in which the nub can choose whether or not to play. There were many incentives handed out by senior crewmen, limited only by their imagination. Taping, which consists of taping someone up with duct tape, was one of the most common. Believe it or not, officers and riders (especially midshipmen) were just as likely to get taped at least once during their stay in the Casa del Fast Attack. Some of the stories of especially creative tape jobs are handed down from generation to generation, reverently, a testimony to the ingenuity of a bored sailor.

There was also pinning, which involved trapping someone in their rack by pinning the rack lid open with a metal rod. There were additional shit jobs always ready for a dink to enjoy; submariners know exactly where the nastiest grease and grime can be found on any boat. Career dinks were likely to end up greased themselves, which consisted of having a grease gun sprayed down your skivvies. Not just any grease, either- Pression Blue, which left the skin stained blue for weeks (which is awful hard to explain to an intimate friend when you get back to port).

But, in general, if the nub was trying to fit in, to get qualified, and wasn’t too much of a dick, he would escape all of that and qualify without comment. The senior members of the nub’s division wanted him qualified as quickly as possible, so that they wouldn’t have to spend as much time on watch themselves. The qualified guys often used their own time to teach young nublets the way things were done, going out of their way to ensure the nub knew his shit. Especially on watch, the person giving the nub a checkout

had a personal stake in the nub's knowledge; one person without a clue can easily screw up and kill the whole crew.

Unfortunately, for me, I chose the hard way from the start.

During that eighteen months of being the most junior member of E-Div, I learned most of the important lessons about how to do my job the right way, as well as the customs and traditions that are the legacy of the Silent Service. It was unusual for one division to keep the exact same people for so long, but I think it paid off in the high level of experience each man had. Subs are like people; each one has its own quirks and unique bugs which have passed down from the seniors to the juniors.

Getting Underway-

Every normal underway starts the same: too damned early. The nukes doing the reactor startup show up on the boat somewhere in the wee hours of the morning. The hot rock is hot long before even the cooks think about waking up. The rest of the crew staggers on board during the next hour, many having done the "goodbye honey" routine on the pier. This is touching, in a Bert Lancaster kind of way, though both hubby and wifey look like death warmed over at five in the morning.

There is always someone who forgot to buy cigarettes or toothpaste, who you can identify as he makes his mad dash for the mini mart across base. There is usually a few nukes hanging out around Dolphin's Cove, a little patio with vending machines, not wanting to go below until the last possible minute.

Once the engine room is running (or "steaming"), the electricians start to pester the EOOW to let them take shore power off. The EOOWs like to play a little game of "chicken" with the CO; their goal is to see how close to the time the CO stations the maneuvering watch they can come before giving permission. This results in most of the electricians still topside lugging cables around when they do station it, and the COB jumping up and down over our absence. As the time-to-beat shrank to mere seconds, I figured it was only a matter of time until some nubby EOOW waited a bit too long, and we ended up sailing away with the cables still plugged in.

Shore power cables, unlike the hoses A-Gang puts on and the phone lines the IC men string, don't do so well if they get submerged in seawater. Therefore, we use a crane-like boom to lift them from the

bunker to the boat. Now, in every other harbor in the free world, this boom is motorized, or at least there's a crane that lifts the cables onto it. That's because they're heavy! Seven pounds per foot heavy. And boats use four of these (or more) at a time.

In Pearl, which is not partial to the "modern" way of doing things, they have yet to upgrade from those tried and true manual powered booms; someone's got to climb up on the thing, and lift the cables up onto it by hand; while dangling eight feet over the harbor on a rusty relic from the glory days of World War Two.

When I first got to the boat, that was one of us electricians; the second most nubly among us (the nubliest was down in the trunk, trying to unscrew the damned cable in the first place). We didn't bother with safety harnesses back then; the prevalent opinion being that the boom was more likely to fall off the pier and drag you down with it if you did. I'm not going to be the one to say that was an impossibility. I have poked a pen through the steel frame of a boom on more than one occasion, to prove the point that maybe they need to be repaired.

Now, shop 25D from NAVIMFAC sends us a slob to climb up on the boom. This has become the standard ever since the higher-up brass on Subase were treated to the sight of a certain electrician on my very own boat (not to name names, but he had a thing for knives) standing up on the boom to salute during colors one morning. After that, they decided us nukes weren't to be trusted on the boom, and I can't say I minded not having to do it anymore.

These cables aren't known for flexibility, though they do bend more than, say, titanium, which is why the Navy calls them "flexible". They are a cast-iron bitch to install or remove in the trunk, because you can never quite bend it enough to line it up with the plug. All your electrician buddies up topside, yelling "encouragements" to you, doesn't help much, either. At least you can, on the rare occasion, accidentally drop a wrench down the hatch (if any of the officers are dumb enough to stand there, looking up at you, with confusion written all over their faces).

The shore power off, the electricians scamper down the hatch to go wherever they need to for their maneuvering watch. As a nub, this was usually something involving manning the phones. As soon as you come down the ladder, you surrender all control over your destiny to a handful of people whom

you saw last weekend puking drunk and peeing off a railing in the barracks. The blueshirts are even worse; they do the same things *you* do with their time off.

It takes a couple of hours to get clear of the harbor, and since there aren't many windows on the boat, you have no clue where you are or what's going on outside. You get off watch, and go back to finding some place to stash the seabag full of junk you brought with you, outside of your rack. That's strictly for food, cigarettes, and nudie magazines.

Under the Sea

To repeat the old cliché, riding on a sub underwater is a lot like being in a commercial plane, only smoother. There's always noise around you; talking, fans blowing, machinery thumping, and various bodily noises that are the calling card of the warriors of the deep. By the time they shut all the hatches and dive, you don't smell the boat, and that's worth something.

There are only a few places on the boat where you can find out how deep you are, and after you dive for the very first time (and find out that nothing at all changes) you lose interest fast. After you dive, you start praying nothing breaks that belongs to *your* division, while simultaneously praying something belonging to someone *else's* division does, so you can go back home. This rarely, if ever, happened. But it's more realistic to hope for a quick 1 day trip than to hope you'll wake up and find yourself back in Kansas, and it was all just a dream.

The day is split up into three six-hour shifts. During the first six hours, you're on watch. Then you eat, and spend the next six hours doing various maintenance work, catching up on paperwork, etc. You eat again, fight for access to one of the two showers which work, and then go to bed. You sleep for about five hours, and the cycle starts all over again.

That's the *normal* routine, for what it's worth, and I have yet to see it outside of holidays like Christmas. The way things really work depends a lot on what the boat is doing. The best scenario is that you're doing something that deals with tracking and/or snooping. The worst scenario is that the Eng wants to "focus on readiness" this underway. Yeah, you still spend the first six hours on watch, either way.

You get off watch, but before you can even get a plate full of that delicious brown & gray stuff, your boss is reading you a list of things which need to get done. Maintenance, fixing stuff that always breaks,

and cleaning out such-and-such locker. You nod, tired, and start figuring out how fast you can do all that. Then the off watch EOW walks through crew's mess, cheerfully informing you that the Eng wants to do training now. You go back aft to do some cleanup; the Eng is always trying to fit more cleaning in whenever he can, and you have nothing else to do while waiting for the cranks to get crew's mess ready for training. They send someone to drag you back when the only person to actually show up for training (like usual) was the guy giving it.

So you sit through two hours of training, and run off to get some work done. Just about the same time you get the equipment tagged out, and enough tools together to work on it, someone tells you they want to run some drills, and that you have to be a drill monitor. You put everything away, wander into the wardroom, and sit through the hour-long brief.

So, the six hours you were supposed to be working you spent mostly in training, and the six you were supposed to sleep during they had everyone awake to run drills. You're drop-dead tired. You shave, eat, and go back on watch. While you're on watch (you've been awake for about twenty hours now), in the midst of reports from control about what other gear has broken, you remember that the XO wants to do a "thorough" field day during the next shift. You sigh, shake your head, drink more coffee, and offer prayers that something in conerland (like the fire control system) will go tits-up and you'll pull back into port early.

If you're a nub, you can substitute "quals" wherever you see "sleep" mentioned in the above routine. Nubs have all sorts of perks, like compacting trash and doing wakeups, in addition to the normal stuff.

You might wonder what we do with all the trash on the boat. Unlike a skimmer, we can't just chuck it off the fantail, so they came up with a rather ingenious solution. As long as you don't have to actually do it, you can admire someone's resourcefulness in it's design. It sucks to have to do it, which is why the whole crew takes great pleasure in "electing" officers to do it on halfway night.

All the trash gets collected from around the boat, and then is hand-loaded into a narrow can stuffed in a hydraulic trash compactor. You can let your mind run wild over the stuff you'd find in the garbage while hand sorting it; no matter what you can think of, I've seen worse.

Once compacted, you toss in some lead weights, and they shoot it out the TDU, a torpedo tube for trash. Its a messy, smelly business, which is made worse by the thought that you are nowhere near a shower yet.

Wakeups are a bit more pleasant than compacting trash, but still a pain. On skimmers they have a great way around this: they get everyone up at 6 am, and keep them up all day. Since time is arbitrary on a sub, there's always one shift in the rack. The lights are usually off in the berthing spaces for this reason, and making noise is likely to result in a fist coming out of someone's rack in your general direction.

Alarm clocks are, therefore, not recommended.

(I asked a staff guy in prototype how they got up in time to go on watch on a sub, and he just laughed. He told me not to worry about bringing an alarm clock, so I just assumed there was some sort of alarm built into the sub itself. There is: the nub.)

You get woken up an hour before everyone else, and your mission is to track down the rest of your section and wake them up before the coners, so they can get in line for chow first. This sounds simple, until you do it a few times. Then you start hating life as only a nubbly nub can.

Hot-racking means that just about every guy you're looking for can be in one of two racks; the guy who's in the other (and who doesn't have to get up) is not pleased to see you when you guess wrong. All the racks in berthing look the same, too, so you really have to play the odds looking for someone. My first time, I made my rounds with a flashlight. Never, ever, shine a flashlight in berthing. Within seconds of turning it on a hand reached out and grabbed me, pulled me into a rack, and pummeled me soundly (with the flashlight, I think). I also quickly learned that shaking people to get them up was similarly discouraged. That left you with only one weapon at your disposal: your voice.

So, even after you had located the guys you were supposed to wake up, your job was less than half done. The hard part was talking them into getting out of the rack when they were just as tired as you. Heaven help you if one of them didn't get up in time to relieve the watch; then you'd have two people out for your ass.

Smoking is one thing a lot of people ask about these days, especially non-smokers who gag at the thought of a cramped sewer tube full of cigarette smoke for months at a time. I found that cigarette smoke was the least of the problems underway; there are several systems purifying the air, and there are worse things floating around.

When I first went to sea, you could smoke anywhere but in the berthing spaces and in the galley during meals. That worked out great; no one really thought about it. As we headed into the 1990's, though, the militant non-smokers scored victory after victory in the Navy, until the only places you could smoke were reduced to two. That was ugly; all that smoke in one space (and after going six hours on watch people tended to suck them down two at a time) created a nice little cloud of noxious smog. When you're underwater, it's not like you've got a fresh spring breeze blowing through; you fart in one space, you're breathing it in the next. So the logic in relocating the smoking areas, when the smoke wasn't going anywhere but around and around in the boat, always escaped me. Now most boats are smoke free (which makes dip the drug of choice in my book), but how long do you think that will last during a war?

Another thing you might think is an advantage is that there's no bugs at sea. Part of that may be because there's not a whole bunch of openings for them to get inside (especially once submerged), but a lot of it may be the oxygen content in the air. After a few days it is a tad below what you are used to on the surface; I think they just suffocate, myself.

Yeah, the boat makes it's own air. Oxygen, really, but that's the part of the air that matters. There are two ways to do this- either run electricity through regular old water, or by burning an O2 candle. The O2 generator breaks down water (H₂O) to get the oxygen. The hydrogen gets shit over the side, though the A-Gangers (who's gear this is, sort of) still refer to it as "the bomb" due to the nature of the gasses created. They also play around with the candles- some sort of chemical that gives off oxygen when it burns. All nubs learn the equation for how this works; I don't remember a bit of it, so ask a nub if you want to know for yourself.

In addition to making oxygen, the boat also has different equipment for taking the crap out of the air. There's the usual stuff, like wire mesh filters (what a brilliant idea those were; cleaning them takes the intervention of god to succeed). There are also electrostatic precipitators, which are like bug zappers

for dust balls. The cooks love these babies; they drop little pieces of tinfoil in a suction vent, and wait for all hell to break loose when it hits the 15,000 volt wire mesh.

Lastly, there's the scrubbers (which take out CO₂) and the burners (which take out just about everything else). That's why the air smells, but civilians shell out big bucks to breathe air purified by systems like this at home, so aren't we lucky to get it for free?

Some officers like to play with the O₂ content in the air; they bump it way up during field days (so everyone's wide awake) then drop it back down to the point it asphyxiates the bugs the rest of the time, assumedly so that we're more tired than pissed. This results in all sorts of phenomena you have to see to believe, like disposable lighters (and even cigarettes) which won't light, and the ever-menacing boat sores. If you want to smoke, your only option is a bic (Zippos won't work) at sea on a sub, which the crew will kindly point out after you're hundreds of miles away from a store that sells one.

There is no vending machines, or even little stores, on a sub. Even the smallest skimmer I've ever been on (my dad's minesweeper qualifies as this) had vending machines at least. They probably have whole goddamned *malls* on a target the size of a carrier. But on the sub, where the hell would you fit even the smallest condom machine?

That means you have to bring anything you want with you from day one; society vanishes with your freedom when the hatches close. After a few weeks at sea, candy and AA batteries are the medium of exchange. Cigarettes and dip, oddly, are not usually in demand, simply because addicts make sure they bring more than enough every time. There was only one time I ran out, but I gladly paid \$150 dollars for a carton when I did.

Actually, there is a store, but it doesn't sell anything you'd buy underway. One of the cooks (the one who cooks the best, i.e., the one never allowed in the galley) runs the "ships store", a euphemism for a broom closet full of boat trinkets, like pens, stickers, and ball caps with the boat's name on them.

While the crew never buys stuff like that, the riders and other guests more than make up for our unofficial boycotts. The crew just doesn't need a memento to remind us of the boat; in fact, often we think up new and exciting ways to forget about it when we can. C'est la Vie, underway.

Being a nub isn't all bad, though. For one thing, since you weren't qualified anything yet, no one cared if you left the engineroom every now and then; you might even be sent "forward" deliberately to get stuff like soda and cigarettes. After you join the ranks of the useful, you're trapped back aft for the whole six hours.

Soda cans were the big thing when I first got to the boat. All enginerooms go through a cycle, it seems, regarding whether or not you can drink soda fresh from the can. Usually you can, but then one of the Zeroes finds a can in the bilge somewhere, and the Eng forbids soda cans in the engine room. Since the standard-issue Navy cup will only hold about 2/3rds a can, you see guys hanging out at the watertight door, dumping soda into a cup & chugging the rest of it, warm, right before going back aft to relieve the watch. Then, after just about everyone is smuggling soda cans back aft, and hiding them in the air conditioning vent ducts, the Eng will give up trying to keep them out, and "allow" us to have them again. Once, while we were working on a pesky MG set, Jim sent me up forward to get soda for the rest of us. I wasn't about to remind him that soda cans weren't allowed in the engineroom; the guy could sign (or scratch) just about everything on my qual cards. On the way back with the soda, one of the more irritating Zeroes spotted me, and took pains to remind me not to take them back aft. I waited until he left, stuck them in my shirt (the smuggling location of choice) and scurried back. I told Jim what had happened, and he blew it off.

Of course, the Zero came back in a few moments, and there's Jim with the contraband soda can in his hand. I got yelled at for about 20 minutes about how rotten a sailor I was for disobeying an officer, and he wrapped it up with a promise to write me up for disrespecting his omnipresence. Jim and the rest of the guys in middle level just sort of watched in the background.

I was worried about this, as you can expect. They weren't. After the Zero went up on watch, they filled his rack from top to bottom with empty soda cans.... a gentle reminder that some things just aren't worth getting spun up over.

One other forbidden item back aft is food. You have to wonder about that; if you can drink coffee in the engineroom, why can't you eat as well? Like the periodic "no soda cans" rule, this weird exercise

in leadership is also frequently bent, twisted, and outright ignored whenever possible. It may make some sense, from a command point of view; sailors always want to do something illegal; if that is smuggling a few doughnuts back aft, then there's no harm done. If they had to find some other rule to break, however, god knows what they'd do. So, maybe officers are taught to make a few BS rules that don't really matter as a decoy to keep sailors from doing something *really* bad.

In the engineroom, eating back aft is about the equivalent of driving 62 mph in a 55 zone- sure, you're not supposed to, but who's going to yell at you for it? Well, one of the chiefs did, once. This story was told to me by JR, who it happened to one fine, fine navy day at sea:

It seems that JR was a little late heading back aft to relieve the watch (it happens) and decided to skip lunch rather than make the guy he was supposed to relieve wait another 20 minutes. So, as he ran through crew's mess, he grabbed a couple cookies to chow on the way back. He was still munching them when he went by one of the more anal of our khaki cadre in Engine Room Middle Level. The chief followed him up to Maneuvering, and, rather than just letting him eat the last cookie, ordered him to take it back to crew's mess. JR had already relieved the watch by this time (watch turnovers don't take long when one is late being relieved) so he told the chief he'd take it up when he got off watch.

Then, like all nukes, he wandered into Maneuvering to share the latest example of the Navy's unique approach to leadership with the rest of us. The officer who was (at least on paper) in charge of Maneuvering, upon hearing the tale, promptly consumed the offending contraband himself.

Now, about ten minutes later JR was making his rounds, and there was our hero, the Chief, waiting by the watertight door to supervise the Great Cookie Transfer. Neason explained that he threw the cookie away, and the disgruntled khaki stomped up forward to look for an article or instruction he could point out that JR was in violation of. He later told me that it took him over three hours to find *anything* in writing that even hinted that eating back aft was a no-no. This

was the prelim to writing JR up, of course, and our Eng promptly tore up the report chit when it arrived on his desk. There's not many examples of common sense once one begins studying the higher-ups, but this was a good one. The Eng probably reasoned that, given more time, such a malcontent as JR would screw up something worthy of Mast. He was wrong.

While I'm talking about mast, and the silly reasons one might be invited to join, let me tell you about the Taping of the Shoe. Shoes make great targets for taping on a sub; they're small enough to tape to almost anything (the shaft, that big spinning thing that makes the screw go roundy roundy, was a perennial favorite) and the victim almost always misses them immediately. So, when the EOOW dozed off one long midwatch, it was only natural that the rest of the maneuvering crew would take advantage of this to tape his shoes up for him. After a nice little nap, the EOOW awoke to find himself rather restrained, and flew into a temper tantrum over it. He fumed and raged for a few minutes, got relieved, and ran up forward to complain to the Eng. (Are you starting to see why Eng is kinda like a school teacher? No one likes him, and everybody whines to him when they catch someone else screwing up.) He wanted to write up all three of his fellow watchstanders, and needed the Eng to help him do so. The Eng just stared at him, and wondered out loud what the EOOW would say when the CO asked him *how* these petty thugs had managed to tape his feet up without him noticing. The EOOW then left, tail firmly between hind legs. He'd learned his lesson; the next time he got taped (this time upside down from the aft escape trunk like a giant cocoon in the movie *Aliens*) he took it like a submariner.

Chapter Ten:

Coners in the Mist- My days as a Crank.

I've got the Twinkie

I've got the Twinkie

Hey... (gulp) belch

With my crackers and dip I snack attack

Big 'n fat, with a gut of flab

Dig it 'cause it's midrats time

Chowin' on a slovenly level

Throw out my belt, gimme the Jell-o

Food on my mind, day 'n night, all the time

Fifty-six inch pants I buy

Pig out time, all the time

Quick my gut swells

I'm the Olympian Orson Wells

-Dedicated to the Round Knights of the Table

-The Twinkie, from the EM Log

Cranking goes back to the earliest days of the Navy, when the newest sailor on board was usually some 13 year old runaway who went along as a “Cabin Boy”, and basically waited hand and foot on the Captain. Why ship’s captains felt the need to have 13 year old boys around at all times I’ll leave up to your own imagination.

Flash forward to about 60 years ago. The Navy was building these new, advanced ships, and needed to actually train the sailors to operate them (officers are taught that actually operating equipment was bad for the hands, or something, so *they* weren’t gonna do it). Realizing right off the bat anyone stupid enough to enlist in the Navy was too dumb to learn everything about everything, they began separating up the gear among the men, so that the poor squid only had to know something about a few things. This is also how government works, or so I’ve gathered from CNN.

And, the rate system came into being.

On the 5th day, the Navy brought forth hundreds and hundreds of rates, which made everyone feel special. And it was good. The Navy created Machinist’s Mates, to do the yucky, hot and heavy work. The Navy created Electronics Technicians, who really didn’t have a lot to do until someone invented electronics, so they kinda got used to sitting around early on. The Navy created HTs and AMSs and BTs and TMs and... you get the idea. Then the Navy thought there ought to be some good looking, smart and crafty sailors, so EMs were tossed in, too. And, the Navy said, “This ought to be good”.

But, they forgot to bring along someone to feed the rest of us, so they created MS’s. MS stands for Mess Management Specialist, who’s name is the epitome of Navy thinking. One would draw the conclusion, from that name, that MS’s clean up messes, or at least manage what mess does occur. Nope! That’s what cranks are for.

MS’s are the Navy edition of cooks, though you don’t see much about cooking in *that* job description. The Navy was ahead of it’s time when it came up with that name; nowadays even garbage men aren’t called garbage men... it’s Sanitation Engineer, or some such blather. Call a guy who sweeps the floor in your office every night a “janitor”, and watch how fast he sues your ass for discrimination or harassment, or something else. Like I said, the Navy sometimes comes up with an idea so twisted the rest of the country can’t help but adopt it.

Now, we've got different rates, but the question remains: who's going to do what? The Navy came up with a simple solution: women get to do the typing and empty bedpans in the hospitals, minorities get to work in the galley, and anyone left over gets to work somewhere else. Does that sound unfair? It does now. You've got to remember that the same time the Navy was saying blacks could only work in the galley was about the time the rest of the country was saying blacks could only dig ditches and pick produce. For myself, I'd rather cook than work 16 hours a day in the sun, picking 'taters. In comparison, I've always thought the Navy was much more fair in it's relations with minorities than anywhere else.

Now, somewhere around the 1970's the Navy changed it's management, so that everyone was getting oppressed equally, without regard to ethnic background. And, with all sorts of new people becoming cooks, one thing was clear: they were tired of doing all the crappy work like dumping garbage and washing dishes. That left them with a problem: who's going to do it, if they didn't?

The answer? Cranks. Here's how it works, on a sub: On your very first boat, if you are an E5 or below, you spend at least 30 days working in the galley. If you're bound for Deck Div, you'll probably do 90 days or more. If there's lots of new guys showing up at the same time, you might never even have to crank. Tim is a good example; he has yet to come near the fun which is Food Preparation Assistant, because there were so many people waiting in line to crank that they sort of forgot about him. Once you get your dolphins, you're exempt, so he probably never will (unless I make chief before he does, of course).

Cranking does serve a useful purpose: it shows off the new kids to the rest of the crew. If the NUB does a good job as a crank, he'll make friends and contacts which pay off big when he's trying to get his cards signed. The opposite is also true: if he's a non-hacker, we find that out early on, too. Either way, it keeps the cooks from having to do anything except cook (and play Nintendo when they're done cooking), and the Nukes would much rather crank than work in the Engineroom; just ask one.

There's a story about Rickover which is passed down to Nukes right before they go off to crank. Apparently, when they first started building nuke subs in any quantity, most of the crews on them were transfers from the diesel sub community. And, to a conventional, a new guy is a new guy, so the new Nukes were sent off to crank like anyone else. Apparently they thought nukes were sailors first and Nukes second. Rickover didn't agree. His line of reasoning was that he didn't send the little weasels to school for two years to have them washing dishes. Bilges, yes, but dishes, no way. He raised quite a stink about it (he was known to get his way, from time to time), and for the next twenty or so years nukes didn't crank. But, the coners didn't forget, and the first thing to change when Rickover left was that: Nukes went back to cranking with a vengeance. And they appreciated it; the work and hours are a heck of a lot easier for a cook than for a Nuke.

I started cranking a little while after my first underway. It was over the Christmas stand down, for which my division begrudged me- the coners actually got a stand down; the nukes got to do work, like always. My division, the Electricians, even got to change out the ship's battery; a nasty, frustrating job I avoided the whole time I was aboard. Plus, no one seemed to expect me to work on quals, and I got to do some no-shit cooking from time to time.

My lack of quals both helped and hurt me while I was cranking. It helped, in a weird way, when we were getting ready for their SMI bi-annual inspection. That's sort of like an ORSE for cooks; they send a team down every two years to make sure our cooks aren't really going to poison us someday. They get asked questions like "You drop a piece of meat on the deck... how long can it sit there before you can't serve it?" (I'm not making that up, folks... ask a cook, and he'll tell you "two seconds", which is the real answer.) Having seen what the galley floor looks like, I don't think time is a factor in this decision, but they seem to.

One of the things they do when getting ready for the SMI is to clean, really clean, everything in and around the galley. One of my spaces was the TDU space, and I loved it. It was about the only room on the boat with a door, and, I could smoke in there. Being a NUB, I had yet to learn WHAT the TDU was, so I didn't mind scooping out the rancid goop with my bare hands. I cleaned that puppy as only a NUB with lots of sleep can. And, out of all the spaces the SMI team inspected, mine was rated the

cleanest. So, not knowing helped me; I'd have hosed it down with sulfuric acid if I'd known what the goop I scooped was.

The Sparky Incident

Then again, my lack of knowledge turned right around and bit me in the ass a few days later. It was a good bite, too, the kind that keeps on giving. One morning, for reasons unknown, E-Div secured the power to some of the galley, including the hot water heater. Without that, I couldn't wash dishes, and watched the pile of cups grow steadily higher with a sense of impending doom. If lunch came before I'd washed them, the crew would have skinned me; thirsty sailors don't care much *why* there's no cups, only who they get to tape up over it all. And, naturally, that would be me.

When the power came back, and the water wasn't getting hot, I had to ask the cook in charge how that could be. He said the hot water heater needed to be turned back on. I asked him to do so, and he said he would in a while. I stared at the five or less clean cups left, and came up with a compromise: if he told me where the switch was, I'd do it for him.

Mistake #1: Never ever send an unqualified guy to operate anything. He and I were not aware of that rule, so he gave me directions to a controller in the wardroom. I went to the pantry, which is right next to the wardroom (and, I thought, thus part of it), and found what I thought was the switch. It read "Sanitary Sink#2 Water Heater", which sounded close. But, just to be sure, I went back and asked if I had found it. The cook grunted affirmative, and I went and turned it on. The lights glowed green, I smiled, and went out to help set up for lunch.

About twenty minutes later, we start smelling the most god-awful chemical smell. We look around, and there's smoke coming out from under a pile of shit in the pantry. The cook called away a fire, and I grabbed a fire extinguisher... ready to do battle. Seconds later, the real submariners showed up, pushed my NUB ass out of the way, and took care of it. It occurred to me, about then, that this might be my fault. I was sure when the duty section started sneering at me...

It turned out I'd energized the heaters built into a sink in the pantry, not the hot water heater in the Wardroom. With no water, the sink rapidly overheated. That was bad; those heaters tend to do funky things when not under water. What was worse, though, was that the NAV was storing his photo

developing chemicals in the sink itself, since no one ever used it (Mistake #2; that's why you're not allowed to store them there; the pantry doubles as a photo lab at sea so most Nav's do, anyways). The bottles melted, and all sorts of chemicals started boiling away. There was never an actual fire, though. For my money, if you're going to burn something, one of those deep sinks makes a good place- it won't spread & all the water you use to put it out will go down the drain instead of a bilge.

Everyone hated me after that, as you can well imagine. I also got to fix what I'd broken, which is how submariners do business. That repair job kept coming back to haunt me, as the company who made the original sink didn't make it anymore (this is typical) and we had to jury rig another type of heater box. Four years later, and I was still trying to get that sucker to work as advertised.

After that, by unanimous decision, my nickname was "Sparky" among the crew. Mistakes are not tolerated; thank god I learned this lesson then, with no injury or real damage. I was damn near paranoid after that, and never did fry another piece of gear. But, every time I went by the pantry, I could almost smell that boiling chemical odor... a reminder that NUBs don't know shit.

Scandal and Loopy's Couch

For those among you lucky enough not to go to sea, let me tell you about the life of a single sailor: it sucks.

One of the things that sucks the most is that single sailors normally have to live aboard whatever ship they're attached to. That sounds just like the Navy... until you realize that there are E6's living on board the ship, while the E3's that work *for* them (many of whom are married) get to go home every day to a home, with a bed and shower and everything. Guess who they wake up when something breaks: (a), the sailor across town, in bed with his wife, or (b), the sailor sleeping a few feet away in berthing. If you guessed (a), put the book down now & watch the pigs fly by your window some more. You're obviously not on the same planet as the rest of us.

Submariners are the exception. Somewhere along the way the Navy Brass figured out that there's not enough room on a sub for people to actually live there, so they gave us cute little barracks rooms to stay in. I guess they're still trying to figure out where we're supposed to live when out at sea, since we don't get to take the barracks with us. The barracks, when I got there, was a lot like the freshmen dorm in

any large college- lewd, rude, and crowded with dudes. We were packed in there four to a room, with one bathroom shared between eight guys. Even the Navy thought that was a tad crowded, but... there wasn't a whole lot of money to build new ones when they couldn't even afford to keep the ones they already had in one piece. Most of that sort of money goes to make the married guys' housing nicer, anyways; wives write congressmen a lot more than sailors do.

In the last five years, however, I have to say that the Navy's made the effort to make the Cinderblock Camelot more livable. When I first got there, for example, there were only fifty phone lines (total) available for people living in the barracks. With about 1800 people in the barracks, I think you can figure out how long the waiting list was to get one of them. In fact, Barry was the only guy I knew who actually got one... two days before we shipped out for a 6 month deployment.

When we got back from that deployment, everyone had phones. We were dumbstruck by such a improvement, until one of the chiefs pointed out that it would be so much easier to call us barracks rats back in now that we'd be a phone call away. Then it all made sense; count on chiefs to explain life to you like that whenever you get confused. In addition, we found we had cable TV, and even an ATM. Suddenly, "Pits of Hell" didn't ring true when describing our home. Yes, the Navy does come through for you, if you wait long enough.

My first roommates were a cook (I'll call him Loopy) and an IC-man named Harris. Harris was cool, and could draw the best satirical cartoons you ever saw, but Loopy was just plain weird. All cooks are odd, in their own way, but Loopy did for weird what the IRS did for bureaucracy. One of the first things that came up was his couch.

Furniture in the barracks is like everything else in the military: old, ugly, and built to last forever. Stuff like couches and EZ chairs don't exist, unless you buy them yourself. That's what Loopy did; he bought a used white loveseat for about a hundred bucks. We all cheered this attempt at "home-ness", until one of us actually tried to sit on it. Then we realized the nasty truth: Loopy didn't worry about a white couch surviving in the barracks... he was *paranoid* about it. That couch was, to him, what a first car is to a normal man, and he loved it with all his heart. We weren't allowed to sit, sleep, smoke, and (most horrible of all sins) eat anywhere near it. That's okay; I can respect that, except that the room was about the size of a kid's room in a normal house, and the couch was taking up a big chunk of that precious floor space. We played along for a while, but, we couldn't resist breaking the rules when

Loopy was out. And, since Murphy's law was always in effect, the only time in our lives we ever spilled anything was when we were crashed on that couch. We got away with that by flipping the cushions upside down, and soon ran out of unstained sides to flip to.

One time, he came back early, and caught us all eating a pizza on it. You would have thought he'd caught us *fucking* the couch, the way he pissed and moaned about it. The next time he went out, he locked up all the cushions in his locker. We responded by tossing the sacred sofa out in the hallway, and replacing it with some normal barracks chairs we could relax on. Faced with the terrifying image of his couch out on the street, all alone, unloved, Loopy agreed to stop locking up the cushions and try to relax a little. He never did either, but at least he never pinned the blame for the Mai-Tai stains on us conclusively. That's about as even as a sailor ever breaks.

The first scandal in the galley was the Great Dope Ring, in which one guy accused two others of smoking pot off base one night. This caused a boat wide anti-drug witch hunt, with the highlights including daily piss tests for just about everyone. No one was caught, though somewhere the Navy's got about sixty more gallons of piss than it needed from our diligent efforts.

Did he see them smoking pot? No, he saw the accused (and guilty until proven innocent under the UCMJ) passing something that looked like a joint back and forth in a car. They claimed it was a cigarette, which it probably was. There has only been one real drug bust on our boat, and that was one guy who'd just transferred aboard. In general, sailors are the last ones to do anything stronger than alcohol, as the penalties are about a thousand times worse than for civilians if we're caught.

The XO was crestfallen; one good "bust" like that could have made his career. Since they got all the witch hunting tools out, though, he decided to play with them a while before he had to put them away again. And, in the process, he got a kill after all. It turned out that the guy who'd narc'd out his shipmates was there to see them passing the supposed joint back and forth because *he* was buying beer for them at the time. Both of the narc-ees were under age, and the Navy hates underage drinkers just about as much as it does heroin addicts. Buying alcohol for underage sailors was roughly the same as being caught screwing a collie in the reactor compartment. In the end, the narc got busted and the accused got off scott free. Such is the random acts of justice one is occasionally privileged to enjoy.

And the XO smiled, and saw that it was good. Since he hadn't caught a druggie, but the UA drinkers seemed to be biting, he decided to fish that pond a little more. That's when the scandal came rolling into my room.

Loopy, bitter to no end over us violating his couch with wild abandon, decided to turn us in for UA drinking. Did he see beer bottles? No. Did he see empty Scotch bottles in the trash? No. He saw Tim and I drinking a dark liquid out of glasses while watching TV one night. He told the XO they were mixed drinks.

I was promptly summoned to the hallowed chambers of the Inquisition, and questioned at great length. Remember, guilty until proven innocent... And, for once, I was. I told the XO the truth- they were just soda. He snorted in disbelief; why were we drinking them in glasses instead of out of the can?

Because, except when it's necessary, I prefer to drink soda out of a glass. That's always been true; right now there's half a glass of Diet Pepsi sitting next to my ashtray. The XO didn't like it, but without an alcohol bottle or at least a puke-filled toilet, he had no case. Tim got questioned just as closely; he had just turned 21 and was labeled as the "connection". The guys who knew us found the irony in *that* almost unbearable. Tim told him the same thing, and a twice-rebuffed XO let us go. Two months later I turned 21 myself, and I was able to forget about that particular form of persecution forever.

But, it was the final straw for Ol' Loopy in our room. Paranoid and weird I could take, but narcs are never worth the hassle. We launched a subtle campaign to convince him it was time to look for safer waters. He held out for about a day (I think the rather unflattering cartoons Harris posted all over the boat & the barracks contributed to this), and moved out the next morning. He was sly about it, too... he moved while Tim and I had duty, so we couldn't leave the boat. When we got back the next morning, then only furniture still in the room was the bunk beds... Loopy cleaned us out. Ah, well, it was worth it. Tim moved in the next day, and we immediately started "borrowing" furniture.

Finding new furniture is a relatively easy prospect in a Navy barracks. For one, it all looks exactly the same, so it's awful hard for the barracks staff to pick your chair out of a lineup of potentially thieved furniture. Most people don't even notice the odd missing chair or coffee table, and the guys who inspected our place from time to time sure didn't worry about it. We made doubly sure by putting our

own serial codes on the stuff after we “found” it, and adding it to the official list on the door. This worked so well that we were considering “finding” the ‘67 Mustang that was under a tarp in the parking lot. I had the stencil all ready to go, but Tim wimped out at the last moment.

The only time we almost got caught was when the barracks staff bought a whole new set of furniture for the lounge. The lounge was more of a display item than anything; no one was going to do anything approaching fun down there where anyone could catch you doing it. The only guy to make the mistake of falling asleep in there became the star of a thirty photo expose, featuring him wearing various articles of woman’s clothing. Let me tell you, it’s hard to keep a straight face when you’re holding a sign that says “Kiss me, I’m queer!” over a sleeping A Ganger for the candid camera.

Our lounge, then had all sorts of brand new furniture, and it was just sitting there, going to waste. I couldn’t resist; and we snuck back up to the room one night with the star of our collection: a blue and purple Navy-ish loveseat. Our home was complete, and life was good. Until the next week, that was, when the COB announced that the barracks staff was pissed as hell someone had stolen the sofa out of the lounge, and was going to search each and every barracks room in the complex until they found it. Tim, Harris, and I quickly conferred, and decided on the fastest method to sneak the sucker out of the room; there was just no way to hide a purple loveseat for any length of time in your room.

That night, while we were waiting for it to get dark enough to smuggle our illegal upholstery out of the building, there came a horrible yell from the top floor, and a purple and blue sofa went flying by. It fragmented on impact with the grass below. Then, another one, from the other end of the building, also took the fast way down. Both couches left nice little craters, and looked from our vantage to be rather well done as far as modern art goes. There was a moment of silence throughout the barracks (probably *not* in honor of the fallen fine furnishings), during which Tim and I just smiled. The silence was abruptly broken by a drunken bellow from the general direction of the A-Gangers: “Fuck the motherfuckin’ Navy!”. I nodded, slightly, at that. We did, since we now had no reason whatsoever to jettison our newest centerpiece.

I cranked for almost a month, and then went back to working for the Engineer. We made a few underways, and then pulled into the Competent (AFDM-6) for a maintenance “availability”. The Competent is a huge floating dry dock that is one of several WW-2 relics still in service in your military.

When it's sitting next to the pier, the Competent looks like a giant "U", with the sub sitting in the center. On top of each wing (the upright parts of the "U") there's a pair of huge cranes, who's main job seems to be to park right in front of the only exit from the dry dock, effectively trapping you there when you could be off sleeping or getting laid. Every Christmas, though, they mount a nice model of Santa & his sleigh up the side of them, which at least gives you something to look at while you're considering trying to swim to the pier.

You have to admire someone's ingenuity when you see how a floating dry dock works. When they want to dry dock a sub, they submerge the Competent until only the top 5 feet of the wings are sticking out. Then the boat swims in one end, and ties up. That all happens in about 5 minutes, after which everyone sits around with their thumbs firmly stowed in their asses for a few hours, with no smoking, food, or air conditioning.

Finally, when the Competent crew figures you've suffered enough, they rise back out of the water, scooping the sub out in the process. This is kinda like catching a small octopus in a tide pool at the beach. Did you ever scoop up a critter like that, only to see it slither right back out of your hand? Well, that happens with the Competent, too, every now and then. It sends a surfable-sized wave across the harbor when the boat rolls off the blocks and slams into the basin, and the Competent starts bobbing up and down. Nothing that exciting happened to us, unfortunately. The best casualties are caused, and repaired, by someone else.

Still, having since been interned in several different shipyards, I have to say that the best place to do an availability is in a Navy dry dock, owned and operated by sailors. Everything seems to happen faster, and the IMF crews from Subase do a much better job at fixing what they're supposed to and not breaking stuff that didn't need fixing in the first place. The only drawback was the food.

No lie, Competent food was beyond revolting. Our galley was shut down for our stay in dry dock, along with just about everything else, so we had to eat in the Competent's chow hall. One meal I remember (and my last there, coincidentally) consisted of fried rabbit, artichokes, little potato balls about the size of malnourished eggs, and some sort of pudding. If I'm ever stranded on a desert island, I probably won't care too much what I eat. In any other situation, however, I do not chow on Thumper. Neither did anyone else, even the genuine rednecked red necks among us.) The Oly came

up with a compromise, of sorts: they had people assigned to go to the various fast food joints around the base when it was time for a meal and get whatever you wanted. When the command does something like that, you know the boat's food is *bad*.

Being a NUB, I fell under the old law of the sea: "A NUB is a king in dry dock". Why is that?

Because most of the work going on requires fully qualified guys, and there's actually not a lot they'll let a NUB do. I, on the other hand, was having a ball in this new and unusual environment. Almost everything seemed to be open, disassembled, or otherwise ready for me to go poking around in. The top of the sub was crammed with equipment and scaffolding; every hatch was choked with hoses and vents and cables. There was a fun platform built up topside around the engineroom to hold nitrogen bottles; it was taller than the sail and if you climbed up to the top you could see most of Pearl Harbor. It also swayed drunkenly in any sort of wind, and let me say a ride like that will spoil you on amusement parks for life. If it ever did topple over, you (and thirty 100 lb nitrogen bottles) would go about 150 feet straight down into the basin of the Competent. I got to sit up there a few times on the phones, and had plenty of time to realize that bungee cord jumping was for pussies when compared to it.

Aside from hanging out on the phones at the top of the Tower of Death, I was sent over to the ILO team to get me out of the way. ILO is short for Integrated Logistics Overhaul, or something like that.

What it was, to be honest, was an anal bureaucrat's wet dream: we took every spare part off the sub, inventoried it, and then put it back. On a sub, spare parts are literally stashed in every space and hole that doesn't have a body in it; box girders, frame bays, lockers hidden in the most unimaginable places, and anywhere else the SK's think you won't be able to find it if you ever need it.

Working in the ILO warehouse wasn't as bad as everyone made it out to be, for several reasons. First, and foremost, we were all working for a civilian who had no clue how to ride us. He treated us civilly, underestimated our work capacity, and generally let us do our own thing most of the day. We settled into a comfortable routine by the end of the week: at 8am, the civilian told us what he wanted us to do that day. Then, totally ignoring Navy leadership principles, he left rather than standing around watching us actually do it. By 10am whatever he wanted done was done, and we took turns vanishing for the rest of the day. At 4pm we all showed back up, reported that whatever needed inventoried was

inventoried & double checked (anal is the word this should bring to mind), and promptly went back home again.

This went on for maybe a month, and then the deal got even better: half the Oly guys I was working with went back to the boat, and I was put in charge of the ones who were left. This was because I was an E5, and non-submariners seem to think that means something. The guys that supposedly worked “for” me were all qualified, a point they emphasized, often. As a supervisor, my main job was to hang around the warehouse all day, playing my game boy and trying to keep track of where everyone else was sleeping in case we needed to do something.

And, we apparently did a good job; there was nothing but compliments from anyone who mentioned the ILO team. Lesson learned: the less you do, without complaining about it, the better you look.

Chapter Eleven:

It's Not Just a Job; it's a Bone Job.

*You have been on the boat for a year
And we're so happy to have you here
But we want you to know
After all these days
You're still the NUB
In each and every way*

*You're still the NUB
So compact the trash
You're still the NUB
And you get less cash
We're still having fun
'Cause you're still the NUB*

-You're Still the Nub, from the EM Log

The MG fire that wasn't-

One of the most common things that sailors talk about when they're bored is the casualties they've seen. By *casualty*, I mean when something goes wrong and equipment ends up eating itself. They have a common thread, too: each story illustrates somebody's fuck-up and the bloody aftermath. All you need to do is tack on the "moral", and you got yourself a modern, blue water fable. The Navy actually encourages this; they substitute "Incident Report" for "fable", and "Lessons Learned" for "moral", but everything else stays the same. The only thing different when you hear a Navy-edition fable is that, instead of the classic "they all lived happily after all", most of them end with "the watchstander was disqualified, the Engineer was relieved, and the EOOW was lynched". *Nobody* lives happily ever after in a Navy fairy tale.

The first actual casualty I added to my sea story chest happened about two weeks after I joined E-Div. At least once a month, most of the division would muster in ERML to do the nasty: namely, cleaning out the SSMG's. Motor Generators are antique holdovers from the turn of the century; they are really two motors (one AC and the other DC) on the same shaft, so that when one motor is turning the other is generating. We use them to make DC from AC, and vice versa.

The reason it's nasty is the carbon brushes on the DC end. They ride on a big brass ring, called a commutator, and transfer power from the stationary part to the spinning part. As the motor spins, those brushes slowly get sanded away by the commutator, and all that dust builds up inside the MG itself. Carbon dust is black, and rather sticky, and makes you look like a coal miner when you try to clean it. No lie; you're sneezing up jet-black boogers for a week afterwards. There's no easy way to get at it inside the MG, either; only two people I ever met were able to get more than one arm into the machine at a time. Electricians really hate doing this maintenance; you can tell, because they want everyone to suffer along with them while they're doing it.

No one likes doing it, so there tends to be mistakes from time to time when rushing through it. No matter how many checklists or closeout inspections you do, something can always slip through; a disconnected wire, a kimwipe left inside the machine, a wrench in the starter cabinet. And, when you try to start the machine back up, it inevitably eats itself in a great pyrotechnic display.

Jim and I had duty, and I was just kinda "there", since I didn't know anything and wasn't even qualified SEO yet. They finished the monthly clean & inspect PMS on the port MG, and tried to start it back

up... no luck. The breaker supplying power to it tripped; meaning too much electrical current had gone through it. The chief ordered Jim and I to look it over and figure out why; it was a hot job, because the boat was supposed to go to Westloch the next day and the CO always likes to have both MGs when out at sea. The MG's main job is to change DC from the battery into AC if there's an emergency, and most of the times you'd actually need to do this always seem to be at sea.

Jim looked it over, and cursed a lot, while I fetched tools and nodded every time he'd point out something and try to explain what it did. After about an hour, he went back and told the Chief that he had no clue why it had tripped. Chief was under the gun from the E-Div officer, who was in turn being pestered by the Eng. Junior officers are often placed in a similar situation; they're responsible to the Eng for all their gear (especially if it's broken) but can't do much more than tell the Eng it's broken and tell the Chief to fix it. Both of them already knew that before he told them. In fact, there's a good chance the E-Div officer was the *last* person to know. Despite this, the Eng hounds the E-div officer about it, making him feel as if there's something he *should* be doing, but the truth of the matter is that only the electricians can fix it.

Chief, knowing that he had to fix it, decided it was better to be doing something rather than waiting until we knew why it was broken. He had us change out the brushes, which doesn't have much to do with why it would trip, but is a pain in the ass and made it look like we were trying.

So, Jim and I spent most of the night changing them out. This takes forever, because there are 40 of them, and half of them are upside down and out of reach. To get them out, you have to unscrew a tiny little screw, which usually runs off and hides somewhere in the drum fan as soon as it's loose. Since you have to do it all with one hand: hold the brush pigtail in place, hold the screw in place, and turn said screw with a stubby straight slot screwdriver, it takes fucking forever. I think it's safe to say whoever the moron was who designed these electrician torture devices must be in hiding in South America; I know if *I* ever meet him I'm gonna kick his nuts up around his ears.

The sun was beginning to peek over the mountains when we finally got the monster put back together. Jim and I looked like refugees from a minstrel show, except that minstrels are supposed to be happy campers, and neither of us was much of anything except tired. Both of us were cynically watching the Chief inspect our handiwork while chain smoking in an attempt to stay awake. By now the CO was

aboard, and in a hurry to get his boat out to sea. The Chief and the E-Div officer conferred, and I guess decided that it wouldn't hurt anything to start it up. *Who knows*, they reasoned, *maybe we'd fixed whatever the problem was without even knowing it.*

We started it up. I was on the phone with Maneuvering, right in front of the starting cabinet, when they did. I got to see my first fireball; a yellow-orange ball of vaporized metal bouncing around inside the starting cabinet.

I pointed this out to the Chief, and also the smoke coming out of the top. His eyes got WIDE. He showed it to the E-Div officer, who was busy listening to the announcement over the 2MC that the MG had tripped off line again. I asked if I should call away a fire, and both of them, without hesitation, said "NO!". I grabbed a CO2 fire extinguisher, just in case they changed their minds. Damage control (both political and the normal, save-lives kind) is the most important thing a sailor can learn, and even a NUB like me knew that the MG wasn't going to be running anytime soon. Calling away a fire wouldn't have made the CO any happier than the news that his MG was still broken.

Later, when we pulled the cover off the starter, I was vindicated. Chief hadn't seen the fireball; he only saw smoke, and smoke sometimes comes out of the starter even when it's working normally. Thus, he had doubts about a fireball, which were laid to rest as we traced it's path as it bounced around in the cabinet. Fireballs, which are really a kind of metal plasma, do lots of nasty things... like melting through anything in their way. You can easily follow the gopher-like hole through the cabinet after one has been by to visit.

We did find the original problem, a disconnected wire in the regulator, while Barry and Rich were replacing most of the stuff inside the starter cabinet. Lesson learned (i.e., the moral is): don't say something's fixed until you know it is.

Fire in the Dryer

Sailors run drills all the time. I mean it- all the time. And, as you'd expect, one of the most common is a fire in something or somewhere. Lube oil fires and lagging (kind of like plaster and ace bandages mixed together) fires and metal fires and fires in stuff that wouldn't burn on the surface of the sun -you

name it. A submariner trains to fight fires in just about every time of material except the two types that actually do burn the most- lint and cooking oil.

It goes without saying that putting cooks and electricity together will give you the occasional grease fire. No problem there; the designers of the galley expected as much and have all sorts of built in fire fighting toys ready to go. But, they totally forgot the other bane of the submariner: Lint.

Yep, lint. The stuff you pull out of your dryer at home in handfuls. The people who built our clothes dryer (singular- this isn't the Hilton, after all, we only have one) were definitely overpaid. Rather than a simple filter screen on the air going out, like every other dryer in the world, this one instead has metal chutes on either side of the drum to direct any lint which might come out straight down onto the heaters. Take some lint, and drop it on an electric stove heater sometime... see that puff of flame? That's how submarine dryers *usually* work.

Every few days it wasn't unusual to have a fire called away in the dryer. Most of the time it wasn't really a fire, just a bunch of smoke from where a bit of lint incediarated itself. But, since it's too difficult to explain to most officers the difference, we thought it safer to let them call it a fire if they wanted to. I must admit that this situation wasn't all bad; after all the hoopla died down, whichever electrician was sent to fix it got to "retest" it- with a load of his own clothes. There's only one dryer, and competition is fierce for it amongst those of us who actually washed our clothes. So, all in all, no one thought too much of this state of affairs.

One fine day underway, as the song goes, a new wrinkle was added. An IC man NUB was up forward was drying his clothes and doing whatever IC men do when the usual cloud of smoke came wafting out of the dryer. This guy was just a little smarter than the average squid, however; he took his clothes out first before he told anyone there was a fire. From then on, whenever discussing the Immediate Actions for a fire in the dryer, "Remove Your Clothes" was added. After all, the only thing more flammable than dryer lint is Navy 'Flame-retardant' uniforms.

Squids And Strippers -

You shouldn't be very surprised to learn that most of the nudie bars built in Navy towns thrive. Sure, sailors have a bad rep for things like that, but it is kind of understandable if you put yourself in the shoes of a 19 squid. First, he's a geek, which is evident by the fact he's not off in college somewhere. He's got a lousy haircut. He's in a Navy town. Put all that together, and you get a sorry bastard with almost zero hopes of getting laid. So, he's horny, and it's that desperate "best years of my life are going by" horniness every guy has experienced at one time or another.

Second, even though he's already proven himself to be at least somewhat responsible, he can't get a drink. Legally, that is. And, being still technically a teen, he needs to drink almost as bad as he needs to get laid. So, find a warm dark place with naked women that doesn't card and it's a good bet there's at least one squid already there. Hey, like the chicken and the egg, who can say what created what?

Now, it's not unusual for even older squids, who know better, to spend too much time & money in these places. And, every now and then, one of them finds love amongst the cheap beer and overflowing ashtrays. That is how Pug came to marry a stripper.

Pug had a thing for strippers. I couldn't exactly explain why; I doubt he could, either. He had been known to drop thousands of dollars on women he was hung up on, though, so it was no surprise that they liked him too. Eventually, like Russian Roulette, if you keep at it you'll score. Pug finally got one to marry him.

It was a recipe for disaster, though: Pug was one of those insanely jealous people who normally exist only in murder mysteries and feminist anti-men propaganda. No problem with that, his wife was retired, but she still had to come on base to see him from time to time. What's on a Navy base? Sailors. Who hangs out in nudie bars more than anyone else? Again, sailors. It was inevitable that someone would recognize her and say hello. That was a bad thing to do, if Pug happened to be in the vicinity. I don't use the word "jealous, insane-type" lightly. What made it worse for him, at least, was the fact we all knew how jealous he was. If you have a sore spot, count on your buddies to find it and jiggle a stick in it. I often wonder if his wife ever understood *why* we all went out of our way to say hello to her so often.

But, he did love her, and love can drive men to do crazy things. Right after they were married, as I would have expected, the Navy sent us all out to sea for a few weeks. It just works that way; whoever made up our schedule was very good at figuring out when we would be the most miserable to be at sea. Holidays were “givens”, but they never forgot to have us out at sea for stuff like the Superbowl and the World Series, either. You could argue that, with 3/4ths of our time being spent at sea, this was coincidence... but I was there and I have to say it was *planned*. Off we went, and Pug was miserable, for obvious reasons.

As I said, love and crazy ideas go hand in hand. And, if this is a proportional relationship, Pug must have loved her a whole ton because his idea was pretty insane. We were supposed to do a pers-trans (which is where the boat pulls into the harbor and transfers stuff but doesn't let anyone leave) in a couple of days, and Pug reasoned that, if he was suitably injured, the CO would let him leave. He'd get to spend an extra week with the wife while the rest of us went back out to sea, and that a body part in traction is a small price to pay.

He got together with a few of the thought-challenged guys up forward and decided that a broken arm was the way to go. But, how to break it? He didn't want to make any loud “banging” noises; at sea that's a big no-no for submariners. So, he had one of his buddies try to break his arm with a sledge hammer... while it was resting on a pillow to keep the noise down. Needless to say, it didn't work. A few bruises later, one of them hit on the idea (no pun intended) of him putting it in the torpedo room door, after which they'd all slam it, real hard. I have to admire that sort of tolerance for pain, because his arm was already pretty well banged up when he unhesitant stuck it in the door jam. They slammed that door as hard as they could, but his arm just wouldn't break.

Finally, enough was enough. With an arm which looked like it had been run over by a Semi, Pug went up to find the Doc.

“I fell down the lower level ladder” Pug explained, as Doc examined his mashed limb.

“Yeah.. That looks broken” Doc pronounced “can you wiggle your fingers?”

“Oh, sure” Pug replied, doing so.

“That ain't broke! Get the fuck out of here!” Doc said with a self satisfied smile.

Doc was quite the detective, though, and soon enough found out the *real* story behind how Pug's arm got the way it did. The night before we were supposed to pull in, Pug went to see the Old Man and got restricted to the boat for a week, as well as kicked out of the Torpedo Room.

The real irony came the next day, while we were getting ready to pull in. When they reeled in our towed array (a big wire which the sub drags behind it to listen for bad guys) it was all torn up like a shark had been using it for dental floss. We had to pull in to have it fixed, which meant everyone could go home a week early. Everyone except Pug, of course, who was restricted on board.

You gotta admire the Navy; not even true love can outsmart it.

The story of the diesel safety circuit

There are really two types of work on a submarine- stuff that no one wants to do, and stuff that EVERYONE wants to do. It's a strange sort of duality that the Navy encourages wholeheartedly, though I sadly doubt it's unique to the Navy by any means. Work that no one really wants to do is about 95% of what needs to get done, and most of it's routine maintenance work with the intellectual challenge and general appeal of scraping boogers off a bathroom wall.

The other five percent isn't much more exciting, yet you can expect to find sailors who haven't picked up a wrench in years fighting to help do it. Why is that? Well, one clue is in our affectionate nickname for such work: "High Profile/Low Risk"

"High Profile" means that someone in the command, usually at the Engineer or Captain level, has taken a personal interest in seeing it completed. High profile jobs take top billing over all other work, yet the work itself may be near-trivial in nature. For example, let's say that one of the turbine generator breakers fails at about the same time the water heater for the CO's shower goes down. The turbine generator will get fixed after the water heater, as there's two turbine generators and all they do is supply the boat with electricity. There's only *one* water heater which supplies water to the CO's shower.

The chief will dutifully report to the CO who got his water heater working, while probably leaving out the where's and why's of it's repair. So, while the CO may not know who's back in the engineroom making repairs to the turbine generator (that are near impossible outside of a dry dock), he's well aware that Petty Officer So&so was the one who got his shower back online. His perception is obvious-

Petty Officer So&so is a good technician. It doesn't matter that the problem was simply a blown fuse which took two seconds to fix.

High profile jobs translate well into awards and (more importantly) advancement potential. Most sailors are very good at what they do, so it's become increasingly hard to get promoted on the basis of job performance alone. This is one of the largest complaints when nukes do manage to get awards- they appear to be for trivial things when compared to some of the really complex repairs we accomplish. The reason you now know: they were "high profile".

"Low Risk" is a bit harder to explain, unless you're familiar with the process of troubleshooting.

Troubleshooting, when you get right down to it, is the art of discovering why something isn't working as advertised. And, most people are fairly good at it, whether they've been formally trained or not. This is because most machines are as simple as a common desk lamp.

Let's look at your average Joe Citizen. He comes home from work, plops down in his easy chair, and goes to turn on the reading lamp so he can read the sports page. He turns the switch on, and ... nothing. No light. No sports page. What do you think happens next?

Well, he hears his wife running a mixer in the kitchen, and the TV's on, so he knows the power is on.

He probably looks to make sure the cord is plugged in, then flips the switch a few more times while muttering obscenities. If the light doesn't work yet, he gets up and rummages around in the pantry for a new bulb. If that doesn't fix it, he'll toss the whole lamp in the trash and buy a new one.

Well, roughly half the troubleshooting that electricians do is along the same lines as our buddy Joe trying to get his light back on. Were an electrician to describe this troubleshooting, it might read something like the following:

Desk Lamp Troubleshooting Procedure

1. Verify power to local distribution panel (TV is on in the same room)
2. Verify unit power supply is operating (yep, it's plugged in)
3. Verify the bulb is functional (put in a new one)
4. Check for proper control operation (does the switch work?)

5. If the unit requires replacement, turn to the parts list on page 213, table 1-1, for current part numbers. (toss out the old one and buy a new one)

But, it isn't all that hard to figure out. It's either a bad switch (which is too much of a pain to change) or it's the wiring in the lamp itself (which you probably can't fix anyways). In either case you'll end up buying a new lamp or trying to read the paper in the dark.

This is how most troubleshooting seems to go, i.e., so simple anyone can do it. Hence, it's low risk, because it's easy to fix (though only other electricians will know that) so the odds of NOT fixing it are very low. This is a good thing, if it's high profile- if the CO knows who's fixing his water heater, and the guy can't do it, his reputation as a good technician is in the crapper. No one volunteers for high profile/HIGH risk jobs for this very reason- it's not worth gambling your eval on one broken water heater.

You might ask yourself why, if troubleshooting is simple, electricians charge forty dollars an hour to fix a lamp. Part of the reason may have something to do with the rest of us not knowing how easy it truly is, and the other part is the Tech Manual.

No electrician can be an expert on everything, and there's times when the equipment is complex and the problem elusive. In such times the technician reaches for the Tech Manual, which has a troubleshooting guide, written by the company who made the equipment, which provides step-by-step instructions for fixing just about any problem that can come up. So, if the problem isn't obvious, you need the instructions to fix it. An electrician (or anyone else who fixes things for a living) will tell you that you can fix anything if you have the Tech Manual.

The electrician fixing your lamp has the manual. He knows the obvious things that can go wrong. These are the main reasons he gets forty dollars an hour to change a light bulb.

Well, a classic example of troubleshooting was the Diesel Safety Circuit. This wasn't a very complex circuit, consisting mainly of switches which closed when it was safe to run the diesel generator. It was sort of high profile when it broke, because you couldn't run the diesel without it, but it was also high risk, because we didn't have a tech manual for it.

Here's the story: One fine summer's eve the duty officer asked us to help IC div fix the circuit. They didn't have a tech manual (it was locked up, and the guy who had the key was on leave) and the only IC-man who knew anything about troubleshooting wasn't available (He was the one with the key). The electricians evaluated it, correctly, as high profile/high risk, and promptly sent the most junior electrician forward to be sacrificed. That was me.

I didn't mind, in fact, I would have gone up anyways. I used to love fixing problems just like this, because it's sort of fun to do something more stimulating than blowing carbon dust around. I was a little apprehensive without a tech manual to refer to, but reasoned that the problem would be obvious.

Besides, it wasn't OUR gear, so I didn't think anyone would care if I couldn't fix it (I was wrong about that, of course).

So, off I went, and spent a couple hours testing various switches with the IC div chief hovering around me like an expectant mother, a dead giveaway that someone in the Uber-Kommand was 'concerned' about my progress. It took a while, but I did eventually nail the problem and figure out how to fix it.

The next day, my chief was upset that I'd spent the night working on gear that didn't belong to us, and twice as mad that I was actually sort of proud of my work. The other electricians were upset that they hadn't gotten in on the job, since it was high-profile. And, the IC div chief was upset because the guys in his own division, several years senior to me, couldn't do it themselves. It was a no-win situation from the get-go, which is why it was deemed "high-risk". And why I got sent to do it.

How 51E almost killed me doing shore power

There has only been once, now that I think of it, that I've ever been nearly killed working on anything electrical. For those of you who aren't aware of it, electricity with a voltage ("voltage" being kind of like "pressure" in a pipe) of as little as 30 volts can kill you, if it passes through your body. This isn't a whole lot of voltage; your car battery puts out about 12 volts and the outlets in your house are usually rated for 120 volts. Electricians routinely work with gear which uses 450 volts.

One of those high-voltage systems is shore power, which I've already discussed a few times. That's when we take these big, fancy extension cords and plug the boat in to a source on the pier so the base

can supply power and we can go home. Because the voltage is dangerous, electricians take elaborate precautions to make sure no one gets hurt.

At least, *submarine* electricians do.

The Oly was scheduled to do a berth shift that day, which is where the boat moves from one pier to another on the same base. I used to wonder why they made us move so often, when there was no apparent rhyme or reason for it, until I happened to notice the model of the harbor the Squadron CO had in his office. On it were all these little toy submarines, next to the piers. What if, during the occasional slow period in his day, the CO was playing with these things like toys, and forgot which sub went where when he was done? His assistant comes in later, notices the boats next to new piers, and figures that's how they're supposed to be. He tells the OOD, the OOD tells the boats, and... well, it's my best guess why we were switching piers that morning.

I was sent over to do the pre-arrival inspection on the shore power facilities at the new pier, which would speed up the whole process of bringing on shore power once the boat showed up. Usually this is a good deal, because the rest of the crew is stuck on the boat with no air conditioning for the hour or so it takes to move from one pier to another. I was also unsupervised, a rare privilege for a nub such as myself. I was determined to do things right from start to finish.

I had a laminated procedure to follow, and most of it was routine inspection stuff, like making sure the cables we were going to use were on the pier and in good shape. I also had pre-signed danger tags to hang on the breakers, which are little signs which tell other people not to try and "turn on" shore power while we're working on it. Danger Tags are bright red, and squids are trained (using techniques which made Pavlov famous) to recognize and leave alone anything with one on it. They're very political, since they're meant to keep people safe; only an officer can tell you to hang, or remove, a danger tag.

About this time a representative from the Sub Base electrical division showed up. This is the shop that actually owed the shore power gear, and they had their own checklist to do prior to us connecting to the pier. I didn't pay close attention to the guy, because I could see my boat approaching and I hadn't finished my own checklist yet. I was on the next to last step, though, the one where I was supposed to use a Fluke (a multimeter) to ensure that all the shore power equipment was turned off.

The cables are big. It follows that the socket they plug into on the pier will be big. It is, and wide open, which is why I was checking to see that it was turned off before I touched it. Imagine my surprise when I hear a loud “thunk” and my meter reads “440 VAC” just as I touch the leads to the socket. My fingers were inches from enough voltage to spot weld my weenie ass to the cabinet! I backed up with the same expression on my face I would have had if I opened my footlocker and found a king cobra snoozing inside.

Only then did I notice the sub base electrician on the other side of the shore power cabinet, doing something. That’s the side where the switches which turn power on and off are.

“Hey!” I called out, voice shaky “Did you just shut this breaker?”

“Yeah” he replied “It’s part of my checklist to make sure the breakers work.”

“Jesus, “ I said, standing up “I wish you’d warn me next time. You almost fried me!”

Then I hear a “thunk-thunk” as he opens it and shuts another.

“Hey!”, I said again, coming around the cabinet to see what he’s doing “Those are danger tagged! What the fuck are you doing shutting them?!?”

“No problem, I took the tags off first...” He answered, holding up the four red danger tags.

As I will no doubt be bringing up danger tags again in great detail once I start talking about life in the shipyard, let me be brief now: By operating something with a danger tag on it, like this bozo did, you can and probably will kill someone. It’s tagged out for a *reason*. Had I been a little more senior, I might have explained this to him in a way he’d remember by using tape in a manner not recommended by the manufacturer to emphasize key points. I didn’t have the time, then, and walked away knowing two things: I was glad to be alive, and not to trust danger tags to keep me that way.

Chapter Twelve:

The Land of the Trickle Showers

*The field days and the hit lists,
ORSE workups and like such
The coners seem to fuck up
Almost everything they touch
Don't matter if it's weekends, holidays or nights
You might as well stop whining
'cause Saavadera's always right
There's lots of aggravation
And lots of shitty deals
The engine room's a jail cell
At least that's how it feels
It's the lure of all that Pro-pay
'cause it sure ain't Lupe's meals
It's a loser's proposition
But it's too late to refuse
You volunteered for submarines
It's the Oly blues*

-The Oly Blues, from the EM Log

One of the things I get asked a lot these days, from newer sailors especially, is whether you can smoke aboard a submarine. And they are almost always surprised when I answer “sure, most of the time”, since it’s not like there’s an unlimited source of air aboard a sub. In fact, if there’s any area I would expect the Navy to ban smoking, it would be aboard a sub, but I guess too many of us “older” sailors are still around, and still addicted.

It’s not that the Navy doesn’t care. There is a huge chapter in one of the operating manuals listing all the things you can’t bring aboard, due to the fact that they will crap up the air. The official name for these are “atmosphere contaminants”, and the list is endless¹. Some common examples include most household aerosols (like underarm deodorant and shaving cream) , and most of the effective cleaning fluids known to man.

This is a mixed blessing. You just haven’t lived until you’ve tried to find shaving cream that ISN’T in an aerosol can, but on the other hand, painting is generally not done at sea. It all comes down to what the COB thinks; I’ve seen some that tried to get stick-up air fresheners banned as an atmosphere contaminant, and some that wouldn’t have noticed a stack of burning tires.

Smoking falls into a “gray” area; it’s certainly an atmosphere contaminant, but it’s still allowed. When I first got to the Olympia, you could smoke just about anywhere aboard, with the exception of berthing (with the lights out) and the galley when the cooks were making a meal. Anywhere else was fair game². We smokers were more than happy to go somewhere else if it offended anyone, and you never saw many people smoking in the same area to begin with. You could even order cigarettes from the supply system, the same as soap and toilet paper.

¹ In fact, they even made a movie about atmosphere contaminants, called “The Seventh Missile”, in which a boomer crew goes on patrol with some mind altering fumes coming from the new paint job they just got. In the movie, which is like an early version of Crimson Tide, the CO goes bonkers & decides to ACTUALLY launch his missiles while they were playing wargames, with the crew in full support.

² If you ever get a chance to tour a sub that was built before the mid 90’s, you’re sure to notice little tabs of aluminum riveted all over the place. These were holders for the ashtrays we all carried around with us- they looked like little tin cans with a tab on one side to hang them up when your hands were full.

But, even back then, I knew that smoking was rapidly becoming the social equivalent of farting in church. The Navy announced that the Navy would be smoke-free by the year 2000, and there was some serious official pressure on the command to discourage smoking. Since this was a generally unpopular move, the XO was more than happy to oblige. His plan was twofold; he banned smoking in any area where he found cigarette butts in the bilge (ie, most engineering spaces), and also while on watch (ie, the rest of the ship) . There was only one small problem: the CO himself, along with most of the khakis, smoked.

The CO didn't buy cigarettes, though. His thing was to walk around, talking to people, and he'd bum smokes where ever he went. This is a fairly smart move, since just about everyone aboard smoked, and who's not going to jump on the chance to bribe the CO? Of course, the XO never had the nerve to tell the CO where he could (or couldn't) smoke, so anywhere the CO was smoking was automatically a smoking area. If he walked into Control, all the smokers would light up, knowing the XO would say anything. The second he walked out, though, the XO would be all over you.

Things have certainly changed these days. You can still smoke, but it's only in designated areas (usually one or two places per boat), and then only five people at a time. In port you have to go to the pier, which is usually out in the rain or snow. Almost none of the chiefs these days smoke, and maybe one in twenty officers still do. Let's face it- smoking is on the way out.

The Booze Cruise

If there was anything that really defined my time in the Navy, it would have to be the Gulf War. No generation seems to be complete until we bomb something, and I'm just glad we applied the concept of Time Management to our war. Not only did we manage to squeeze full scale combat into 2 minute sound bytes, we also quite righteously kicked some ass.

But, I'm jumping the gun a little bit.

Towards the end of 1990 the Olympia started getting ready to deploy overseas on what is affectionately known as a “WestPac”. WestPac is short for WESTern PACific, and what it basically means is the boat will be operating out of Japan for 6 months. Those of us who hadn’t deployed before were sort of looking forward to it; we’d been hearing sea stories about exotic Subic Bay, Philippines and Yokoska, Japan for years. And I was almost legal to drink here, anyhow.

And, speaking of drinking, one of the things I wanted to try before going on WestPac was a “booze cruise”; one of the many tourist-y things that Hawaii offers. Here’s how it works: You and your bud go to downtown Waikiki for the evening. After hours of crowded bars, overpriced drinks, and stuck-up women, you find yourself just walking around with the crowd. Two women approach you and, much to your surprise, they aren’t whores. One typically opens with “Do you want to go to a party with us?” If you show any interest, and most of us did after a night of striking out with the local girls, you soon found yourself buying VERY expensive tickets to a 2 hour cruise off Oahu the following weekend. The inside of the boat is mostly bars, with a giant communal dance floor. Once you’re away from the pier, and waiting in the endless line to get a drink, you’ll probably notice that there’s even less women here than there would be in a bar back on shore. Since the ride costs more than a normal tour would, and it’s not like the drinks are free, it’s just not worth it.

One of the most memorable things about the cruise I took happened on the bus ride to the pier. The same girl that has hustled us into buying tickets was working the intercom at the front, telling mostly off-colored jokes. But, right before we got there, she admonished the women with us not to be as standoffish as they normally would. I’d always suspected women got off on shooting down men, but hearing one admit it was still disturbing.

Anyway, I was in the cab on the way home from the booze cruise when I noticed that the cab driver was listening to some news show on the radio intently. It was the initial report that Kuwait was being invaded by it’s neighbor, Iraq. Oddly enough, this was one of the scenarios in a war game called “Air Strike” that I was playing at the time, so I knew exactly what I was hearing. Even stranger, it was the plot of the Eddie Murphy movie “Best Defense”, which I had also recently seen. The next day, I started reading the paper seriously.

While I (and most of you, I suspect) wasn't an expert on middle east politics, I wasn't at all surprised when President Bush jumped into the Gulf with both feet. I'd been living with the inevitability of war in the Gulf most of my life; I still remember the Iran hostage crisis vividly and was relieved that we weren't going to let the "ragheads" get away with this crap a second time. President Reagan had done a great job of reminding other countries that there was a price to be paid when you messed with us, and I was glad to see President Bush following suit.

Most of the guys on the

6. WESTPAC POM CERT preps

- it came from the aux tank(and stores loads in general)
- musgrove and the TOW rocket at Westloch
- donger count chockula
- westpac widows Japan, part one
- barracks
- a club
- Japan vs. the us (especially bike thing/trust)
- guy who tried to buy shirt

COB TDUs shoes story

COB fires other MC's

CO's kindler, gentler field days

Chapter Thirteen:

I Love You, No Shit...Buy Your Own Fucking Drink

*I was horny that night
When she came into sight
Hitchin' by the road
A young girl in slut clothes
So I screeched to a stop
And she stared at my cock
She told me with her smile
We'd be fucking in a while
I didn't ask if she came
Left her standing in the rain
And to Penthouse I'll write
How I fucked her that night
Used and abused
Then out like a light*

-All I Want to Do, from the EM Log

Divorce and the wives back home

-the rumor mill

-the saga of EM2 Johnston, pimp

PI, Disneyland for men

-the first night(impressions and drunken staggering)

-Subic vs. Barrio Vs Olongopo

-The battle fleet arrives(cigarette rationing, the long line)

-McCracken learns about god during ground isolation

-The party and the resulting beer watch

-The great go-cart hijack

-PI shipyard workers

-the xo rides by on a jeepney top

-the stuck up bitches at cal jams

-my t-shirt vs. the boat; 40 sketches to nowhere

Chapter Fourteen:

The Weasel of Doom

On the twelfth day of Stand Down, the XO gave to me:

- 12 Hours of training*
- 11 Lights a' blinking*
- 10 P.A.I. hits*
- 9 Hours of field day*
- 8 Evolutions*
- 7 Fucked-up stores loads*
- 6 Stowage hit lists*
- 5 Cans of primer*
- 4 Grounded heaters*
- 3 Shot down leave chits*
- 2 Chiefs a' floppin'*

...And a hitlist for the bilge

-The Twelve Days of Stand down, from the EM Log

Singapore- the nicest American city

-shellback and wogs at war (esp. Howie looks sexy in drag)

-morals of a woman

-bars in shopping malls

-the women and their suitcases

-the cab story

-The saga of no shore power

-the broom Hilda excursion

-the fag & the blow drier on our table

-the theme park: a scenic photo op.

Guam- the rock

-the fat bitch channel marker story

-our leave system & how I was con'd

-impressions (after the hurricane)

-crappy barracks and the guy who ran them

-the duty vehicle explodes

-the fag epidemic (on base story)

-the Seabees build their own home

-the CO swims and our beach party

-Harvey wants to get in a fight (and the puke Seabee bus story)

-tender impression with rank vs. sub denial of it

The weasel of doom book

The Evaporator

-no water saga

-stripe's water source (spot coolers)

-our water sources

Chapter Fifteen:

Coffee's Machine

*You're feeding me this bullshit
Your words are all the same
But I guess you haven't noticed
How the times have changed
I'm the newest E-Div
But far from unqual'd
Read the In-Port watch bill
I'm senior, after all...*

*Speak to me, the shit you give
Speak to me, the shit you give
Speak the word:
"Oppressive"
The word is all of you*

-Speak(the Word), From the EM Log

The \$350 day off

The wives club raffle con job

Family Grams and News Sheets

Lost in Tokyo

-the "strip" rock sheers paper game

-umbrella madness

-weird shitters/computer shitters

-finding normal food

weasel leaves, work log starts

bob, the chief from god

-drinking stories

-the whorehouse story

-The Taping of the Cup

Pizza Night for Ediv

-honey bee analogy

The burner enigma is solved by a NUB

Desert Storm: we saw the Post-Game wrap-up in Japan

Chapter Sixteen:

Hey... What's With all the Yellow Ribbons?

*You read it in the work log, you see it every day
They say we'll get a stand down
But it don't work out that way
They moor the boat at West Loch
Coners leave that day
We don't shut down; we steam all night
I mean we're here to stay
More liberty's the answer
More augment and more schools
Ask any LPO man,
He'll say there's nothing he can do
Don't bother trying to fix it,
'cause it sure ain't nothing new
While the coners take the day off
The nukes always get screwed
We're doin' time in hell, man
It's the Oly blues*

-The Oly Blues, from The EM Log

What return from WESTPAC is like

The Boat-People phenomena

The changes in the locals during the war

The high-rise is COOL

The great barracks escape when power was lost

Coffee's reup: how we all got the day off

Edwards shows up- no more nub

The pizza lady story

NRRO- One killed and one wounded

Chapter 17:

Homecoming and PAI Hits

*Let me take you on our trip
To the world and back
And you won't get the bone like we did
Now watch the crew do the working
And watch the COB do the jerking
Let me show you the boat in my eyes*

*I'll take you to our bullshit training
To the depths of the deepest bilge
And you won't get much sleep, believe it
All the dipshits in manuev'ring
All the arguments you're losing
Let me show you the boat in my eyes*

The Boat in My Eyes - From the EM Log

Bob leaves and Sievers arrives

Barry's leaving, too

The difference between fags & art

My abortive trip to Australia

Bangor- How Subase should be

-difference in support, esp. paint locker

Screw sleeping on a Barge

Hatchet Face story

Clearing PAI hits

The flooding that wasn't (grease fittings)

Chapter 18:

Depot Modernization Period- Hell on Earth

*Well, I'm on my forth year in the Navy
And I'm cruisin' through cold Puget Sound
Eventually we'll hit Pearl Harbor
But tonight we're just cruisin' around
Took off shore power back in Bangor yesterday
Left his morning from the service pier okay
Like all the losers here
I call nowhere my home
Too dumb to leave
I work my fingers to the bone
'cause I'm on my forth year in the Navy
And I work where the bullshit is deep
There's khakis in charge of this madhouse
And they make sure we don't get much sleep
I've got dues to pay, and holes in all my clothes
I'm gettin' out someday, but when God only knows
They say the Navy isn't what it used to be
I've got people back at MEPS that lied to me
So, if you're on your forth year in the Navy
And you work in the Nuclear field
Then I know that your life has no future
And you still got two more years in your deal*

-Four Years in the Navy, From the EM Log

My first disqualification (opening the purification valve for a sample)

NRRO disqualifies everyone else

Instructor School

Entering the shipyard

Life in the shipyard

Out with the qualified, bring on the NUBs

Fixing the training program in the Navy

Stripping the other boats for parts

Involuntary Extension

Evals stay hosed

the flag in the sun story

the exploding SPM hydraulics story

Chapter 19:

Bad Attitude gets Worse.

*You see me now a veteran
Of a hundred underways
I've been living with this shit so long
That it almost seems okay
And I'm smart enough to know it
But far to dumb to leave
All my honor's in the bilges...
And I'm quite sure
That there's nothing more for me*

*Don't let this shit go on
It's time we put a stop to it
It's time this bastard leaves
We've been living in a game
We're appeasing the insane
Oh, COB, don't let this shit go on*

*You ask me why I'm angry
Why I won't work for you
You blame me for my bitching
Say "I volunteered"; it's true
But the shit's just getting worse here
And I got four more to go
And I can't see if I'm ever
Ever gonna get leave...*

-Veteran of a Hundred Underways, from the EM Log

Spiral in catch22 land

Disqual'd- out of the band & written up

Talking in maneuvering - written up

Tagout screw up - mast

Big Mouth- Mast

Fixing things shipyard broke

Retests and underway

Chapter 20:

Olympia Washington- Greenpeace & Groupies

*Let's run a drill simulation, drill simulation
Tonight
To emphasize the fact you won't see your rack
For another black
Day
I laugh at you, how you play along
When we sound the gong
Out at sea
The confusion in your eyes
Is a source of pride
To Eng's like
Me
-And then I fake a few alarms
Running drills you haven't seen in years...
Drill simulations, drill complications
Tonight
I yell and scream "What's the story?"
Meter, what's it read?
Oh, shit...!
Sucking rubber, the fans are off
And the seas are rough
Oh well*

-Drill Simulation, from The EM Log

The night of a thousand tagouts

The stranded coners at the bus station

The media and our boat

Diesel Fire in Oly

Ditching the reception/why uniforms were cool

They can find a strip joint, but not a school

The male strip show

One protester

The Boat Groupies

Meeting the governor

Chapter 21:

The Final Farewell

*Sailing on through endless night
Corpses under fluorescent light
The constant drone of turbine blades
Wearry men without a home
On the deep highways roam
Cut off from the world above
Cut off from the ones you love
A tomb of steel to mark your grave
A sandy plot beneath the waves
Secret lives and secret end
To never see the sun again
Accolades to metal gods
Worshiping their mighty throb
Hear our tale, it's seldom told
Of men lost to the ocean cold:
A bitter cold October day
The Olympia got underway
They left the coast of Puget Sound
For Pearl Harbor, homeward bound
A tired crew of tired men
Never seen alive again
Worked beyond their darkest fears
As the COB said: "volunteers"
Slaves unto his twisted whims
Protecting rights denied to them
Then came the day, or so it's told
When death arrived to claim their souls*

-Fathom, From the EM Log

Transfer blues

Appendix A:

Nuclear Power and Weapons in the Movies

One of the things that has grown to almost a hobby with me is snickering at inaccuracies in the movies regarding nuclear power and (to some extent) nuclear weapons. Whenever I do start yelling BULLSHIT at the top of my lungs in a crowded theater, one of my friends inevitably points out that the movie is just for entertainment purposes, and that the average person doesn't know any better. Then a helpful theater employee inevitably tells me the same thing, only more in terms of forcibly relocating my "lecture" to somewhere outside the theater.

Isn't that the whole point though? If the average Joe can't tell an isotope from an ion, isn't it all the more important that they get it right in the movie? After all, these are the same 'uniformed' masses that Greenpeace and other militant environmental groups manipulate with ruthless efficiency for the simple reason that they only know what they see in the movies.

A good example of the results of the sludge you typically find passing for information about nuclear power was brilliantly illustrated to me one day while eating lunch in a Denny's in southern Washington state. Across the road was a forest, with a nuclear power plant's buildings visible beyond it. My meal of chewy meat things was shattered by the exclamation of the 40-ish hausfrau at the table next to me: "Oh, my GOD! Sally, look at that!" she cried, pointing at the gray-ish clouds rising out of an hourglass-shaped building, the cliché for nuclear power plants known to our generation.

"It's leaking! What...what should we do?" her girlfriend replied.

I laughed, and leaned over the seat. "That's just a cooling tower, ma'am" I explained "It's like a big radiator. And, when it's cold, you get steam rising out of it"

"Is it dangerous?" The first asked, in such a tone and manner as if she almost wished it was.

"No, there's nothing but plain old water in there"

They looked at each other, then at me.

"How do *you* know?" the other hausfrau asked suspiciously.

"I've been working on one for five years now" I replied.

"Hmmp" they both hmmp'd in unison "like you'd tell us if really was dangerous" the first muttered.

And this is just one example of the countless run-ins I've had with the voting hordes over the years. The reasoning for their mindset is not hard to find; I didn't just move here from the Australian Outback. It's what they've gathered from reactionary press and idiotic movie scripts down through the years.

People, I'm here to tell you that nuclear power is both safe and efficient. More efficient, and more environmentally friendly than the radical hippy wannabes would have you believe. And what you see in movies, on TV, and especially in fiction novels is so inaccurate that it's about the same as learning about the space program through the *National Inquirer*. Nuclear power plants are much more environmentally friendly because the crew that runs one has about twice the training as those in a conventional power plant, and they monitor every little thing going in or out of the plant. Look at a fossil fueled plant: there is more natural radiation released from burning coal or oil in one day than a nuclear plant gives off all YEAR. And what waste a nuclear plant does make is carefully controlled; it doesn't just get dumped into the world like a conventional plant.

So, with that in mind, I'm going to give you some insight into the best (and worst) movies I've seen on the subject. I'm not performing arts major; neither am I one of those parasitic movie critics. These are just my impressions of what I saw, and you can feel free to skip past if you're more interested in plot, subtext, and lighting arraignments. If you had anything to do with these movies, and just happen to be reading... well, shame on you (in the first place) and my apologies if your little feelings get hurt (ha!... *sure*, I'm sorry).

Fat Man & Little Boy- This is one of those HBO almost-good-enough-for-the-theater movies about the team at Los Alamos which developed the first atomic bomb. It is, by far, the best movie I've ever seen that dealt with nuclear physics in any way, shape, or form. If you've seen this movie, and want to learn more about it, check out *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*, by Richard Rhodes. It won a Nobel prize, so you know it's worth a look. I had to fight off my engineer when I first started reading it underway; most nukes will find the origin of the things we do fascinating.

The China Syndrome- God, where to start with this clunker? First, it stars Jane Fonda, not even ten years after she did so much for troop morale in Viet Nam (not our troops', unfortunately). It's not

surprising to see her going for publicity on the wrong side of the line yet again. The China Syndrome was released in the wake of the Three Mile Island-2 accident, mostly to cash in on the sensationalism floating around about nuclear power's dangers. You can tell whoever the technical consultant was on the script knew a little about what happened at TMI, and just made up what he didn't know in the rush to get this on the market before the public's notoriously short attention span wavered. The result is like trying to listen to a foreigner speak English out of a phrasebook- they're using real words, with no clue what they actually mean.

Okay, the movie opens with Jane Fonda (hereafter referred to as Ho, as in Ho Chi Mihn) and a very young looking Michael Douglas (what the HELL was he doing in this movie?) as a team of reporters going to film a news clip on the local nuclear power plant. While they're there, a sort of TMI accident happens, which Michael Douglas just happens to film. Of course, the Men in the Dark Sunglasses don't want it shown on TV, and thus it's the government cover-up thing for the rest of the movie. Meanwhile, the Plant Manager (Jack Lemmon) discovers that some of the ultrasound inspections on the plant's piping were forged, and that there is a serious defect in the plant's manufacture. Now, the Sunglasses team are after him, too.

Looking at the supposed casualty which takes place at the start of the movie, it's obvious that someone who knew nothing about nuclear power copied a few pages out of the encyclopedia writing it. It starts off with a scram (like at TMI) and a rapid increase in Steam Generator water level (that's normal). The operators, worried about water (instead of steam) leaving the steam generators and damaging the turbines decide to cut back on the amount of water they're charging. (Kind of like TMI).

Departure from reality time: The person writing the script didn't know that the water that cools the reactor (the primary) and the water that goes in the steam generator (the secondary) are two separate and isolated systems, so he has Jack Lemmon draining water out of the reactor to lower the level of water in the *steam generator*. That would be like draining the oil pan in your car to try and keep your radiator from overflowing. In the process, the operators almost uncover the reactor core, and this leads someone to remark that they're lucky the core didn't meltdown and kill everyone.

In the accident at TMI, the operator saw the water level in the primary rising, and tried to throttle the amount of water going into the primary. This was just a little part of the casualty, but seemed to be the basis for the whole plot of *The China Syndrome*. There is no risk of a melt down, just as there's no

risk of a reactor exploding like a bomb- the plant is built in such a way that it's impossible. Even if the operators in the movie had emptied their pressurizer, they would have just drawn a bubble in the reactor core, because the plant was already shut down. Sure, there's damage, but it doesn't go floating around in the world. It's more like frying your pistons because you drained the oil when trying to reverse-flush the radiator.

TMI was a bad accident; not because a small amount of potentially radioactive steam leaked out of a storage tank, but because it gave the Media free license to make hackers like this one for years to come. If you still think this movie is factual and informative... go reverse-flush your radiator, and thus help us get one more idiot off the freeway.

Superman 4- I think it was 4; I'm talking about the one with "Nuclear Man" as the villain. At the end of the film, ol' Superduperman captures Nuclear Man, who's made of fissionable materials (and yet, for some reason, is also solar powered) and decides to dispose of him at a power plant. When I saw this scene, I nosed half a Diet Pepsi down the front of my shirt- it was like a compilation of every dumb thing I've ever seen in Greenpeace propaganda handouts. Let me take ya through it, step by step... after you put down whatever you're drinking.

1. Superman, with Nuke Man under one arm, flies towards a nuclear power plant.

- Yep, that's some stock footage of a real plant... somewhere on the wrong coast, though.

2. Superman assumes that the cooling tower (that huge hourglass shaped building) is where the reactor is stored, and flies into it with his prisoner.

- The building is actually where water used to condense steam in the secondary is cooled off, rather like the radiator in your car. On a sub we use seawater for this, and many civilian plants also use natural water for cooling. Either way, the reactor is really in the tiny domed building to the left of the cooling tower.

3. Shot of Superman flying from inside the cooling tower, which looks surprisingly like the inside of a large vacuum cleaner hose.

-The inside of the cooling tower is not empty; it's crowded with piping and fans and heat exchangers. But, if you're dumb enough to think a reactor is at the bottom of it (as the producers of the movie were), then this is too trivial to even point out.

4. Superman lands on top of the 'reactor', opens what appears to be a watertight hatch off a WW2 submarine, and drops Nuclear Dude inside. Supposedly the assumption is that the reactor is burning nuclear materials like a wood-burning stove, and thus Nuclear Dude will be destroyed.

-The top of a reactor is where the control rods are located, along with tons of cables and pipes and stuff. There's no place for you to even stand, let alone open a hatch.

-There is no hatch at the top of the reactor vessel; in fact, it's built to withstand huge amounts of pressure and a door at the top would kinda defeat this purpose. Why would you want one, anyway?

-Fuel in the reactor is built into fuel plates, and in very small quantities at that. It's not shoveled in there like coal on a locomotive. Besides, the top of the inside of the vessel is packed with different assemblies that position the control rods and direct the cooling flow; ol Nuke Man would be sitting on top of the thermal shields, not the core.

*-If there **was** a hatch, and you **were** somehow able to open it, you **still** couldn't drop him in, because all that superheated water would instantly flash into steam; blowing you into orbit like a bullet from a gun. The plant would also eat itself, since there's 6x3' unisolatable hole in it, but it still wouldn't melt down (sorry, Ho...). Thanks, SuperDork!*

5. Cut to the reactor plant control room, where a Radio Shack \$2.95 dial labeled "reactor power" suddenly pegs high, thus indicating (I assume) that Nuclear Man has been consumed.

-Adding 200 plus lbs of fissionable material to the core of the plant would cause power to spike, true... and it would also scram before you could even see the cheapo gauge peg high. One would think the operator would be more interested in why there was a fast reactor coolant leak... coming out of the cooling tower, of all places... than looking at an obvious movie prop.

6. Finally, a shot of all the lights in the city going on, for those of you in the audience who haven't figured out what crafty ol' Superman is up to yet.

-This is so retarded that I'm even going to ask what reactor power has to do with whether or not the switch for the light in your bedroom is on or off. Let's just say that the electrical generator turbines running in a nuclear power plant are powered by steam (just like any other place) and do not vary their power output if reactor power changes. Quite the opposite, actually.

National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation- I loved the scene when Sparky turns on his Christmas lights, and browns out the whole city. The on-the-case operator at the local nuclear power plant quickly runs over to the control panel, and turns on the "Emergency Reactor". Good entertainment, pioneered by *the Simpsons*.

Appendix B:

Submarines and the Navy in Movies

Much like the general misconceptions that movies like *The China Syndrome* have introduced about nuclear power, the media also seems bent (literally) on screwing up any sense of what it's like to be in the Navy. That goes double for any movie about submarines made after WW2. There are some examples, though, that someone actually had a clue while writing the script... but they're so hidden you need a real sailor with you to point them out. Well, lucky you! Here I am, to do just that. I've also put in some movies which anyone interested in what the Navy's like will want to see.

Operation Petticoat- Until this year, this was the absolute (intentionally) funniest movie about submarines ever written. It's a good example of what it's like if you ever go to sea in one with women aboard, too. The one chief is *very* believable; who else would want the crew to go back to painting a sub on a holiday like Thanksgiving but a chief? It also demonstrates one common feature of Navy ships- the jinxed piece of gear that never seems to work. In the movie, it was a diesel; on our boat, it was anything we let coners touch outside the engine room.

The Beast- This is a great sub movie; it would be even better if it took place on a sub. Instead, it takes place inside a Soviet tank caught behind enemy lines in Afghanistan. Well worth watching; the movie revolves around the tank crew trying to escape a roving band of rebels and rejoin their forces. Inside the tank, you find an example of the major personalities commonly found on a sub, acting just like they do.

- You have the hard-ass, by-the-book officer (who's probably insane) in charge.
- You have the smart, but tactless, Nuke... complete with glasses and chess board. He gets in a lot of trouble with the hardass, just like the real thing.
- There's the typical Coner, who does whatever the officer wants him too, but who isn't too bright. This guy, at one point in the movie, drains the break fluid out of the tank to make some

sort of alcoholic drink. On a sub, there isn't any break fluid, but everything else is the same.

This character hates the nuke-ish character, which is par for the course.

-Lastly, there's the NUB, who doesn't know who to model himself after and is far too impressed with everyone else's rank.

This movie stars no one, and half of it's in Arabic. Nevertheless, it's well done and should be viewed by anyone who's begun to take those Navy recruiting commercials seriously.

Tora Tora Tora (sub colors scene)- This is, of course, the definitive movie about the attack on Pearl Harbor. I'm glad to see you can still rent it, as the modern trend in historical media is to ignore the fact that it was the Japanese who attacked us. No kidding, even at the Arizona Memorial, you'd be hard-pressed to figure out from their displays who actually sank the *Arizona*. In twenty more years, this movie may be the only thing left that uses "Japanese" and "attack on Pearl Harbor" in the same sentence.

That's a shame, too, because it was a great execution of a crappy idea. The men who actually fought in the attack did a brilliant job of thumping us when we least expected it.

Anyway, this movie is just superb. It only has one US sub in it (and it's a class of sub that didn't exist in 1941) but the submariner is the real deal. Let me explain:

Okay, we're about 3/4ths into the movie, and the first wave of Japanese planes are just getting to Pearl.

There's a shot of everyone on the *Arizona*, in their dress whites, waiting for colors to go down.

Everyone's in pretty, neat, little ranks. They even have a band, which sounds like something skimmers would do.

Cut to the topside of a sub. The submariner pops out of a hatch, wearing oily dungarees, and bebops down towards the flagpole with a flag jammed under his arms.

Back to the *Arizona*, which has just been strafed. The men, well disciplined, stay in ranks until colors is done, even though they're being shot at. Only after the flag is up (flying over what will soon be a pile of rusty scrap metal on the bottom anyhow) do they go to their battle stations.

On the submarine, though, things are done a tad different. A plane flies by, and strafes the sub. The submariner takes one look at it, basically says “FUCK colors”, and jumps right over the side, flag and all.

This illustrates the basic difference between skimmers and submariners: skimmers are dumb.

Down Periscope- This the very best submarine movie ever made. Kelsey Grammar is *very* convincing as the type of submarine skipper who will survive in combat. I only wish I’d worked for a CO like him myself; most junior officers with his leadership style have their careers squashed at about the O-2 level. Hopefully, when winning a war takes precedence (over NRRO, political correctness, material condition, and all the other things that turn officers into bureaucrats) submariners like this will come forward to drive our boats for us. See this movie with a submariner if you can; most of the jokes (like the little ship’s store and the XO) are insider jokes only a submariner would catch.

Mr. Roberts

Run Silent, Run Deep

The Caine Mutiny

The Abyss (opening)

Hunt for Miss October

Crimson Tide- Jeez, where to start?? This movie, I think, was written to give Trident sailors something to laugh about the next time they went to sea. The first thing I wondered (aloud, to the embarrassment of my date) is what carrier they filmed it on; there’s far too many running bodies in every scene, and far too much space in which to run. Here are some other (barely even noticeable) things I just happened to find:

- Notice that every enlisted guy is a moron? In reality, most enlisted men on a sub have just as much training (and often a lot more) as the officers. Most of us have college degrees, too; the thing that the Navy uses to decide who’s going to be good leaders.

But... the time the XO is pestering the radio guy, and the radio guy just hangs up on him was true to life. Officers break things, enlisted guys fix them, and the officers usually hover somewhere nearby, asking them when it will be fixed at least once a minute.

- The scene where the fat assed lieutenant starts bellowing like a drill sergeant in the bus was probably the single most hilarious one in the movie. If an officer was dumb enough to abuse his rank in such an unprofessional manner, that would have been his last underway. Besides, anyone as fat as that poor sailor was probably has a medical excuse chit against doing manual labor.

- I know why the whole crew flipped out: it was those flashing ambulance lights all over the place. And, flashing yellow disco lights like they had would be permanently disabled by the crew the first time it went off; it's a dangerous distraction (and besides, it's fucking annoying).

- If I ever saw a dog pissing on anything inside the sub, we'd be having fresh hot dog(s) that night for dinner. And, I sure as hell wouldn't be cleaning it up.

- There was one realistic moment that I caught: After the torpedo attack, notice that maneuvering calls forward, asking for "off watch electricians to lay aft for ground isolation". That's a real command; we do it all the time & twice as much if there's cooks aboard.

-Likewise, the fire in the galley was believable, if for no other reason than that's where most of the fires *are* on a real sub. They could have also said "fire in the dryer" and been just as accurate.

-Everything back aft was wrong; but I can't tell you what or why... unless I killed you afterwards.

- Who was that idiot with the bugle at quarters? No one runs to get onto the boat, but they may have run towards that guy so they could toss him off the pier.

Despite all that, it's worth seeing because the special effects are kickin' and there's some good one-liner's. And, who knows? It may inspire you to volunteer for subs, in which case you can have MY spot.

The Enemy Below

Gray Lady Down

The Seventh Missile

Glossary

A-Gang	The bastards of the Engineering department; these non-nuke Machinist Mates nevertheless get just as much work (and abuse) as everyone else who works for the Engineer. A-Gang owns all the yucky systems on a sub that the nuke MMs are smart enough to avoid.
Angles & Dangles	Riding in a sub at sea is often compared to riding in a plane. This what it's like when the pilot is Chuck Yeager. Often done to amuse wives during family cruises, and to amuse the crew when the cooks have lots of stuff lying around in the galley.
Answering Bells	The sole reason the throttleman never gets a chance to sit down like everyone else in maneuvering; this means changing the speed the sub is travelling at. Comes from the ringing noise the EOT makes. See EOT .
BCP	B allast C ontrol P anel, the single most complex control system we let the coners play with. The BCP is in Control, and manned by the COW at sea. The BCP monitors and controls the trim and drain systems on the sub. See COW .
Bilge	The bottom of the inside of the sub. Subs are round, so everything eventually leaks, overflows, or falls into the bilge. A perennial favorite during field day, most bilges are full of oily water, dirt, and sleeping nukes.
Blowing Sans	The basic version of a coner practical joke; it consists of pressurizing the tank under the toilets that holds all the shit (the "san"), then tricking someone into opening one of the ball valves so they get sprayed with a stream of high pressure turds. Hey- I never said it was <i>funny</i> , just that coners do it a lot.
Blueshirt	Nickname for anyone not in the khaki cadre (i.e., officers and chiefs); Enlisted men refer to themselves as blueshirts in a grudging acceptance

Boat Sores	<p>that they are the ones who do 9/10ths of the physical labor in the Navy. After you've been at sea awhile, you find that cuts and scratches don't heal much, probably due to fatigue and lower than normal O₂ levels. They don't get infected, exactly, they just form these little red sores all over your hands and arms. They go away when you get back to port, but leave little scars to remind you it's not just a job, it's an adventure.</p>
Bonejob	Just what you thought it meant before you looked it up.
Brow	What we call a "gangplank" just to confuse people who learned about the Navy from old Popeye cartoons. A wobbly aluminum walkway to let the coners get from the boat to the pier without killing themselves in the process.
Bubblehead	What a surface sailor calls a submariner right before the submariner tapes him to a condensate pipe.
Bug Juice	A fruit punch served Navywide, which is more prized for it's acidic properties (it's great for cleaning toilets and funnels) than it's palatability.
Bull Nuke	Nickname for the EDEA, the senior enlisted nuke. Usually a Master Chief or Senior Chief petty officer. Basically a COB for the nukes, since the COB is a coner and the nukes don't listen to him anyways.
Burner	A device A-Gang plays with that takes impurities (like carbon monoxide) out of the air.
Burning a movie	Watching a movie on a submarine. If a movie gets watched over 50 times, they consider it "qualified" and stamp a little set of dolphins on it. <i>Roadhouse</i> and anything with kung-fu & lots of topless babes are examples of "qualified" movies.
Cancer	One of the many theories associated with leadership; this one assumes bad morale throughout a crew is the result of a few "cancerous" ringleaders. If you identify and remove these malcontents, morale is bound to improve. Unfortunately, this never seems to work in practice,

	which is maybe why it's only a theory.
Casualty	A threat to the ship, other than the enemy. Typical casualties include fires in the dryer, fires in the galley, and anything else involving coners for an extended period.
Cat Turds	Nickname for a strange dish found only on submarines, consisting of a piece of jerky-like beef wrapped around some sort of stuffing and smothered in greasy gravy. Actually quite good, if you can get past the fact it looks just like a cat turd.
Cavitate	What happens when the OOD, the throttleman, or both, are losers. When the boat is making all sorts of noise because the screw is spinning too fast of the depth of the sub.
Checkout	When you bribe, whine, bluff, and cringe trying to get someone to sign off your qual card so you won't go dink.
Chop	The supply officer on a submarine, who has the unique distinction of being the only non-nuke officer. This nickname comes the shape of his insignia, which looks like a pork chop. Somewhere along the way the supply officers themselves must have misunderstood this nickname, because ever since they have chopped (disapproved) virtually every request for more tools and parts.
Clue, to get a	To understand something.
CO	Commanding Officer , the guy who's in charge of the boat. Usually a captain, or a commander trying to make captain.
COB	Acronym for Chief of the Boat . By definition, the senior most enlisted man on a submarine. His main job appears to be fussing over how clean the boat is, how your uniform looks, and whether your rack is made or not. He is considered a coner by the nukes, so the only reason they listen to him is that he gives out rack assignments & would have them sleeping in the torpedo room if they didn't.

Colors	That wonderful time, twice a day, when everyone outside stops to salute the flag (the “colors”) as it’s raised and lowered all over the base. You can usually tell when colors is about to happen; sailors all over the base are hiding in doorways waiting for it to end (rather than standing outside saluting for 5 minutes or more). If there is ever an air raid, this would be the fastest way to get everyone inside.
Coner	From the word “cone”, which is what the front of a sub looks like. A coner is someone who works in the forward end of the boat- anyone who isn’t a nuke, in other words.
Control	An oxymoron; the room where the coners worry about driving the ship from. Most often heard in the engineroom as “Look what those idiots in Control want us to do now!”
Control Rods	Control rods regulate the amount of fission in the core by absorbing neutrons. See SCRAM .
Controller	A device used to operate a motor from a remote location, usually including safety and protective features. The ignition switch in your car is a good example of a motor controller.
Cooks	A hopelessly optimistic nickname for the Navy rate of Mess Management Specialist. You see, nowhere in their real job description does it say anything about cooking, so this nickname is meant to encourage them to learn how. Cooks are good at destroying each and every piece of electrical gear within their domain. See grounds .
Cover	Hat, especially the white “sailor-looking” Dixie cup hat.
COW	<i>Chief of the Watch</i> , often stood by a real live chief; the COW sits at the BCP (in Control), tells sea stories, and drinks a gallon of coffee an hour. The throttleman is the only nuke who has much to do with the COW when the boat is at sea.
Crank	A combination busboy/dishwasher who works in a submarine galley.

Everyone below the rank of E-6 spends at least 30 days doing this before they earn their dolphins for the first time. Actually a good deal, for the nukes, because cranking requires less effort than even being a cook.

Crew's Mess

The only home-ish room on the boat. A collection of picnic benches where the crew gathers to eat, train, watch movies, and sleep while doing all of the above. This is also where all the coners huddle when there's any sort of emergency.

Critical

When the reactor core has just enough fission activity producing neutrons to keep the reaction rate constant. If sub-critical, the reaction rate is decreasing, and if super-critical the reaction rate is increasing. It's terms like this, though, that make Greenpeace nuts freak out and write anti-nuclear editorials.

DC Gear

Damage Control gear; all the stuff like fire extinguishers and medical first aid kits which is used to fight casualties. If you don't know all of the DC gear on the boat like the end of your dick, you have no place being on a submarine.

Diggit

"Dig It"; another word for lifer; someone who not only supports every BS rule that comes down the pike, he cheers in favor of them. See **Lifer**.

Dink

Short for delinquent; what happens when someone in quals falls too far behind where he's supposed to be as far as progress. Kind of like wearing a kick-me sign, because dinks have zero rights until they're off the dink list. Basically the opposite of a hot runner.

Diode

A crewman who only helps out himself. For example- a person who goes on a coke run and doesn't bring anything back for the rest of us is a diode. From the electronic device of the same name which only allows electric current to flow in one direction. Mechanics, who know nothing

about electricity, call these people “check valves”, the plumbing equivalent of a diode.

DMP

Depot Modernization Period - when the Navy parks a submarine in the shipyard to get the newest gear. Kind of like driving your car to a garage to get a tune up, and giving the mechanic a blank check to “take care of anything he finds wrong at his own disgression”. When you get your car back (two months later), you’ll be lucky if he hasn’t changed everything but the ashtray. Only, with a real DMP, nothing works afterwards. I’m sure the crew of the Thresher had some choice words about shipyard overhauls.

Doc

A mythical creature seen only in port, the “doc” is the ship’s one and only corpsman. He doesn’t stand watch or do much of anything, except doc stuff, which no one can really describe. We assume he rigs an IV bag and crawls into a rack as soon as the boat goes out to sea. Sometimes (in port) he stands by the line of people waiting to eat, showing them pictures of nasty wounds from the Medical Book of Disgusting Things.

Doghouse

A tent made out of canvas and pipes placed over open hatches to keep the cold in and the rain out. About twice every year, one will blow over the side into the harbor and sink.

Dolphins

The insignia a sailor earns for qualifying in “submarines”; the main qualification for coners. Since getting your dolphins doesn’t let you stand any watch, the nukes tend to forget about it until the last minute. On many boats, though, dolphins are the dividing line between being considered useless and being considered a submariner. See **Movie Pass**.

EAB

Emergency Breathing Apparatus; a forced-air face mask which always smells like someone else’s snot when you put it on. Used anytime the air

in the boat may be toxic. Wearing one longer than 10 minutes will give you a pretty rash and a wicked headache.

EB Green

Stands for *E*lectric *B*oat Green- a very tough and sticky version of duct tape. Modern submariners work with EB Green the way old time sailors used to work with knots and rope. See **Tape**.

EDO

*E*ngineering *D*uty *O*fficer- the poor lieutenant in charge of the engineroom for the day while in port. His main jobs are to worry about whether all the logs get taken correctly, and to ensure that absolutely nothing of any consequence occurs during his duty.

EDPO

*E*ngineering *D*uty *P*etty *O*fficer is the chief who spends most of his duty day guarding the goat locker (and his rack therein). His main job is to complain about nobody standing a proper watch and how dirty the engineroom is.

ELT

*E*ngineering *L*aboratory *T*echnician; a nuke MM who was given special training in chemistry and radcon. They are great to have on board, because no one else can understand half the crap they do. ELTs own the only private space in the engineroom: Nucleonics. They spend an awful lot of time in there, especially during stores load and field day.

EM

*E*lectrician's *M*ate; A carbon based life form (literally) and the only people who never get shocked on a submarine (they just touch things which are "sharp"). Natural born thieves, they steal tools from MMs and parts from ETs. They are wary of virtually all coners who work with electrical gear, as most of it is equipment that EMs have to fix when they should be asleep.

Engineer

The officer in charge of things mechanical related to the boat, especially the engineroom and reactor plant. Usually swallows a bottle of Maalox every two hours, or smokes like a chimney, or both. A very tense individual, not to be bothered unnecessarily.

EO	<i>Electrical Operator</i> ; the electrician who's responsible for controlling the electric plant. The senior watch for EMs underway.
EOOW	<i>Engineering Officer Of the Watch</i> . The ensign or Ltjg who hangs out in maneuvering and says "very well, electrical operator" a lot when the boat's out at sea.
EOT	<i>Engine Order Telegraph</i> ; how the coners in Control let the throttleman know what speed they'd like to go. On just about every other type of ship in the navy this is a redundant system.
ET	<i>Electronics Technician</i> ; aka "Twidgets". Their job is to watch over the reactor itself and the electronics end of nuclear stuff. Never seen without a tweaker. Most twidgets resent EMs, probably because it doesn't take EMs two hours to solder a couples of wires together. Twidgets get lots of spare parts, which are often just laying out where anyone can "borrow" them.
Eval	<i>Evaluation</i> ; the yearly report card sailors get from the command. These are the basis for everything that matters in a career, like promotions and duty assignments. A good one is like gold, and a bad one can end your career. Eval is Latin for "Why doesn't the front match the back?"
EWS	<i>Engineering Watch Supervisor</i> ; the chief who wanders around in the engineroom underway, reviewing logs and making cleaning hitlists. The enlisted equivalent of an EOOW.
Family Cruise	When the boat could be in port, but instead it goes back out to sea with a bunch of the crews' families all crammed up forward. I can think of better ways to spend a day with the family, but apparently the Navy couldn't, so these are common.
Field Day	Rub-a-dub-dub, clean up the sub.
Float Test	This is a common way of getting rid of things you don't like while next to the pier. You toss it over the side, and see if it floats. The Navy's

insistence on sending us crappy food, like cans of spinach and sauerkraut, is one reason the harbor is only a few feet deep. There are also a few TDU weights and coffee cups on the bottom which failed the float test.

Flop, Flop&Twitch

What happens to the khakis when something goes wrong. Basically consists of them yelling at each other that “something needs to be done” while the blueshirts are busy doing it. In other words, to stress out, to panic.

FTN

*F*uck *T*he Navy, or (**F**ree **T**he **N**ukes, if you get caught writing it on anything). The most common acronym in the military, it can be found on virtually every surface inside a submarine, including the CO’s rack. Every FTN ever written on navy gear was done by one disgruntled seaman during the years 1967-1972; no one would *ever* be angry enough to do it in today’s navy.

Galley

The Navy’s impression of a kitchen. The only place the cooks are allowed to operate anything on a sub. Most of the electrical equipment in here is hosed down with water and/or grease at least once a day, so don’t touch anything energized.

GMT

General *M*isuse of *T*ime; what happens when you try to get 130 people into a space about the size of your bedroom, and then tell them things they already know for an hour. They do this a lot on subs.

Goat

Nickname for a Navy chief, possibly the basis of the term “goatfuck”

Goat Locker

A foul, smoky, cramped little clubhouse for the chiefs in the forward end of the boat. This is where they all sit around and figure out new ways to bypass their division officers.

Grounds

Cooks + water/grease + electrical equipment = grounds.

Growl

To call someone, as in “Growl Control, and find out if anyone’s awake up there”. See **Growler**.

Growler	A nickname for sound powered phones, which make a growling noise (instead of just ringing) when someone calls you. The first phones ever used in the world were sound-powered; the Navy has yet to upgrade theirs from the original design.
Gundecking	Falsifying the completion of PMS (or related paperwork), a serious charge which often results in the end of one's career, if caught.
Hacker	A truly lousy movie, most often picked by an A-Ganger or Torpedoman. <i>Lair of White Worm</i> was our boat's all-time worst hacker. Long before <i>Mystery Science Theater 3000</i> , submariners were maintaining a running commentary during movies like this.
Halfway Night	On a patrol, the day when you've been gone exactly half the time you supposed to be. It's celebrated by a steak & lobster dinner (served by the khakis, no less), as well as a bunch of pranks and general guy-stuff. You usually have the XO compacting trash, and the crew's buying pies (at auction, for the rec fund) to throw at your favorite people. Not as fun as, say, waiting for a bus back on shore, but better than most days at sea.
Haze	Methods used to convince nubs to qualify, before the Navy made it illegal because it offended the women (and more importantly, because it worked). The same thing as a "Code Red" in <i>A Few Good Grunts</i> , only nobody gets hurt. See Tape .
Heavy, Heavy Toad	Very knowledgeable about the boat, especially the engine room. A high complement from one's peers.
Hot Rack	One of those traditions the Navy keeps around to annoy us. Hot racking is where two beds are given to three people to share, so one guy is always left without a place to sleep. Usually the nuke.
Hot Runner	A person who is far ahead on qualifications. From the term for a torpedo which starts running before it leaves the boat. If a nub is

considered a hot runner, he usually doesn't get abused as much by the qualified guys. If the term hot runner is applied to a torpedo, though, it is a bad thing.

Hot Rock

Nickname for the reactor core, which is often used when trying to explain two years of nuke school to an A-Ganger during a checkout.

ILO

*I*ntegrated *L*ogistics *O*verhaul - sort of like taking all the food out of your kitchen, hauling it to a warehouse, looking it over, and then putting it back without losing any... only on a shipwide scale.

IMF

*I*ntegrated *M*aintenance *F*acility a Navy-ish version of the shipyard, only at the IMF everyone gets paid less and (oddly) does better work.

Interlock

A device, electrical or mechanical, designed to keep you from doing something you shouldn't. Try shifting into reverse while driving on the freeway; the reason you can't is there is an interlock preventing it.

Naturally, bypassing interlocks is a big no-no in the Navy.

JO

*J*unior *O*fficer; a khaki of the zero flavor who has yet to be a department head. JO's are the best officers to be around, as they are usually friendly and willing to learn from blueshirts. JO's also take the most shit from the CO/XO types.

Khaki

The opposite of blueshirt; collective term for chiefs, officers, and anyone else who doesn't do manual labor. Comes from the color of their "working" uniforms.

Kimwipe

What happens when the Navy sets out to build a better paper towel. Kimwipes on a sub are like leaves in a forest, only leaves might absorb liquids better and aren't half plastic.

Klingon Death Watch

Another name for the midwatch; after being up all day it's very hard to stay awake another 6 hours on watch. This term is also used, occasionally, to describe especially long, boring watches.

Lifer

The enemy; someone who thinks the Navy is just great and plans to

make it a career. Lifers are big on the useless stuff, like uniform inspections and counseling chits. Since all khakis are automatically lifers, this term only applies to blueshirts. Lifers are held in the greatest contempt; they are like informers in a POW camp.

Malicious Compliance

Proof you just can't win with Navy Justice. One of the ways you can train new officers that they aren't the Golden Knights they think they are is to do exactly what they tell you, no matter how retarded it is. If doing so results in something bad (as it usually does), the Navy can come down on you for doing what you were ordered to with the charge of "malicious compliance". Don't know what they do to the officer; probably give him a medal for leadership or something.

Maneuvering

The tiny little room the reactor plant and most of the engine room is controlled from on Navy ships.

Megger

What a gun is to a hunter, or a pillow to a Sonar Tech, a megger is to an Electrician. Its uses include checking for grounds, checking for insulation, and checking how fast someone moves when you use it on them.

MG

Motor **G**enerator, an antique piece of equipment which converts ac power into dc power, and vice versa. The ultimate don't-wanna-do-it piece of equipment to work on, it is usually full of carbon dust and a pain to clean. E-div invariably hates their MGs.

Midi

Short for Midshipman, a wanna-be officer still at the Naval Academy. Submarine crews are occasionally burdened with them for a few weeks.

Midrats

MIDnight **RAT**ions; possibly the best meal of the day. They are similar to raiding the fridge at home for leftovers at 11pm.

MM

Machinist's **Mate**- Nobody's really sure what they do for a living except hide and buy more tools. Nevertheless, M-div is one of the single largest divisions on the boat, and owns most of the gear in the engine room.

	MMs are adept at breaking pumps, and blaming EMs for it later. MMs have lots of tools just lying around where they can be “liberated”.
Monkey Shit	What you call Play-Doh when you’re 27 years old. This stuff has tons of uses... keeping water out of junction boxes and making little “Mr. Bill” dolls to smash are just the beginning.
Movie Pass	The nuke name for dolphins, because you can’t watch a movie until you earn them. However, by the time a nuke earns his, he doesn’t have time to watch movies, anyways. But, whatever their worth, the coners seem to make a big deal out of earning them. See Dolphins .
Muster	An official sounding word the Navy made up so that they wouldn’t sound like simpletons writing you up for being “late to work”. Muster is when the bosses check to make sure no one escaped during the night.
NAM	<i>Navy Achievement Medal</i> . If medals were chess pieces, this one would be a pawn. The actual amount of effort required to earn one varies widely, depending on your rate. Cooks get them, nukes don’t.
Navy	An acronym for <i>Never Again Volunteer Yourself</i> .
NIS	<i>Naval Investigative Service</i> - the naval edition of a secret police. Unfortunately, they haven’t had a bunch of luck catching anyone doing important stuff, like spying and sabotaging. They are pretty good at finding blame when minor plant property vanishes, though.
No-Load	A member of the crew who doesn’t do much work. From the term for a generator which is running but not supplying power to anything.
Normal Working Day	Loosely defined period of time during which all the engineering types have to stay on the boat- anywhere from 8 to 14 hours.
NRRO	Acronym for <i>Naval Reactors Regional Office</i> , the local Gestapo agency for NAVSEA-08, the branch of the Navy’s vast bureaucracy that worries about Naval Reactors. NRRO agents are sinister in that they are all active duty, yet they wear civilian clothes so you can’t tell what rank

Nub	<p>they are. They are the most feared of all the daemons of nuclear power.</p> <p>Acronym for <i>Non-Useful Body</i>. Anyone who isn't fully qualified is automatically a nub. This may also be used as an insult for qualified submariners who don't carry their own load.</p>
Nucleonics	<p>An air-conditioned lounge for ELTs in the engineroom. Don't bother trying the door knob; it's always locked.</p>
Nuke it out	<p>To figure something out, especially how equipment is supposed to work, by how it looks. In a sentence: "Did you find the instructions for those cherry bombs?" "Nope- I just nuked it out"</p>
Nuke	<p>Someone who works in the aft end of the boat... someone who is nuclear trained, in other words. There are only four divisions in the nuke world: E-div, M-div, RC-div, and the ELTs. Affectionately dubbed "Fuckin' Nukes" by the coners, who are often perplexed by the nukes' insistence on doing everything the hard way.</p>
OOD	<p><i>Officer of the Deck</i>; the officer who is overall in charge of the boat while at sea. He hangs out in Control, and worries a lot.</p>
ORSE	<p><i>Operational Reactors Safeguard Examination</i>. Kind of like getting an IRS audit while taking your driving test. And , just for fun, your college physics instructor is in the back seat, asking you questions the whole time. This is the exact opposite of Christmas. Originally invented by sadistic SS guards at Dachau, and later refined by NAVSEA 08.</p>
Oscar	<p>A plastic dummy which is periodically thrown over the side so JO's can practice running over it with the sub. Simple minds, simple pleasures. One look at Oscar's mangled body will keep anyone from falling over the side, perhaps the very reason they do it.</p>
P-Panel	<p>A roach motel for fuses: fuses check in, but they don't check out. There are hundreds of these suckers on a sub; electricians know them all by heart.</p>

Peckerhead	The box on the outside of every large motor when line meets load. Comes from the fact that, after taping the fuck out of the wires inside, they look rather like a huge pecker.
PHNS	This used to be PHNSY, for <i>P</i> earl <i>H</i> arbor <i>N</i> aval <i>S</i> hip <i>Y</i> ard, until they got tired of being referred to as “PANSY”. A larger scale version of high school auto shop where lots of people are paid lots of bucks to do lots of nothing with lots of paperwork. Submariners would rather be at sea than in the shipyard, especially the nukes.
Pig Boat	Another word for submarine; comes from the skimmer rumor that everyone’s filthy and the place stinks. Draw your own conclusions.
Pinning	The recreational hobby of trapping people in their racks by lifting the rack lid up (on top of which the sailor sleeps) and propping it up with a metal rod. This leaves a gap of about three inches between the rack lid and the rack above, out of which the victim stares pitifully. If this happens to you, just go back to sleep.
PMS	<i>P</i> reventative <i>M</i> aintenance <i>S</i> ystem- a program the Navy uses to make work for engineering types while they’re waiting around for the next piece of equipment to break. See Gundecking .
Political	Something receiving a lot of attention (read: worry) from the higher ups in the command. Jobs which are political have an absurd amount of pressure on them to get done, offences which are political have an absurd amount of penalties for committing them. See Witch Hunt .
Poopie Suit	The dark blue jumpsuit everyone wears on a sub underway. With only one washing machine for the whole crew, you can see how they earned this nickname. Poopie suits are also a great way to judge submarine movies; if the crew is wearing dungarees in every scene, the movie is automatically BS.
Port	1. What the Navy calls “left”(which also has four letters so it’s easy to

remember). Four is an even number , so all the equipment with an even number (like #2 TG) can be found on the port side. This much logic is the result of years of effort by the Navy.

2. Where every sailor wants to be, rather than underway.

Primary

The primary plant- the system which transfers heat from the reactor to the steam generators. Most of the primary is hidden away in the reactor compartment. Primary systems are always a pain to work on, due to the excessive paperwork and precautions taken with them.

Proficiency

How often a qualified watchstander actually stands the watch. If you lose proficiency, by not standing the watch enough, you are disqualified and all manner of unpleasantries happen.

Propay

The extra \$75 dollars per month nukes get just for being nukes. Often cited by the command as the reason coners get most of the good deals.

Quals

Qualifications- sheets of paper with requirements written on them. When you think you know enough, you find a senior guy and ask him to sign you off. As you can imagine, bribes, kickbacks, and general sucking up never hurts.

Quarters

Imagine getting your whole family together, standing in a line in the backyard, while you read the newspaper to them. If you also told them to clean their rooms better, it would be a lot like quarters.

Rack Burn

The red impressions formed on the skin while sleeping, not necessarily in a rack. Rack burn is the wrong thing to have when you climb out of the battery well after field day.

Rack

The Navy's version of a bed: 4 inches of foam in about the same size and shape as a coffin. Nukes and A-Gangers don't see this too often, but have heard stories about it from the Sonar Techs.

Radcon

Radiation Controls- the broad spectrum of (borderline paranoid) precautions taken during nuclear power-related activities. This one of the

first things a new sailor learns in the engineroom, and one of the most important.

Radiation

Energy given off by excited atoms as they drop to their stable state. Radiation is always present (in extremely low levels) on the surface of the Earth, due the sun and other cosmic sources.

RC

Rea**C**tor **C**ompartment. The heavily shielded and normally locked up tight compartment which houses the Reactor and the primary systems. When shut down, there is actually lower radiation levels inside the average RC than on a beach.

Rickover

Our father, who art in Heaven, hallowed by thy name, amen.

Rider

Basically a useless “passenger” who is taking up space without being a part of the crew. Midi’s, Admirals, VIPs, and contractors are all typical breeds of the species rider.

RO

Rea**C**tor **O**perator; the twidgets who’s responsible for controlling the reactor plant while underway. ETs are very selfish and don’t let anyone else stand this watch, even though we all want to so badly.

Roving Watch

The common name for the Shutdown Roving Watch- about the only watch MM’s stand in port. The rover’s main job is to find creative places to hide in the engineroom, especially if the SRO’s looking for him.

RPPO

Repair **P**arts **P**etty **O**fficer- the guy who tries to con parts from the Chop for your division. A good one is half used car salesman and half purebred pack rat. The RPPO also acts like the Easter Bunny, sneaking around a night, hiding goodies all over the engineroom where he hopes no one will find them.

Sat

okay, good to go. Opposite of unsat, for those of you who are thought-challenged.

SCRAM

One of the oldest traditions in nuclear power. The legend is, with the very first reactor, the engineers who built it weren’t sure exactly what

would happen when it went critical. So, in addition to other exotic safety precautions, they stationed a guy with an axe to cut the ropes holding the control rods out of the core if necessary: the *Safety Control Rod Axe Man*. A scram is rapid insertion of the control rods into the core, either as a protective measure or because the RO touched the wrong thing at the wrong time.

Screw

All subs have one. Most nukes get one, daily. Nickname for the propeller on the end of the boat that moves it.

Scrubber

A device which A-gang loves, because E-div has to come fix it when it breaks each and every two hours. Supposed to take CO₂ out of the air, but what it really does is leak amine all over the electrical parts.

Secondary

The system which transfers heat (as steam) from the steam generators to the various turbines and evaporators, condenses it back into water, and returns it to the steam generators to get turned back into steam. Most of the secondary system is in the engineroom, making the engineroom into a literal sauna if the air conditioning fails.

SEO

Shutdown Electrical Operator- An all but useless import watchstander who works for the SRO. He is only stationed to keep the SRO awake and if the electric plant needs to be shifted. His duties include fetching coffee and talking on the phone.

Shitter

Like a toilet, only it's flushed with seawater and has lots of interesting things to read on the toilet paper rolls next to it.

Shore Power

Electricians have a love-hate relationship with shore power. On one hand, shore power is good, because it means your both tied to a pier and able to shut the plant down (and sometimes even go home). On the other hand, shore power is prone to all sorts of problems, not the least of which is grounds when it rains(which means you get to come back from home, if you made it that far).

Shore power consists of huge, heavy black cables that are like giant extension cords for the boat. They plug into the escape trunks, though if I ever meet the engineer who thought that would be easy enough to do when he designed it, I'll kick him square in the balls.

One of the biggest sources of injury to electricians is screwing up the shore power procedure.

Sick Call

Where sailors have to go when they feel ill, instead of just staying home and getting better. If you were good at convincing your mom to let you stay home from school, you'll do well at sick call. Most sailors avoid it like the plague.

Sickbay

Unlike the Star Trek version in most respects, this is the Naval equivalent of a hospital emergency room.

Skimmer

The prey of submariners. Skimmers are surface ships; they always operate at test depth and only get to dive once in their lives. See **target**.

Sky Pilot

Navy (often non-denominational) Chaplain. They have a thankless job, as the attitude/morale on a sub is not usually conducive to inspiring faith in religion. Nonetheless, they occasionally make visits onboard to try and cheer everyone up. Like I said, a thankless job.

Slider

What happens to a hamburger when the Navy gets ahold of it.

SNOB

Shortest Nuke On Board; a sacred and holy title conferred on the nuke with the least amount of time left in the Navy. Some of the SNOB's duties include sleeping, watching movies, laughing at the Career Counselor and ditching training.

Spin up

To make someone mad on purpose, because it's fun to watch.

Spook

One of the many flavors of rider, these hang out in crew's mess a lot, reading books like War and Peace... in the original Russian.

Squid

Another name for sailor, especially of the House of Blueshirt. Sounds more salty than jarhead or grunt.

SRO	Shutdown <i>R</i> eactor <i>O</i> perator- an inport watch; the SRO is directly in charge of the shutdown reactor plant and stays (as far as you know) in maneuvering all the time. He is sometimes accompanied by an SEO. SROs live in fear of two things: a casualty and a surprise visit from NRRO.
Standdown	The carrot the CO and Engineer hold out for the nukes right before the holidays. Supposedly a period of less work, most standdowns actually turn into periods of extended painting and cleaning back aft. Coners seem to get these every now and then, though.
Star Baby	Someone who re-enlists STAR. STAR is for first time re-enlisters; it offers some bucks, a C-School, and a promotion to E-5. Submariners hate Star Babies because they are the reason almost no one can make E-5 the normal way; the STARS get all the open E5 slots.
Starboard	What the Navy calls “right”. Right has five letters, starboard has nine. Both have an odd number of letters, so all the equipment with an odd number (#1 TG, for example) can be found on the starboard side. Not quite as logical as the “port-left” coincidence, but you have to agree it’s getting there.
Stores Load	When the whole crew (except officers, chiefs, and cooks) gather topside to hand carry food and parts from the pier into the boat. This looks surprisingly like what ants do around a picnic table.
Tagout	Comes in two flavors: Lemon Yellow (Caution), and Cheery Cherry Red (Danger). The Navy’s main system for finding out if you actually did the PMS you said you did (see Gundecking). Tagouts are used to keep people from operating the wrong valve or switch at the wrong time. It relies on the crew knowing how to read, of course. Screwing up a Tagout, especially in the shipyard, is a major no-no; many promising careers have been cut short this way.

Tape	To secure an inanimate sailor (or coffee cup) to another inanimate object, like a chill water pipe. Half-recreational and half-hazing.
Target	Anything not a submarine in the water.
TDU	<i>Trash Disposal Unit</i> ; a torpedo tube for garbage. Also used to describe an object lost or destroyed (like someone's pillow, which just happens to go out the <i>real</i> TDU "by mistake")
TDU Weight	A flat metal disk weighing about 10 lbs, used to weigh down trash (and other things like rack lids). These come in small 70lb boxes, which are a real pain to load into a sub.
TG	<i>Turbine Generator</i> - the equipment used to change steam power into AC electrical power. Now rarely found outside of naval nuclear reactor plants because there's so many better ways to do this.
Throttleman	This is (usually) an EM or MM who operates the throttles on the main engines, thus controlling how fast the boat goes. The only watch in maneuvering who doesn't have a decent chair to sit on.
Tits-up	Broken, really broken, not-going-to-sleep-until-its-fixed broken. Like broke-dick, only different.
TLD	<i>Thermo-Luminescent Dosimeter</i> . Nobody really knows how one of these suckers works, but the ELTs make a big deal out of them once a month.
TQL	<i>Total Quality Leadership</i> . During peacetime, a strange phenomena occurs in the military: it starts to think of itself as a corporation rather than an armed fighting corps. This has both good and bad aspects. TQL is neither. It is a system which is fairly effective in the civilian world, but too straight jacketed when adopted for use in the Navy to ever work as planned.
Tribal Knowledge	Information which not contained in any of the vast number of publications, procedures and tech manuals which cover the boat and her

equipment. Tribal knowledge, while somewhat frowned on by the command (officially), nevertheless makes the difference between booksmart and smart. On the *Oly*, for example, it was common knowledge that a relay in one of the seawater controllers could be substituted for the relay in the burner controllers. Since they had different part numbers, you couldn't learn that from the manual. It made the difference when a burner went down.

Tunnel	The passageway separating the engineroom from the rest of the boat. A good place for EMs to hide things, especially under the floor.
Tweaker	A fag-ish little screwdriver that every ET carries around with him to make adjustments (tweaks) to his gear.
Twidget	Possibly a mutation of the word "tweety bird"; see ET .
U/I	<i>Under Instruction</i> watch; when someone trying to qualify a watchstation practices standing it under the watchful eye of the real watchstander. For most people, this is where they really get a feel for how to do their jobs.
Underway	Taking the sub out to sea.
Unsat	The same thing as "sat", only not really.
Verbatim Compliance	A fancy way of saying "doing exactly what your told". The engineer can be counted on to harp about this about twenty or more limes a day. See Malicious Compliance .
Verbatim Repeatback	Repeating back, word for word, whatever you were just told to do. A funny gag from junior high school taken way to far. Engineers harp about this more than verbatim compliance.
Wardroom	The officer-edition of a Crew's Mess. Where the duty officers hang out when hiding from the rest of the duty section.
WestPac	Short for Western Pacific; a collective term for six months of mostly sea time with the following highlights: A crew that hates work, gear that won't work, sleazy foreign ports, and various venereal diseases. This is when

you and a 150 of your closest friends bounce around the Far East for half a year.

WestPac Widow

When you pull into a port halfway around the world, realize there's no way the wife could ever catch you, and thus proceed to screw everything with two legs and a pulse... keep in mind she's thinking the exact same thing. Only, there's that one big difference: she's got the house, the car, and the paycheck.

White Rat

The nickname for a speaker in maneuvering which repeats everything on the phone circuit out loud. This gives the EOOW some impression he knows what's going on.

Witch Hunt

A modern day inquisition the Navy in general (and XO's in particular) love to hold- they usually revolve around things like hazing, harassment, and underage drinking. The penalties for being caught breaking a rule during a witch hunt are about 300% more severe than before or after the witch hunt. They haven't got around to stuff like "accidents on watch due to fatigue" or "catching people who are spies" yet, but I'm still hoping.

XO

eXecutive *O*fficer, the second in command for the boat. Riker and Spock on Star Trek were XO's, but that is where the similarity ends. The XO is kind of like an officer version of the COB; he too frets a lot about how clean the boat is and how spiffy our uniforms look. He does a lot of "investigating" for the captain.

Zero

An officer. From the Navy's way of listing ranks: E for enlisted (as in E-4 or E-9), and O for officer (as in O-2 or O-6). Comes from the fact that officers do zero amount of work maintaining the equipment on a sub.

