

Looking Back at Thanksgiving '55

He sat down on the bar stool next to me and ordered a beer. I only knew him by his first name. It was Tommy. He was a tile settler by trade.

"Hello Tommy" I said, "How's it going?" "Good thanks" he replied. "Are you ready for Thanksgiving?" he asked. I replied, "I sure am, I have a date with a turkey." It was two days before Thanksgiving.

After talking about Thanksgivings past, he said

I'll never forget Thanksgiving of '55." I thought for a moment and then said,

"By God, I won't either."

"Where were you?" he asked.

I said, "I was on a tin can returning from Europe."

"So was I", he said as he took a swallow of beer.

"You were on a can?" I asked.

"No!" he replied, "I was on a LST, I was in the 82nd Airborne."

I said, "By God, we must have been in the same convoy."

I went on to tell him what I remembered. We had refueled in the Azores, a small group of islands off Portugal. I believe that there were about sixteen ships in the task force.

We had received a radio message that said a hurricane was setting off the coast of Africa and would cross our path.

The barometer was falling. It was the day before Thanksgiving and the cooks were trying to prepare a Thanksgiving feast for the crew of the U.S.S Bordelon DDR-881.

The hurricane was moving in a North-North West direction. The Admiral in charge of the convoy decided not to change course, he must have been a hardheaded old bastard, but that was his choice.

The winds now were fierce and the swells were running ten to fifteen feet. The Captain came out on the ships P.A. system and gave the order to set condition able throughout the ship (condition able-all water tight doors and hatches secured tightly). I thought, "That's a good idea." "If we break in two, both halves will float."

The winds had picked up now and were probably well over one hundred miles per hour. The swells were running now over 30 to 40 ft. I was on watch in the forward fire room, tending the boilers. A huge wave hit our port side. I grabbed a large valve wheel and held on for dear life. I heard loud explosions coming from inside the boiler fireboxes. We must have taken seawater down our funnel (stack). I heard later that a boatswain said we took a 78° roll, I believe it!

The poor cooks and mess cooks were having a hell of a time in the galley. Two turkeys had escaped from the spring operated oven doors, a latch on a galley porthole had broken and seawater was pouring in. A large pot of gravy had over turned and was all over the deck of the galley. Now I know why they call it "mess cooking". It was a mess alright. The cooks were standing in our Thanksgiving dinner.

The Captains Jeep had been lashed down on the main deck, securely, supposedly. But not good enough. It had broken loose and was rolling back and forth, smashing and crashing into everything. We could not do anything wasn't much left of the Captains' Jeep. We cut it loose and it was given a burial about it until after the storm.

After taking a pounding for two days, our little ship survived. The storm had passed us and was now headed for Boston and surrounding coastline. There wasn't much left of the Captains' Jeep. We cut it loose and it was given a burial at sea.

Sitting in a bar 30 years later, Tommy and I both agreed, we both had a lot to be thankful for, "Tommy, let's drink to that."

Another tale-Another time.



"There wasn't much left of the Captains' Jeep."