

Repairs were undertaken as soon as the hurricane subsided and were completed in October. This enabled the Park Service to schedule a happy event for November 13, 1999, the re-lighting of the Cape Hatteras lighthouse. This was accompanied by songs, prayers, speeches by local and federal officials and a Coast Guard flyover. After the speeches a park service ranger sent up a flare and a ranger inside the lighthouse saw the flare and flipped the switch. The Cape Hatteras Lighthouse was whole.

Alan R. Vogeler

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SEPTEMBER 3, 1943

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Guido J. Gores

As I was finishing my evening meal at the Wequetonsing Inn on my 1937 vacation in Northern Michigan, the news in the chatter in the dining room was about Neville Chamberlain and his trip to Munich, Germany (or maybe it was Prague, Czechoslovakia) to see Adolph Hitler about keeping peace in Europe. Chamberlain was assured of peace and no New World War was to occur. My mother who was a widow of nearly a decade became pensive and began to talk of a new Western European conflict. She became insistent that I accept the advice of her lawyer to prepare for war. At 18 I would be unable to avoid participation in the conflict, so shortly after my return to Cincinnati I had a session with Robert L. Black, her lawyer who adamantly reinforced her fears. I needed to be prepared for military service pronto. I quickly realized that I did not want to be a foot soldier. What to do?

By summer of 1938 I had made my choice; I would be a naval officer. This I was able to accomplish when I registered for Harvard Law School that autumn. I talked fast and apparently persuasively enough to be

allowed to take undergraduate Naval ROTC training. Harvard was one of the seven Universities with a Naval program - the US Navy was content with an annual production of about 600 Ensigns each year for the entire US. I promised to do two years in one - 3 years of law school was all I had to look forward to and I wanted an Ensign commission, which required 4 years of training. Unheard of, but the Navy relented and I emerged from Harvard Law School on time an Ensign in the Naval Reserve.

In the spring of 1941, I had no thoughts of the Navy. I needed to pass the Ohio Bar exam in June. With tutoring, a common practice of law students, I successfully passed the Bar first try. Mr. Justice Potter Stewart was the only Bar candidate with higher grades. I was sworn in as an attorney by the Chief Justice of the Ohio Supreme Court along with other successful law candidates on an August Friday morning.

It was a great relief to have succeeded so well but when I returned home my mother greeted me with a Navy Communication: Report next Monday in Annapolis, Maryland for Naval Service - 3 days later, and so I did. My legal career was not to be; in fact only 4 and 1/2 years later in February 1946 was I demobilized and free to be a civilian again.

Fall of 1941 was spent learning the routine shipboard. I had been sent to the USS Savannah, a light cruiser with a full crew of 1300, 5 inch guns, 3 turrets forward, 5 inch 25 mm anti aircraft guns. She was built in the late 1920's, one of seven Brooklyn class of cruisers. Since my Annapolis training had been in communications I was assigned to the Communications Department of the ship - Radio signals (flags and wig wag), mail, ship's office, etc.

The Savannah was sent in May 1943 to the Mediterranean Sea. The Allies under direction of Winston Churchill had decided to carry the war to Europe's "soft side" and the US Navy spared from the Pacific war what it could - ships like the USS Savannah. Our role was one of support: bombardment of shore defenses. Our effective damage to such defenses

could not have been more than 5 or 6 miles if that much.

Mid summer 1943 saw the Allies successfully seize Sicily with minimal casualties. It also saw one of the great difficulties of managing our own activities properly. Little has ever been disclosed about the allied fleet shooting into the parachuting 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne division of the US Army - many of our infantry were mistaken in the dusk of the first day by the ships of the Allied landing force for German or Italian parachute troops. The Allied ships were staying close to the Southern Italian shore lest German and Italian enforcement be attempted from sea. No such attempt occurred but our ships killed many of our soldiers who had been intended to be dropped on the shore to reinforce our very tenuous hold on the coast. I have never learned how many we lost but the embarrassment in London when the news of the shooting leaked out was great. General Montgomery, the Allied Army Leader never really lived the event down. Eisenhower was not then the Allied Supreme Commander; his turn came later.

Our task force of about 12 ships was under cover of darkness split into small units of 2 to 4 ships each and separately deployed. All units were to patrol the Italian coast of the Tyrrhenian Sea independently - an area of at least 200 miles of coastline but to coordinate their action for mutual safety and effectiveness. The Savannah participated well; we covered more than our 200 miles keeping a wide separation from the other units. As the night wore on a degree of boredom developed. I was most aware of that feeling as the personnel on the bridge lost a bit of their alertness. The captain retreated to his bunk on the bridge and turned over to me the actual responsibility of the ship.

While I was only a Lieutenant junior grade at this point in time and younger than others among the important Savannah officers and very inexperienced in ship handling the Captain had trust in my burgeoning seamanship. I was flattered. All went well for an hour or two and the thickness of the night did not scare me.

In all my seagoing activities during War II I had one serious failing; it remained with me in 1946 when I was demobilized. This failing was and still is my inability to read and cope with the dots and dashes of Morse Code. I needed a signalman and a radioman with me always and this night was no exception. Suddenly late that night this failing nearly produced a disaster for our small task force: I/we missed a command to all the forces to turn to a southerly course. The Admiral in charge wanted to translate all activity to the south. Each ship obeyed but the Savannah, which missed the order and continued on its more northerly course. As you can readily understand in less than a minute a head-on crash between the Savannah and the other ships was about to happen. We on the bridge in the black night were holding course and about to crash head on the southbound ships as they loomed straight for us. What to do? I was faced with how to avoid the impending crash. No time to wake the Captain; really no time to think. I had had enough observation of ship handling by others so I almost instinctively knew that I had to act, and so I did. As one of our destroyer guard loomed up in the dark headed to crash straight into us I gave the command to turn away from the oncoming ships thus hoping to slide the destroyer down our port side and not damage severely either ship. It worked. Much noise incredible scraping of metal on metal but no one was hurt and both ships maintained watertight integrity. We rejoined the task force in our proper position in a matter of minutes. The phosphorescence of the seawater we disturbed enabled us to get into that proper position again easily. Daylight the next day revealed our damage was only scraped paint. I was undone and it took hours for me to calm down. The Captain was of course awakened by the jolt and the scraping noise and quickly took over the ship. He said little but did indicate I had done well to have salvaged the situation as I did.

Lest you wonder how this near miss was possible to have happened I must now explain. In 1943, no reliable maneuvering voice radio was available so nighttime communication between ships was by hooded signal lights. We did have such radio but it was not dependable; voice radio was too new. This particular night it was not working but intermittently. Thus,

Savannah missed the crucial command. Radio for the ship was my responsibility as the communication officer. Early that night I had really laid out my radio people to no practical benefit but I was in trouble for the glitch. I had had the Chief Radioman on the bridge repeatedly but no results. Not much of an excuse!

The next day the weather was clear and warm - the Italian coast at its best. The morning went quickly as all the allied ships jockeyed for position to attack successfully enemy small ships. Larger ships such as the Savannah stayed out from shore at quite a distance. Minor defensive bombing continued briskly against the allied attackers who had now learned that a turn of 135 degrees was necessary constantly to avoid being hit. A less severe turn did not do the job and the Allied forces lost a few small ships learning that lesson. No ship of either side followed a distinct or straight course.

Unobserved in the distance a large German plane - it turned out to be a DO-127 - appeared at the edge of activity. It did not mingle with other aircraft and flew higher than the crowd all by itself, as it seemed to study the general activity. The Allied high command had within the last day or so sent an all hands dispatch about the newest German widgets, a radio controlled bomb that could be flown, not just dropped and when maneuvered into position changed from flying to bombing position. This allowed the control plane to stay away from attack until it had positioned it perfectly for a direct hit and then not just allowed the bomb to fall by gravity but shot it directly onto the target ship. The US Navy had at that point in time no experience with such a bomb. The British likewise. The DO-127 suddenly used this trick bomb with perfection and aimed it for the Savannah and scored an almost perfect hit on the Savannah bridge - only 42 inches off of center line and about 2 feet in front of the bridge. The hit wasn't fatal but it ended any action for the Savannah for many a month, in fact until the Savannah was rebuilt, an event accomplished 15 months later.

The Savannah was immediately down into the ocean by about 17 feet and it had a hole in its bottom that allowed open ocean to fill the forward part of the ship. It also smashed the number three gun turret and fried alive the turret crew. Loss of life was largely instant and produced death for 30% of the crew. I never want to see again a human on fire; the torture is too horrible. We could not get the morphine to the victims quickly enough to mitigate their suffering.

As the Communication Officer, I was in charge of encryption, codes and all protected external communication. The bombing of the ship and the possibility of its sinking was now foremost in my mind. So I packed my suitcase to hold all our coding books, cards, devices while considering whether I should follow procedure for pitching them to the bottom of the Tyrrhenian Sea. We carried many of the allied codes (British, English, French, Brazilian, etc.) This was standard procedure for a large ship, which sometimes carried a taskforce command or higher ranked personnel.

Many of our codes and gadgets for coding machines were shared with our Allies so I dared not allow them to be compromised. My thinking was should I pitch them for security? I debated with myself aware that I had no idea of how deep were the waters we were in. My subsequent study of charges of the Tyrrhenian Sea confirmed my doubts. So I decided on my own that I had best not pitch the suitcase and risk our sinking. Events proved me correct; no bait for German submarines and their divers.

The Captain anchored the ship where it stopped to assess the damages. Fortunately, the armored wall to the boiler room held watertight so we could count on moving and controlling the ship. Miraculously when the ship did move the water in its bottom flowed out and the ship handled normally.

Under cover of darkness, the Savannah was detached from its taskforce assignment and sent to Malta, the nearest ship repair facility. That journey was uneventful even though the currents of the Straits of Messina are treacherous (water passage between Sicily known in mythology as Charybdis and Scylla and mainland

Italy.) As we navigated the straits we saw a substantial portion of the Italian Navy tied up along the shore of Italy; it had surrendered. We arrived at Malta late that day and tied up while there was much communication between US Commanders and the Admiralty in London. The question was what to do with the hole in the Savannah. The Admiralty already had a damaged British Navy cruiser scheduled for the dry dock in Malta and in fact had begun laying the blocks to dry dock their cruiser so the Savannah could be made seaworthy enough to return to its home port, South Philadelphia Navy yard. This was to involve a three month patchwork job to make it water tight enough to safely cross the Atlantic to the U.S.A. This was to involve new full plates and I-beams to straighten the fore part of the Savannah. So the Maltese shipwrights set about dry docking the Savannah and preparing her for the Trans Atlantic journey.

Meanwhile a strange event had developed. My Radio III (reserve radio only) crew let us know that they were trapped in Radio III, a compartment deep in the center of the Savannah and they wanted to be rescued. It dawned on the Captain that we had 4 men trapped with water on all sides of their radio compartment. What to do? Until our ship could be dry docked these 4 radio men were completely isolated. The ventilation system to the compartment had survived the bombing and was working so we were able to water and feed the 4 men via the ventilation system. The Captain refused to sentence the 4 men to their captivity for 10 days or more while the Savannah was being dry docked. Until the ship could be dried out no rescue seemed feasible. Surely the radiomen would go crazy in their small compartment with no relief, no place to lie down and rest. Nothing large could be sent to them via the ventilation tube. It was workable only after we had first blown a string down the tube/or was it maybe a thread only at first, then followed it with a stronger string and ultimately a strong wash line.

The next day the Captain decided the 4 men had to be rescued. No matter what. The damage control team was consulted but they were of little help and pointed out that the dock above the compartment was armored, not just plain steel. This meant cutting the deck to do

the rescue would not do the job. Rather the deck would need to be drilled, as no burning was safe. The forward area of the ship was still covered with a thin film of oil from the bombing - fire danger too great. The ship construction and repair force insisted that the rescue be through a manhole drilled out of the armored steel. That meant that a hole would be manhole size. The ship really didn't have but one power drill which could only work with a drill bit of about a half inch diameter. The prospect was daunting as about 200 to 300 holes must be drilled, one right next to the other so the armored steel could be knocked out. This meant that with continuous drilling if we could keep the drill from overheating at least 2 days of drilling. Could the 4 trapped men stand the noise? Actually, they had no choice other than to stand the drill for an hour and rest for an hour or two to adjust to the noise. This plan did work, but it took three days to do the job. When the manhole was completed, the 4 men crawled out with much assistance from the drilling detail who really had to pull them out. Despite their ordeal every one was quite well, no longer scared, and most happy.

The taskforce commander was so pleased that all came out in good shape that he prepared a letter of commendation for each of the 4 men. This was sent to the Washington Bureau of Personnel and resulted in a shipside assembly of the entire crew months later as a new Captain awarded each of the 4 a medal. The Commander-in-Chief of the Atlantic fleet had authorized a Navy and Marine Corps medal for each; that is rarely awarded.

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THE WHITE CAT

February 14, 2000

Joseph P. Tomain

It's good to get the clutter out of your life every now and then. I usually start in my study