

Submitted by Hugh Tulloch via Dennis Dow

The Huge Pervert

My next ship was the *USS Hugh Purvis* (DD-709), nicknamed the Huge Pervert, homeported in Newport, R. I. I reported aboard in January and we sailed immediately for Operation Springboard. All the guys loved Springboard. It took us out of the cold weather to the Caribbean for a couple of months. We got to shoot the guns, chase submarines and lie on white sandy beaches drinking rum. The wives were not quite so enthusiastic at being left behind.



USS Hugh Purvis (DD 709)

Official US Navy photo

The day we got underway from Newport was cold, raw and snowy. We cleared the harbor and began drills, including lowering the motor whaleboat. Unfortunately, the lowering tackle jammed in the after hoist, holding the boat's stern up, while the bow dropped into the sea, spilling the two crewmen into the icy waters. We tried to execute a Williamson turn to recover them, but the captain missed two approaches, and it was a painfully long time before we got alongside them. Don DeLude, the Gun Boss, went into the water to recover them, and we got them both aboard, but Michael Acevedo, a wonderful Portuguese-American seaman, died of exposure. We threw Floyd Smith into a hot shower and gave him some brandy, and he recovered. We were off to a bad start.

A couple of days later, the squadron was refueling at sea off Norfolk, and the *Manley* lost steering control and collided with the carrier, completely crushing her superstructure. I

can't remember, but I'm fairly sure that a couple of men were killed in the radio shack. Suddenly, Springboard wasn't looking so attractive.

The skipper was CDR Harry R. Moore, a country boy from North Carolina, I think. In retrospect, Cdr. Moore was a sweet guy, with a sweet wife, Marcella. His XO was Dan Denison, a Naval Academy graduate, who had a dry sense of humor in spite of himself. One day at lunch, he regaled us with stories of his days in the PACFLT cruiser navy, where there was a huge inter-ship rivalry over a painting of a very attractive lady which hung in the wardroom.

The rivalry led the junior officers to carry out raids and steal the portrait, hanging it in their own wardroom until it was discovered. Back and forth the portrait went, until the two XO's laid down the law and the thievery ceased. I'm sure our XO never intended the story to be instructive for us.

The *Purvis* was in and out of Key West a lot during this period, so we really got to know the town. Unfortunately, the town also got to know us. We'd wander up and down Duval Street looking for the perfect hangout, but somehow, we always wound up at Sloppy Joe's. This was still before tourists and cruise ships, so the Navy was a big economic factor in town.

Sloppy Joe's was a comfortable dive in those days. The clientele was eclectic, and you could always strike up an interesting conversation. The walls were covered with works of local painters, but the most prevalent was a fellow named P. Seru. His work was all Caribbean, but our favorite was an island girl wrapped in a sarong without benefit of a top, combing her hair. We dubbed her "The Nut-Brown Maiden". She hung about 8 feet up on the wall.

We decided that the Nut Brown Maiden would be our new totem, and join us on the bulkhead of our wardroom. This called for operational planning. Ed Lynch and I were the ringleaders, as befitted our status as department heads. At about 11:00, Ed and Al Weigel staged a fight while the Pork Chop screamed for the police. Naturally, the fight spread, and, with an unnamed henchman, I stacked up beer cases until I could climb up, grab the Maiden, and spirit her out the side door. We stashed her behind some garbage cans, and went back in to get the fight stopped.

Later, we escorted her back to the ship, and across the quarterdeck, to the quizzical looks of the watch. By this time, most of the enlisted knew that they could expect almost anything from the junior officers in a liberty port. Somehow, it never spread to their behavior. We ensconced the Maiden on the wardroom bulkhead and went to bed.

The XO greeted us in the morning with his blackest scowl, and tried hard to raise hell with us, but couldn't keep from laughing. The Nut Brown Maiden made the return trip to Newport with us, and hung for years on our walls. I don't think she was a favorite for Keith, who observed that she looked as though she had dentures. After about four or five moves, she left for my brother's house, and thence for parts unknown.

Fortunately for the XO's sanity, he was relieved by LCDR Jay Quick, who was bald down to his shoulder blades. Mr. Quick, whose name sparked many wisecracks, knew that many of us liked a short nap after lunch, and had the habit of tiptoeing back to Officers Quarters to make sure that his officers were up and on deck. We took to calling him Old Tennis Shoes.

When we finally got back from the Caribbean, we were steaming into Narragansett Bay, with the Special Sea Detail set, putting all hands on deck for their assignments for entering port. Despite all the foregoing anecdotes, we'd had a bit of a tense cruise, and Ned, our Combat Information Center Officer, was an annoying type. As we went through the routine, he proceeded to give our leading radarman, a seasoned first class, a good deal more guidance than he needed or wanted.

Eventually, he snapped and punched Ned in the nose, knocking him flat out on the decks. Almost all of us identified with the radarman, but he had done this in front of a whole room full of officers and men. A Captain's Mast was held quickly, and he was restricted to the ship for a few days to re-establish discipline, but no rank or pay reduction.

The *Hugh Purvis* was a part of Destroyer Development Group 2, and served as a test bed for many of the brilliant (or not so brilliant) ideas which the defense contractors were pushing. This led to some really bizarre experiences over the next few months.

By now, Jim Tedder had reported aboard as XO, which gave the ship a whole different feeling. The XO really sets the tone of a ship. The skipper is usually a little above it all, setting overall policy and keeping in touch with the outside world. The XO is in the trenches, dealing daily with the officers and chiefs, and nudging events in the right direction. Jim Tedder was a great XO. He came aboard as a Lieutenant in a LCDR's billet, so he had already been singled out as a front-runner. He was a mustang (ex-enlisted) and really had the touch.

One of our projects in the summer of 1966 was the evaluation of a conformal sonar array. Simply explained, this means that, instead of having your sonar detection device in a compact dome below the hull, you spread the detector elements all along the side of the hull. Among other things, this meant that you had a longer baseline for more precise direction-finding, and the potential for less bubble noise interfering with your signal.

Along with the array, we would also test an air bubble generator, which would blow bubbles along the hull to mask the sound of the ship and make it more difficult for other ships / submarines to detect us. It sounds very hokey, but it was later adopted for submarines under the name Prairie Masker. Our civilian project manager almost certainly had a real name, but the XO promptly dubbed him the Skinny Guinea with the Ravioli Eyes. The project started with an extended period in the Boston Naval Shipyard to install the array. It was the first of many visits.

Shipyards and Sandcrabs

A ship is a free and wondrous thing. You're always going somewhere and doing something, even if it's just plowing furrows in the ocean. The color of the deep ocean in sunlight is like nothing else in the world; not even the Caribbean beaches can compare. On the morning watch, you get to see the sun rise, pink and fresh, with all the little puffy clouds suffused with the rosy colors of the dawn. It's a miracle every morning. If you're in southern waters, you may see squadrons of flying fish, startled out of the water, and gliding for yards away from the ship. Sometimes, porpoises will come to play with you, leaping and diving just in front of the bow, daring you to catch them, and once in a while, you might see a whale.

On the other hand, a ship in drydock is a special kind of purgatory. Away from the ocean, you're hot and sweaty in the summer, and freezing cold and damp in the winter. All day long, you're subjected to the incessant chattering of the pneumatic chipping hammers, stripping away the caked rust, and the whine of the grinding wheels, cleaning up the steel surfaces for painting. The din is constant, intense and infinitely annoying. The ship is dirty, strewn with cables and air hoses for all the power tools, with grit and flakes of rust and paint chips in every corner.

You're away from your home port, but ashore, which is when you should be spending time with your family. Your sailors are restless, moody, and morale is low. They're getting in trouble ashore regularly, and the Shore Patrol are frequent visitors in the small hours of the night. The area outside the shipyard gate is called the Combat Zone, and not for nothing. Bars, dives, strip joints and worse are at every hand, and they know every trick in the world to separate the sailor from his pay. One of the sleaziest, the Blue Mirror, was just outside the gate, and some of the crew never saw anything further into Boston.

One of our stalwarts in the deck force, Rosie Rosenthal, was a good worker, but perhaps not a candidate for Mensa. He was a loveable guy, willing to help, but occasionally misdirected. He went out the gate one night into the Combat Zone, and was brought back around midnight by the Shore Patrol with a knife still sticking out of his back. We never did get the story, but Rosie was on deck the next morning, chipping paint with the rest of the gang.

Every morning while you're in the yard, the ship is invaded by dozens of workers, the Sand Crabs, who seem bent on destroying your familiar shipboard environment and stealing everything which is not bolted down – and, of course, they have all the tools to unbolt anything they really want. The Sand Crabs are the demons of this purgatory, and they are relentless. Worst of all, the shipboard officer has absolutely no authority over them, and, should he try to give them an order, he will quickly be enmeshed in the toils of a union grievance.

Of course, there are good Sand Crabs, hard working, wonderfully qualified in their trades, and cooperative. They want to get the job done to high standards and get the ship out of drydock on time. Their punishment is that they have to work with the bad ones,

and pick up the slack when Joe is sleeping in the Bo'sun Stores locker. The trick for the ship's crew is to identify the good guys early and co-opt them.

Every ship goes into the yard with a long, long list of jobs to do. There is only so much money available, and if it covers half the list, it's a miracle. The trick for the ship's company is to seduce and bamboozle the Sand Crabs into doing the unfunded work. This process is called cumshaw, and is best managed by the chiefs. The currency for the unfunded work is coffee and .22 caliber ammunition. Shotgun shells were also popular, especially during hunting season. The supply officer's pre-shipyard job is to load up on these commodities, which will be traded off to the various shops for work.

Need new upholstery on the wardroom couch? Just give the Sand Crabs a gallon can of coffee, and it's done. Need your optical rangefinder collimated? Slip the lead man in the Optical shop a case of .22 ammo and it's underway. This is where you separate the men from the boys. Catch 22 and Milo Minderbinder were our training manual for the shipyard.

Tongue of the Ocean

Finally, after many delays, the array was ready, and we steamed out of Boston Harbor for sea trials which were to be held in TOTO. I've mentioned before how baffling Navy acronyms can be, and this was just one more. We found out that TOTO was the Tongue Of The Ocean, just off Andros Island in the Bahamas. The water was deep and remarkably clear, which would allow for good sound measurements and underwater cameras to check the bubble patterns along the hull. It was all a little esoteric.

Fortunately, this was when Diver Dan came into our lives. Diver Dan was burned mahogany brown with blue eyes and a mass of unruly blond hair. He was clearly insane. He had signed a contract which called for him to swim with a underwater camera recording bubble patterns while the ship steamed by him about 10 feet away at speeds up to 32 knots. Our captain, Harry Moore decided that this was a great chance for his junior officers to get experience in conning the ship in precision approaches at high speed, so all of us got the chance to sweat out several passages by the mooring buoy where Dan waited for us. None of us really knew whether the pressure wave from the ship's passage would push him out from the ship or suck him into the propellers (or both).

TOTO was filled with abundant sea life, including many very large sharks. Diver Dan loved it, and he was a source of great amusement for us all. He would splash around in the water by our mooring buoy while we re-positioned the ship for the next speed run. When we finished our runs for the day, he'd help us pass a mooring cable to the buoy, and then call for the sharks by knocking on the buoy with his diving knife. And they would come! Dan splashed around with them, pointing out that this one really wasn't dangerous, but you need to watch out for that one. He seemed to be on speaking terms with most of them.

Mooring to the buoy left us well away from any chance to go ashore, so fishing became a big source of amusement. Everybody seemed to have a rod, and we caught amazing things, keeping the mess bill down to record lows. We did the table fishing in the afternoon after knocking off ship's work, but after dinner, the shark fishermen came out. We rigged spotlights on the water, and huge, handmade hooks up to six inches across went into the water, baited with chickens, gristle and other unidentifiable bloody masses.

Of course, no one had really thought through what would happen if we really caught a big one. And then, one night we did. He was huge, probably 11 or 12 feet long. I have no idea what sort of line they had on the rod, but, miraculously, it held, and the shark gave them a real run for the money.

After several hours, he finally got tired and came close to the ship, where we tried to kill him with rifle fire from the M-1s in the landing force locker. It's not difficult to kill a shark under water – it's impossible. I suppose the water deflects the bullet, and the shark's brain is small, etc. but all we managed to do was irritate him. Eventually he tired and died, and we hoisted him aboard, using the five inch gun barrel as a crane. With the guns elevated, he still stretched almost to the deck, and it seemed like everyone aboard got a picture with him. He left pools of blood on the deck which dried like armor plating– not an easy cleanup in the broiling sun the next day.

Back to Beantown

Finally, trials were complete and we went back to Boston for more modifications. We entered harbor on a chilly, very foggy day. We couldn't see fifty feet ahead of us, and I was stationed on the foc'sle, ready to drop the anchor if we got into trouble. It was eerily quiet as we inched forward through the fog, and then we heard voices! However, these voices weren't angelic. It turned out that a bunch of drunken Irishmen had scheduled a fishing day, and were in no way deterred by the fact that they had no idea where they were going.

We passed them by and kept going slowly, slowly. Suddenly, I felt a funny, gentle tremor under my feet, and the ship reversed. No one ever spoke the words, but the feeling went around that we may have ever so gently run aground. Of course, any grounding, however slight, is sufficient to consummate the offense, so we kept mum while we proceeded to the drydock.

As the water pumped down, Jim Tedder donned a set of hip boots, and as soon as the water reached waist depth, he scrambled down into the dock to inspect the hull. I never saw the evidence, but rumor has it that he pulled a handful of mud and a few rocks out of the sonar dome, and never said a word about it. It probably saved Harry Moore's command.

During that shipyard period, a bunch of the officers decided to take night courses at Harvard. I have no idea why Harvard decided to accept us, but it was pre-Viet Nam, so the antipathy to the military hadn't set in yet. I signed up for the history of the Soviet

Union, thinking it wouldn't look bad on my next fitness report. It was interesting, and helped me understand the movie *Reds*, but otherwise was no great insight. My memories of Harvard are mainly of damp wool and clanking steam heat. There was a fun little bar we used to hang out in after class, but I can't say that we made any inroads into the social life at Harvard. It did help me confirm that I made the right choice when I went to the Academy.

We had a great bunch of junior officers on the ship – Andy Combe, Curt Ley, Charlie Harper, Bill Draper, John Hewlitt - all unmarried. I was a big, bold department head, married and presumed respectable, so Keith and I were invited out to Curt's parents' cottage on Cape Cod to chaperone the unmarrieds and their girls for the weekend. We understood our duties, and went to bed early every night. Perhaps the most interesting activity for us was learning how to catch herring with our bare hands in the stream. I guess they were swimming in to spawn and we just reached in and pulled them out.

John got engaged shortly afterward, and we decided to throw a bachelor party for him while we were in Boston. John was a quiet, modest guy, not a drinker. We started at the Officer's Club with cheap drinks, and had worked our way through the Combat Zone to the Hillbilly Ranch by about midnight. We had taken along a couple of bottles from the club for insurance, in case the bars might run out. It was at this point that one of us lost control of a vodka bottle which smashed on the floor during the second chorus of "Honky Tonk Angel". The club photographer actually took a picture to commemorate the event. The management were not amused and threw us out without a hearing.

Undeterred, we held a curbside conference to determine our next stop when John, previously a teetotaler, told us he didn't feel so well. As fate would have it, at that very moment, a couple of guys from the ship who were on Shore Patrol stopped by to say hello. Problem solved! They promised to deliver John safely back to the ship, and the rest of us continued. It was a slow morning for all of us the next day, but fortunately, Jim Tedder was lenient, and it wasn't long before the noise of the chipping hammers drove us up on deck.

Bill Draper, the DASH officer, was from Kentucky, tall, muscular and soft-spoken. Pierside maintenance for the DASH helicopters included periodic sessions of firing up the engine and checking controls on deck. Bill was putting one of the birds through its paces, and I decided to go back and take a look. I was climbing the ladder alongside the flight deck and my head had just cleared the deck edge when the radio control system went haywire and the blades crashed together. As I said before, the blades were laminated plywood, weighted on the forward edge with inch thick lead weights to give them weight and balance stability. When they collided, we had plywood and lead weights flying out for yards in every direction. I ducked my head down like a turtle, and scuttled back down the ladder to await the subsequent silence. We had a few holes in the bulkheads, and the outboard ship was furious. Another \$125,000 down the drain!

We were touched to get a call from Bill one afternoon to ask if he could come by so we could meet his fiancée. I'm not sure, but I think he may have been looking for a sort of

approval. She turned out to be a nice girl, and we all had a drink and wished them well. Unfortunately, Bill overstayed his leave going to visit her while the ship was on a visit to Savannah, and missed the ship's sailing, a serious matter in the Navy. It wasn't long afterward that he got his orders to Viet Nam. I'd like to believe that it was coincidental, but I'm just not sure. No one ever missed a sailing date again.

Straight Shooting

We had one of the great old-time Chiefs on the *Hugh Purvis*, FTC Bartlett. Chief Bartlett had been around since World War II, and had fought against the Imperial Japanese Navy. In addition to a working knowledge of the MK 1A fire control computer, he also could keep the temperamental MK 25 radar going, and could even operate the optical rangefinder of the MK 37 gun director.

First of all, the MK 1A computer. It was an electro-mechanical analog device, a far cry from your laptop. It was probably about 6 feet long, 4 feet wide, and 4 feet tall. It had shafts and cams, cranks and ramps and all sorts of mechanical innards which modeled the ballistics of the 5/58 gun projectiles in flight. When it was properly stroked and tweaked, it would put your rounds right on target, but you needed a special hand. We won the gunnery "E" that year based on Chief Bartlett's stroking.

The MK 25 radar was even worse. Designed before World War II, it had never seen a chip or even a transistor. Reliability was just awful, and many's the night when I had to confess that the MK 25 was still /again inoperable. The magnetron (whatever that was) was usually the culprit, and we carried a couple of spares, but that wasn't enough to get through an extended deployment. A couple of Bartlett's FTs were fairly good with it, but we still were out more than we were in.

But the optical range finder was the really arcane skill. There was hardly anything to break on it, but very few of the ships had anyone properly qualified to use it. It was a stereoscopic device, and you had to be able to "see stereo" to qualify. Many of us weren't even sure what that meant, but Bartlett kicked off a training plan that soon had many of us working the knobs successfully.

The ultimate test was on our Firefish project. This was in the mid '60's, when we were concerned about the threat from small boats attacking our ships along the Vietnamese coast. Defense contractor Ryan had taken a Boston Whaler, automated the controls and established radio control. It was an oversized bathtub toy, so we took it to sea, and launched it. It zipped around Narragansett Bay like a water spider. The staff officers looked on approvingly and said, "OK, take it out and shoot at it."

The idea was to introduce an offset so that we wouldn't hit the Firefish, but Bartlett got to talking to the Ryan reps, and soon he had a bet that he couldn't hit it. I think the Ryan rep was betting on the probability that the MK25 radar would never hold track on it in high-speed maneuver mode. The skipper and the squadron staff knew about it, but took no official cognizance.

We steamed out to the Op Area, put the Firefish in the water and got warmed up. I was up in the MK 37 director, and Bartlett was hunched over the range finder. He normally wore coke-bottle glasses, but took them off, wiped his brow, and reported ready. The Firefish came speeding toward us, steering an erratic, evasive course at about 35 knots. We acquired it briefly with the MK 25 and then dropped track, but Bartlett had it locked on with the rangefinder.

He tracked it in to effective range, the MK 1A burped out a firing solution, and we opened fire. Bartlett called out the spots, "Right 200, drop 200". Then "Left 100, add 100". Then, "Fire for effect!" The rounds burst an ideal 50 feet over the target, and the Firefish burst into flames! We recovered the debris, tied a broom to the mast, and steamed back into port. (A broom at the mast is a symbol that you have "swept the enemy from the seas".)

The Ryan rep was properly chagrined, but congratulated the Chief and paid off. Shortly after we moored, the Captain got a call from the squadron commodore, and we all held our breath until he got back. Captain Moore smiled in his quizzical way, told us that we had willfully destroyed thousands of dollars worth of Navy property, and the commodore had given us a "Well done!"

Chief Bartlett also had a spark of devilry to him. He was a tobacco chewer (Red Man), and one morning, as we were getting underway from a particularly hard-played port visit in Genoa, he casually handed me a plug. I wasn't about to let the challenge pass, and bit off a chaw. I was the conning officer going out, and Bartlett hung around the bridge wing, watching our passage. It wasn't before I had to excuse myself and visit the head on the signal bridge to clear the tobacco along with the rest of my stomach contents out of my system. He never said a word, but I got a cryptic smile out of him for the rest of the day. I'm sure they enjoyed the story in Chiefs' Quarters.

All this straight shooting got the crew more interested in gunnery, and one day, MM1 Pine turned up in my stateroom with a brass model of an old-fashioned cannon which he had made in our machine shop. We oohed and aahed over it, and then started making suggestions. Pretty soon, I had drawn a dimensioned drawing for the next model, and Pine went off to make a prototype. He bored it to use 00 buckshot from the landing force locker, and that afternoon after working hours, we took it out to the fantail for a trial firing. It worked like a charm!

Pine went back to the shop to set up limited production. As a machinist mate and head of the damage control locker, he had access to large quantities of high quality brass bar stock, and we scraped together enough wood to make carriages. I saw about three models, but I suspect there were many more circulating around the lower decks. We arranged for firing trials in my stateroom, which I shared with Sam Carter, the Pork Chop (Supply officer).

The Pork Chop climbed into the upper bunk, out of the line of fire, and Pine and I loaded and primed the cannon, pointing it down the length of the room (about 6 feet). This happened to align it with the Pork Chop's locker. We touched it off - - BLAM! Smoke everywhere, but when it cleared, there was a very satisfying hole in Sam's locker door.

About 5 minutes later, the XO, Jim Tedder, strolled into After Officers' Quarters, sniffing like a bird dog at the gunpowder smell. "What's going on, boys?" We confessed like schoolboys, he gave us a slap on the wrist, and that was the end of the cannon production line. I've still got mine.