



USS BRADLEY ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Established July 6, 2002

Vol. 2 – No. 9 Winter 2003

Bruce Gottsch (71-75) – Editor bgottsch@optonline.net (845) 634-3993

USS BRADLEY ASSOCIATION REUNION

San Diego, California October 7-10, 2004

The Hanalei Hotel, on Hotel Circle

MUST be registered with the Association

From an anonymous sailor... first day on the Bradley and beyond, and it's all true!

I had been a professional hitchhiker for a little under 3 years when a Mexican gang in Pomona, CA rolled me. They took everything I had except my clothes and a 5" knife I had in my boot, which unfortunately, I was unable to use during the attack. I roamed the streets of East L.A. until the need for a cigarette became overwhelming. I had just passed a donut shop that had a little Mexican girl working behind the counter alone. I figured she was an easy mark, so I turned around back towards the donut shop with a plan to hold her up for cigarette money.

Not really being the criminal type, the thought of my first felony bothered me. I was trying to think of another option. Panhandling wasn't working since the area was pretty depressed in the first place. As fate would have it, between the spot I had planned my robbery and the donut shop was a navy recruiters office. I thought, what the hell, walked in, joined the navy, and stayed for 10 years. But that's getting ahead of myself. Lets back up.

While I was in boot camp, I was so grateful for three hots and a cot that I did exactly what I was told to do and ended up being meritoriously advanced from E-1 to E-2 upon graduation. I had no idea what was ahead of me and just went in as an "Undesignated Seaman". That meant deck force.

At 17:45 on January 18th, 1982 this bright-eyed 4.0 recruit showed up at the brow of the USS Bradley. I screwed up the procedure concerning who and what I was supposed to salute, didn't show my ID, and called the MM1 standing OOD "Sir". After being pummeled with jokes and ridicule from the watch standers, I was escorted by the Boatswain mate on watch down to W-1

berthing. Of course, I was led to the shittiest rack there. Bottom rack, right next to a ventilation tube that terminated 8" from my head, blowing freezing cold air 24 hours a day.

I wasn't exactly received with open arm. It was knock off and most of the crew was on liberty. I did notice a few strange things going on though. Two racks forward and one up from mine was a guy hitting what I later found out to be referred to as a Pen Pipe. He would place the tip of the flame from a Zippo lighter to a small metal ring and pull smoke into his lungs. He would then hold it for what seemed to be as long as he could, and then he would bury his face into a fold gray wool blanket and exhale. I could see several brownish colored marks on that blanket shaped like lip kiss marks. Lets call this guy "Bill".

Across from "Bill" and one rack down, another guy I'll call "Tom" was dividing a large mass of dried green vegetable matter that looked like parsley into small sandwiches and rolling them up.

Behind me on the top rack was a closed set of blue curtains. From behind this curtain I could see a small fluorescent lamp burning and could hear something that sounded like a razor blade being tapped quickly and repeatedly on glass followed by a scraping sound. I was later to be introduced to this "musician". His name turned out to be, oh, lets say, "Frank".

Now I had just got off the streets and knew just what was going on. As a matter-of-fact, I had been pretty heavily involved with most of these same doings prior to entering the service. I mean, I had to make a living out there. When these guys saw the look of approval on my face, I quickly became "One of the Guys".

It took me no time at all to get involved with the others indulging in this "culture" and we all had a grand old time and generated many interesting and amusing stories. Here's one of them...

"Tom", "Frank", and I were three "musicians". We "played" nearly everyday. "Tom" was pretty laid back, even for a "musician". "Frank" only cared about women and focused his efforts towards learning Tagalong for our upcoming trip to the P.I., and I just worked. Worked and worked and worked. All the time. I made ESWS the day after I made BM3. Was a master at the needle gun. Could wield a paint spray gun like a gladiator, and when I was assigned the berthing it shined like a palace. The officers loved me and my 4.0 evals proved it.

During morning quarters on the foc'sal, each and every morning I might add, "Frank" would lean over the lifeline and vomit a small amount of white liquid. He was always fine, before and after this morning ritual. It was most puzzling. But one of the funniest times was when "Tom" was in charge of quarters and he was standing in front of our ranks waiting for the chief to come out after Officers Call and pass down the POD. It was cold that morning and "Tom" had his hands in his pockets. Just as the chief was rounding the corner, "Tom" pulled his hands out of his pockets and one of his "instruments" fell and broke on the deck in front of him. A small white powdery hill instantly formed between our ranks and him. He looked down, looked at all of us (who of course knew he was a "Musician", and then to the approaching chief who apparently had not seen anything yet. "Tom" took one small step forward, placing his right boondocker on the pile and remained there until quarters were well over. To this day I don't understand how all of us were able to keep a straight face while the chief was reading that days assignments. Us looking from his boot top to the chief and back again. Him pleading to us with his eyes trying not to move. It was hilarious!

This all went on for quite a while until we reached the Philippines. We were to be making a “Dream Pac” visiting two ports in Australia, and one each in New Guinea, New Zealand, and New Caledonia. So the ship needed to be PERFECT! New Paint. No rust. Small boats and all the brass work as shiny as humanly possible. Now deck force was always undermanned and it was more so because we had to sent two guys to mess duty. Then “Project Upgrade” hit with the force of a hurricane.

Project Upgrade stated that anyone with more that three (I’m pretty sure) Captain’s Masts for “Related Offenses” was to be immediately discharged from the navy and sent home. We started that day with 22 guys in deck and finished with 11. Those of us remaining just had our workload doubled. Luckily, I had only seen the old man once so I was spared; so were “Tom” and “Frank”. “Bill” was axed since he had visited the podium 5 times since signing aboard.

Zero Tolerance was the new law of the land and all of our musical talents had to be brought underground. Testing for the presence of “instruments” was initiated and we finally had to break up the band. “Tom” refused to quit and was tagged and shipped away. “Frank” left the navy after four. I got married, re-enlisted; changed rates becoming a skate Instrument man First Class (IM1), and never “played” again.

I never went back to it, but I’ll never forget those days. Unless of course the affected brain cells finally kick off.

Post-Navy Update...

After returning from the Persian Gulf War in April 1991, I came home to an empty house. My wife had taken our daughter and moved out, later to divorce me. Not the homecoming I was expecting. I had just been frocked E-7 and had 3 months left to reenlistment. I was right at the 10-year mark. The terms of the divorce were wicked. I was looking at living onboard ship with only \$150 a paycheck left for me.

No, that wasn’t going to happen. I got out at the end of that enlistment and moved to Montana and became a bartender, ya know, to get my head together. After 3 months there I moved back to California to be closed to my daughter and went back to school. I got my degree in electrical engineering and started working for Hewlett Packard.

I lived in Sacramento for the next 7 years. Being a bachelor with military experience made me somewhat of a “playa” I must have had 30 girlfriends during that time. It was great, but exhausting.

I fell behind in my child support and alimony payments and the State was starting to get real attitude. No sense of humor at all. They were talking about jail time. Na, that wasn’t going to happen either, so I made plans to move to Valdez, Alaska. Sold my cherry ’69 Cameron and bought a ¾ ton pick up.

But before I left, I got a call from my folks. See, they were getting ready to retire, needed a hand and asked if I could come down to Phoenix, Arizona and help them out. It was only supposed to last a few weeks.

Well, I picked up a Joe-job to help with my expenses and, damn the bad luck, met a woman and fell in love. We dated for three years and got married in 2002. I still live in Phoenix, still trying to figure out what I'm supposed to do with two sea bags filled with clothes rated for 100 below zero temperatures.

Ups and downs, that's what life has always been for me. It would have been much harder had I not been in the navy. I carry the constant internal pride that only a veteran can hold. The trials and tribulations faced here in the States pales in comparison with what I have seen others on this planet have to deal with. It puts my troubles in perspective. I really do have it pretty good when I think of the poor in places like Thailand and the Philippines. The 12-hour shifts I work at my job are a cakewalk. My bills are all paid and my responsibilities to my daughter and ex-wife have been dealt with and cleared up.

I have the military to thank for that. Along with my shipmates, my superiors, Mother Nature, War and the people of other lands, I am a better, more responsible man than I would have been with out them. I can lie now on my deathbed and know that I have lived the lives of 10 men. I have no regrets. I am proud. I am a patriot, and nothing can change that.

Mike Moravek
BM1/IMC (SW)
U.S. Navy 1981-1991

NEW WEBSITE PAGES!!!!

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of the two shipmates responsible for the ships website, Tom Lettington and Tom Hyett, two new pages can be found by checking www.ussbradley.com. A complete roster of all *registered* association members, along with their rate/rank and the dates served aboard Bradley, is on the site. A second new page is dedicated to deceased Bradley crewmembers. Members are urged to check their data and contact your editor with corrections. Also, any member who knows of any deceased Bradley crewmembers are also asked to have their names entered on our TAPS page by contacting me. **Ed.**

An Officer and A Gentleman

My name is Jack Minster, RD / OS3. I was on the Bradley from 1971-74. Most everyone on board back then, called me Ripper.

Bruce Gottsch has asked me to write an article for the newsletter, thinking I might have an old sea story tucked away somewhere in my ditty bag. Ditty bag??

My article will be (somewhat) about an officer on board I served under, who I think went on to be the highest ranking officer that the Bradley was ever associated with. If someone knows of another person that was on board, that reached a higher achievement, please correct me.

My saga begins in early 74. I had an EAOS of 16 June 1974. The Bradley was scheduled for a Wespac cruise in mid March. This would have been my 3rd cruise, and quite frankly I saw no reason why the Navy needed me on board for another. But the Navy on the other hand, saw it different. It seems they were short of OSs (Radarman) and to get an early release in this rate was almost impossible.

So I started this crusade of submitting chits for an early discharge. Every week or two, at Quarters (and even more so as the year came closer to the month of March), I would have a chit with a request for an early out. Now I didn't think that a discharge on the day of deployment, (roughly 90 days early), was too much to ask for. And I truly cringed at the thought of going back over, you know, just to go to a transit barge in Subic Bay to await discharge, and then a flight aboard some cargo plane back to the states. No, it just didn't make a whole lot of sense to me. But I was short, and thinking like a civilian.

Being the supply petty officer for my division, I had an ample supply of chit pads, and being an OS (RD), in port, I had ample time on my hands to conger up excuses for my early departure. Some of my requests were well thought out; others were just pleas for mercy. I remember one I submitted that broke down exactly how much of the taxpayer's money would be wasted by keeping me in. Another one was how my short timer's attitude was affecting the division strikers, and it would be in the Navy's best interest to get this type of thinking away from them. Anyhow towards the middle of February, my requests were becoming lamer, and sometimes down right comical. It even got to the point, that if I hadn't submitted a chit in a week or so, the LPO, at Quarters, would ask me if I had one, or if I had scuttled the idea. I must have submitted at least 20 or 25 requests.

(M*A*S*H wasn't on TV yet, so the Klinger approach never occurred to me).

So what does this have to do with a high-ranking officer you ask? Well, every chit I handed in was always approved by my LPO. Then the Division Officer would get it, and he would approve it too. But it always came to a screeching halt, when the Operations Officer got it. You see, here was a career man, a purple heart, a man by the book. He was very hard, but he was also very fair, and there weren't any free lunches with him. No sir, if I want out, I had to justify it. He also had a sense of humor. When each chit was returned to me, it always included a comment or humorous reply. And towards the end it was like a game we played. Although I still wanted out.

Finally one day, someone told me that if I was accepted at a college, and the semester started before my discharge date, the Navy sometimes granted early releases. Whoa!!! I had a weekend pass, and a day of leave on a Friday. Flew out of San Diego on a Thursday night, and was in Michigan in about 4 hours. The next day, I was at a community college, signing up for courses. I also talked to someone in Admissions and asked if they could write a letter of acceptance. And boy did they ever. It was like I brought them a script to go by.

In about a week, I got their letter in the mail. My chit with the "see attached letter" was already made out, I just needed to date it. This time it worked! He signed it!

I still have that chit. His remarks on it read as follows:

"Nothing but smiles and Good Luck Minster!!" RJN And off to the side, he wrote:

(Suitable For Framing)

Oh yea, the officers name...

(then) Lt. Robert J. Natter.

Adm. Natter retired October 3rd, 2003, after 41 years of service. A sad day for the Navy. He was truly one of her best.

Just one more thing, his comment "suitable for framing"... A FOUR star Admiral!! "Yes Sir, You're damn right it is"! I'm going to Wal-Mart to look for a frame!



DOES SECOND CLASS (citizenship) MOTIVATE SUCCESS?

I am becoming an old man. Possessor of a Doctorate in Jurisprudence, a senior partner at a respected Twin Cities law firm, I have been practicing law for 25 years. In truth, I am old, rich and educated.

But once upon a time I was a junior enlisted man in the United States Navy. I was a radarman on the Bradley during her second cruise from December 1967 to July 1968. On Bradley, I went all over Asia, heard the crack of her guns and "watched the war" at night from her main deck as we steamed slowly off the coast providing gunfire support. I was young, a high school dropout and very poor.

One of the things I most remember about the Navy was the vast gulf between the Officers and the enlisted crew. It can be truly said that we lived in different worlds. I don't think in the entire year and a half I served aboard Bradley I was in "Officer's country" for more than 10 minutes. I do know that I was very definitely uncomfortable about being there.

Officers were mostly older and thus someone I instinctively respected and followed. But I also knew that the entire weight of the United States Navy was carried in those bars, and like every crewman, knew there was a real line that could never be crossed. No matter how "cool" an officer seemed, and there were some who seemed so, there was always that line between us: "familiarity" breeds contempt goes the old Navy saw, and while that may not say much for the Officer corps, it certainly was the way things were.

After my stint in the Navy, and while I was struggling to get through college and law school and establish a law practice, I also spent some time in the Army National Guard, again as an enlisted soldier. Here though, the distinction between officer and enlisted was completely different.

In the Navy, officers always got the best of everything. We had cloth foul weather jackets, they had warm nylon jackets. We ate from tin trays in the "mess decks", they ate off china in the Wardroom. The rule in even the mess deck was that "seniors ate first".

In the Army, by contrast, officers not only ate after the troops, they very often served the troops. The only time I recall that happening in the Navy was because of some initiation rite. In the Army it was routine. Not only did officers not eat first, nor did sergeants. The privates go to the head of a chow line in the Army. Try telling a PO1 that!

In considering this dichotomy, I concluded that the basis for the difference is that in the Army the troops are the mission. It is they who have to get the job done. In the Navy, it is the ship which is the

mission. The officers are charged with the responsibility to see to it that the ship performs her assigned task. The crew is simply the tool that makes the ship work. Thus the huge difference. (I also thought the fact that the privates had all the big guns might have something to do with it).

From the vantage point of 32 years since my discharge I look back at the Navy with a mixture of wonder and pride. It is hard to conceive of the seven years I did in the Navy, but I also know damn good and well that it was the Navy that made me succeed in life. I sometimes wonder, though, whether I made it because I got so incredibly tired of being treated as though I was not as good as the officers I met, that I resolved in some dark recess of my psyche to prove them wrong.

The truth was that it was always the junior officers who made me mad. I did not for a moment mind Captain Whaley sitting in that bridge chair while I nearly passed out from exhaustion after standing back to back CIC watches. No, it was the Ensigns and JG's, with their vaguely swashbuckling persona and cars, and houses "on the beach" that pissed me off. It was the surprise of the ship's officers to find I had rented a room at the Hong Kong Hilton, when they had concluded this was their "wardroom ashore" that did it. It was a certain O-1 supply officer telling me in CIC one early morning at sea that officers were "better" than enlisted, to whom I think I owe the drive and persistence that put me where I am today. For these men and their attitudes I am deeply grateful. I say this without rancor or sarcasm because I do not believe I could have done it without them.

Thomas Malone
67-69 RD2