

Annaboat Memories, by SN Alan C. House, circa 1967

Not sure of the sequence of events, but here are some recollections.

One morning, a shipmate said something like, “you gotta get topside – you won’t believe it”. Upon arriving on the flight deck I saw that we were completely surrounded by fishing boats. Not sure what you would call them – junks, dhows, whatever. We were barely making headway, perhaps 5 knots. I cannot recall if we could see Viet Nam, but we were well within the 50 mile zone. Now, I would presume that given the importance of the ship and having no escort, we were required to stay well away from the mainland. Obviously, if the enemy knew where we were, it would have been quite easy to take out the ship with a load of explosives.... like the USS Cole. I also assume that the skipper caught hell for this. I think we got another \$50 in that month’s paycheck for being within the 50 mile war zone.

Normally the South China Sea was windless and absolutely flat. However, on this particular day, it was rather breezy and some large swells. Apparently, due to the weather and perhaps a shifting cargo, an Asian merchant ship had gone down nearby. We steamed to the vicinity and saw many huge logs, obviously the primary cargo. Unfortunately, we also found a dead body in a life jacket. No idea how long he had been in the water or what the cause of death was. But he was very dead. After a few unsuccessful passes, we retrieved the body. The scuttlebutt was that he was stowed away in the food locker until we made port. A guard was posted to keep away the curious. I have some pictures of the event, although poor quality. One disturbing photo is of an empty lifeboat. I think 5 guys perished. Now there is more to the story. Seems like in our maneuvers through the area we wrecked one of the props. So we limped on in to Subic Bay and a diving team confirmed the extent of the damages. We then made our way to Japan for repairs. I think it was

Yokosuka but not sure. Maybe Yokohama. Anyway, into dry-dock for repair.

Not sure if my memory is accurate, but I recall one night I was on watch as a telephone talker on the bridge. As you know, I was in communication with forward lookout, engine room, CIC, aft lookout. I believe the Captain was on the bridge, as was the office of the deck. We picked up a radar contact that continued to close during which time we made repeated attempts to establish communication with the contact. I cannot remember what the range was, ultimately, but the Captain radioed that if the contact did not identify, we would open fire. I'm assuming we were at general quarters, but not certain. Anyway, the contact finally radioed that it was the USS Saint Paul and we could fire at will. If my recollection is incorrect, someone can let me know. Even if untrue, it is quite amusing since we could not hit the broadside of a barn with our wimpy 3"-50s. Sorry to offend any GMs.

Now to support my opinion about the Annapolis ability to hit a target, I do recall finding a large overturned sloop one day. Our orders were to sink it as it was an obvious hazard to shipping. After quite some time and many, many, many shots fired, we left the sloop afloat. I think we even sprayed it with a 50 cal.

On at least one occasion, I recall seeing the mainland of Viet Nam. I heard it was off Cam Rahn bay, but not sure. I have a photo I will send to confirm. Again, we had ventured well within the 50 mile combat zone so another \$50 in the monthly paycheck. Now that I think more about it, I know we were in the 50 mile limit because a number of personnel were shipping over, if they could. Seems like the reenlistment bonuses were tax free in that area. Kind-a weird.

Funny story about “high line” or “high lead”. Anyway, you all recall underway replenishment, transfer of mail, etc. Well, one day it was pretty lumpy out and we were trying to get lines to another ship for getting mail. Once again, I was on the bridge as the telephone talked. The Captain was also on the bridge. We had snapped a couple of lines already, but had managed to get one to hold. Now, the kid that was the telephone talker on the starboard sponson asked permission to “transfer mail”. At least that’s what I thought he said. But he had a heck of a southern accent. Sounded like May All. I notified the Captain of the request and he agreed. Next thing we know, there is some poor devil strapped in a bosun’s chair, zipping up and down as the other ship’s crew is attempting to pull him over. Of course the Captain went nuts and yelled what the hell were we doing???? I asked the kid on the sponson...he said, “Well, ah asked permission to transfer person.....ale.” Very funny in that the guy being transferred made it over intact. The Captain ordered me off the bridge and told me to get a “FIRST CLASS TELEPHONE TALKER “ as a replacement. Now I was pretty scared and did EXACTLY as I was ordered. I woke up the division 1<sup>st</sup> class Petty Officer (must have been the mid watch) and told him the Captain wanted him on the bridge. He was very upset, grouching that he was not to stand any watches at his level of rank. Well sir, the next morning I, again, got chewed out. The PN1 said the Captain didn’t want him.....just someone who knew what the heck he was doing. Very funny. As the PN1 had to stand watch as a telephone talker on each and every highline thereafter.