

Ron Curtis

1959

Early June after graduation, John Kenney, John Calzini and myself were off to Fort Dix NJ, for basic training in the Army. Just six months and we would return to our National Guard unit in Natick. They were real nice to us down there, gave us all new clothes, shoes and free haircuts. Taught us how to fire our weapons, eat strange food, and hope that time would fly.

Boot camps over, now to Fort Knox, Kentucky for tank training, at last something we feel might be worth the effort we put forth, being treated as a human being once again helps, the time passes and home to Natick, just in time for Christmas in a few days.

1960-1962

After about a week my Mom asked when I was going to look for a job, so I went and enlisted in the US Coast Guard, little did I realize that it would last for over twenty two years and change my life so much. Now off to boot camp once again, where else? Cape May NJ, same as before, all that new stuff and the lousy hair cut that would allow the new hat to spin on your head like a merry-go-round, polishing that area above your ears. To this day I still have a dislike for NJ.

My first orders were to Boston, so much for seeing the world, my first ship of (8) which lasted seven months and on to the next, an ice breaker that was making a trip to Antarctica, things were looking up. We sailed in Sept. and headed for the Panama Canal, down across the equator where an initiation took place for those of us that had not crossed before, as King Neptune held court. Once again that dreaded HAIR CUT was administered and duly noted in the log. But it did not stop there, as the crew with hair told the local girls in New Zealand that we had lice and they should stay away from us. Left NZ and spent the next four and half months breaking ice with the US Navy.

Following year, second trip to Antarctica, with ports of call which I'll cover later. I've been able to strike for electricians mate these past few months, (on the job training) and have been allowed to take this with me to my next unit.

1962-1966

My next transfer to my new ship was in Portland ME, as of this date, She is still sailing and is the oldest ship in the USCG. We spent most of the time on search and

rescue. I left there as a First Class electricians mate (E-6) and went to my next unit, just around the corner on the other dock. CG doesn't believe in a lot of travel money. This tour lasted two years as the senior EM. in a Chiefs billet. The ship received orders to Viet Nam so they sent a Chief to take over and asked me if I would go to EM school as an instructor!!

1967-1969

Now as anyone who ever sat in a classroom with me can tell you, I would have rather cut my arm off then stand and give an oral report. Receiving a zero or (F) was really the least of my concerns. So while thinking of accepting these orders these old feelings came back to haunt me, also these orders would require two separate moves which can be at times very traumatizing. I am convinced that movers are paid for what they can lift, not for what is between their ears.

Well the orders were accepted, since they gave me three years shore duty, unlimited access to a large library of electrical information that I needed that was missing during my (OJT) in preparation to take the Chief's exam in a year. Here we go, off to Groton, Conn. And then to Governor's Is. NY, NY. We made our home on Staten Is.

I sat though three weeks of classes with the departing instructor before he transferred out and felt that I could muddle through for awhile and get up to the level that was expected of me. Boy, was I in for a rude awakening, his books, lesson plans and notes were all trash!! This was Friday afternoon, my classes started on Monday.

To top this all off my brother Jim was in my first class taught, he was a good student and did not say if I embarrassed him (or not). Over time I prevailed as an instructor, made use of the library and made Chief Electrician.

1970-1971

Transferred to a bouy tender at Woods Hole, MA. Great sea duty, work and sail all day, tie up and go home at night. Home was now Teaticket, a nice little town boxed in by Falmouth and just down the road from Otis Air Base. Close to everything we needed, families near but not next door, you know what I mean.

1971-1972

New orders, off to New Bedford, MA. for more sailing the Atlantic for search and rescue, ocean station duty, Bermuda standby and anything else they could throw in the pot.

1972-1974

At my previous unit I had taken the test for Commissioned Warrant Officer (CWO) and the results were now out, I accepted the appointment that came with a set of orders and was once again on my way to a new unit.

It is a two year tour, so I checked the schedule and found that we would be underway for 19 months of the 24 required. Up to the Arctic in the Fall to break ice and back into the Great Lakes in the Winter to keep the shipping lanes open and a repeat of the above for the second year.

A lot of things were happening at this time, we moved our family back to Maine, set them up in an apartment, started building a new house and biggest of all was that Caroline was pregnant. It was for this reason that we decided she and the kids would remain behind as our families were close enough to help when the time came, as I would be at sea.

Well the best laid plans often go astray, and BOY did they. We sailed for the Arctic and twelve hours later we lost one of our main motors, turned around and limped back into port. Westinghouse came aboard, made special tools, and was able to make repairs. When they left, they stated that this was one for the record books.

We are a month behind schedule, but are once again headed for the sea and northward bound. We are now in the ice pack, twenty four hours a day listening to the ice as it slides down the sides of the ship, after a while you no longer hear it, but you sure do when it gets clogged up in your screws and rudder, we lost the tips of two blades and the king post of the rudder! We made it to Iceland, where we given a tow from another CG unit to Baltimore, MD. Exchanged ships and sailed our new (refurbished) breaker to Milwaukee.

What started out as a lot of sea time, came to be only around nine months, spread out in increments. I was able to see our latest addition to the family the day after she was born. Caroline named her Ronda, I wondered were she came up with that handle but I just smiled and kept my mouth shut. We came to the conclusion that leaving my wife and children behind was something that would not be repeated again.

1974-1976

Well we've rented out our house and have taken up residence on Governors Island, were I was previously stationed, but now at a different unit. I am the Engineering Officer in charge for all repairs to the many types of sailing units stationed here or anywhere else in the third CG District. It's great, I can walk to work, go home for lunch, and because of the ferry traffic we quit at three thirty.

We can look out our window and see the Statue of Liberty and from this

vantage point watched the tall ships arrive and some pretty awesome fireworks in our countries' two hundredth birthday (TV made a lot of use of "bi-centennial"). You can see quite well from the 13th floor of a hi-rise.

This tour went fast, on to the next .

1976-1979

Next unit, Marine Safety Office, (MSO) Boston MA. Left the family at my parents home while I went to Inspectors School in Yorktown, VA. Five months later we bought a house in Marlborough.

I was now conducting inspections of LNG tankers arriving in Boston, also any ship carrying passengers for hire, if it carried six or more for hire, it was inspected every year. Eighteen months passed and I was given the Boston shipyards as the Resident Inspection Office (RIO). As I lived closer to Springfield than any of the other inspectors, I got the brunt of the calls out there. They made CG approved equipment which had to have the CG seal stamped on them.

1979-1982

Our last transfer, back to Portland ME to the MSO of Portland. Duties here the same as in Boston, but a lot more shipyard work. Bath Iron Works has two new contracts, one for an ocean going barge, the other for a dredge for the US Army Corps Of Engineers. So they opened the RIO at the yard and I was given the job as the resident inspector, it was early in the program so I was only needed about once a week. The rest of the time, passenger vessels, tall ships (sailing) and motor types.

The work at Bath has picked up and I now go there back and forth from home, only going to the office on Fri. afternoons to bring the CO up to date. About this time Bath has won a contract to build two tankers for a company out of Houston Texas, and I arranged to get an interview with them. They hired me and would hold the job until I was able to retire, as I was must likely looking at another transfer, this as they say, was a no 'brainer'. So I retired from the CG in March of 1982.

I've neglected to tell you that our move back to Portland forced us to wait for our home as it was still rented and the lease would not expire until the first part of Sept. So we rented a summer camp on the lake, there was not a lot of real estate available in our price range, needless to say this was not the top of the line living quarters, unless packing in your drinking water, sharing your bathroom with spiders and mosquitoes is your high point of the day.

1982-1984

Spent the next two years doing for Falcon Tankers, the same thing that I was doing in the CG. These were the last two merchant ships constructed in the USA.

1984-1985

Took a job at a Machine shop making repairs to vessels and machinery in the industries as an electrician, work slowed down so left there for greener pastures.

1986-1987

I applied for and got a job with Zealand Containers Shipping Co. As their Senior Inspector, I was over seeing the lengthening of ten ships with the insertion of a one hundred foot mid-body into the middle of the ship, putting it all back together, testing of all reconnected equipment. All of this going on at four different ship yards at the same time, in Japan. I was able to travel to these places by train for the most part, Hiroshima, Kobe, Yokohama, but Nagasaki required air travel. Airports in Japan are overly crowded, when someone is flying there the whole town comes to see them off.

Mamma san carrying all the bags, no matter how cumbersome, at least five paces behind papa san, who's only carrying his paper and pride. Always thought that one of these guys should get an American girl for a wife, talk about culture shock.

They do know how to build ships, after all they did build a first rate navy.

1987-1994

Hired by Bath Iron Works as a Technical Writer for a USCG project to refurbish seven of their ships. I worked mostly on power and lighting, some machinery items, main engines and gas turbines. Gas turbines being used only when additional speed or horse power was required as they suck up fuel faster than a mosquito at a blood bank.

1994-2001

Finished off my working career at a Sheraton Hotel in So. Portland, ME. Took an early retirement due health reasons.

I am sure that by now you've figured out that I am married, you have met my youngest daughter, then there is Laurie, middle child and Steve our oldest. We have six GRAND children, three of each.

I wish that I were able to attend our reunion, as there are a lot of old people that I would love to be reacquainted with. But as I have emphysema and as I walk around

with the oxygen supply attached to my face, the bottle dragging on the floor and making an awful racket, I think of how ironic, all that time around the sea, and I now have my own anchor.

Places Visited 1960-1982

Thule, Greenland
Halifax,
Saint Johns, Newfoundland
Nova Scotia
Reykjavik, Iceland
Panama City, Panama
Tahiti
Pitcairn Is.
Wellington, New Zealand
Christchurch, NZ
Sidney Australia
Lima, Peru
Ceylon, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka)
Athens, Greece
Naples, Italy
Lisbon, Portugal
Azores, (Port.)
Hamilton, Bermuda
Guantanamo, Cuba
Hobart, Tasmania