

Star Fix

CAPT Ace Trask, USN RET

About the mid-1950s I was the X.O. onboard a patrol boat (USS Brattleboro, EPCER-852) out of New London, Conn. We did various experiments for new equipment the Navy was considering for the future fleet.

As the X.O., I was also the navigator. We were operating in the Bermuda Triangle. In those days LORAN did not go more than 75 to 100 miles off the coast. One evening the quartermaster and I would go to the ship's bridge to "shoot stars." I would get out my sextant, shoot a star and when I brought the star to the horizon and rocked it back and forth, I would say, "mark." The quartermaster would note the exact time and I would read the angle on the sextant. We normally shot 4 stars to get a "fix." One night I was shooting this star but when I got it down to the horizon and rock it back and forth it kept moving up off the horizon. Stars don't do this! The quartermaster and I thought this was one strange star. We finally decided it was a SATELLITE! In the 1950s satellites were not that common!