

## **My First U.S.N. Watch Underway**

By CAPT Ace Trask, USN (Ret)

After graduating from the Maine Maritime Academy with a Third Mates license and Ensigns Commission, my first at sea job was with an iron ore company. The bridge watch was manned by me and a helmsman. We had no radar but a fathometer and Radio Direction Finder (R.D.F.). That was it. The mates on watch were the lookouts, navigator, etc. The ship's course was maintained by an "Iron Mike". If we had to change course I would call the helmsman, who would typically be doing maintenance in the bridge area, to take it out of automatic steering and come to the new course, then it would go back and be set to steer by "Iron Mike".

When we returned to the U.S., in my mail, was my DRAFT NOTICE (my number was called). But instead of going into the U.S. Army, I joined the U.S. Navy. I was assigned to an LST out of Long Beach, CA.

My first underway watch in the Navy was, shall we say, different. The Captain (a Mustang LT) qualified me as an underway Watch Officer immediately due to my merchant marine service. The bridge area of an LST is quite small and when I relieved the Officer of the Deck (OOD) and he had gone below, I realized there were just way too many people in this small area. The "helm and lee helm" were just below the bridge area, the next level down. So, I proceeded to clear the bridge area because I didn't need all those people around me in my underway watch section. I sent the port and starboard lookouts and phone talker down to the next level. All went quite well until the Captain came up to the bridge. Then it sort-of went like this:



Where the hell are the lookouts? Get them back up here! Where is the G.D. phone talker? Get him back up here! Etc. etc. etc.!

I stayed on as an Officer of the Deck but had to do it the U.S. Navy's way.

## **My First Underway Watch in Ice**

By Captain Ace Trask, USN, (Ret)

Sometime later the LST received a new C.O., but still a "LT Mustang". After he reported aboard we set sail, part of a twenty six ship group (some USN and some MSTF) enroute to the Arctic to build the Distant Early Warning Stations (D.E.W. Line).

Steaming north in the Bering Sea, this long line of ships was headed by the Flag ship with my LST next in line. I had the watch and CIC called the bridge to report "distant ice ahead". I relayed it to the C.O. who was off the bridge at the time. About 30 minutes later CIC called to report "ice 3 miles ahead" and I relayed that to the C.O. About 30 to 45 minutes later CIC called to say we should be able to see the ice, and we could. I relayed that to the C.O. and he said, "Very Well". A few minutes later I called the C.O. and said, "the flag ship ahead of us will be going into the ice field shortly" to which he replied, "Very Well". Then I called the C.O. and said, "the flag ship has entered the ice field and we are next". Again, he replied "Very Well". A minute or two later I called the C.O. and said, "we are next to go into the ice field sir and I can't talk to you anymore as we will be maneuvering around the ice". His answer, once again, was "Very Well". --- About 30 to 40 minutes later the C.O. showed up on the bridge! And I was very glad to see him.

Nothing was ever said as to why he waited so long, which was kind of perplexing in light of the fact that neither of us had ever been in ice before. But for the next five plus months, we saw a lot of ice!