

I want to tell you about "The Shot in the Dark". I had the Sea Poacher in early 1964 we were going to make a Med cruise. Well this is about the same time old uncle Hymie Rickover and his nuclear power outfit was going full blast. What they needed to run these nuke boats was Electricians, IC Electricians, particularly ET's and Motor Machs and this that and the other. There was a fella in Washington called Buck. He was named "Buck the body snatcher" because Rickover would send him out to the various squadrons and anybody with that rate on their arm, they would snatch them up and gave them two choices. You either go to nuke school or we kick you out of the submarine force. That's the way it worked.

So, we were going to the Med and of course we had the old SS radar. You probably don't remember that but it was the old world war two radar that we had and sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't. It took a pretty smart man to keep it running. Well we ended up with our Chief ET being a 3rd class who just got out of A school. He was our senior man.

Now before you went, you may not have known it but all of the CO's had gotten orders and instructions from everybody from the Chief of Naval Operations, COMSUBLANT, Squadron Commander, anybody you can think of told you, personally, in letters and writings "DON'T GET INTO OR CAUSE ANY TROUBLE WHILE YOUR IN THE MED". Because, if you do we are going to fire you and the best job you will ever have is the secondary cook at McDonalds when you go back to the states.

Well, we got to the Med and the radar worked more or less. And one of our liberty ports was Palermo, Sicily. Now you know Palermo is home of the Mafia. That's where the good guy's come from but it's a pretty good liberty town never the less. Whenever we went into a liberty port we had to send out a shore patrol. And the shore patrol had to be at least one rated man and the other guy could a seaman or whatever but you had to send out two. So, for some reason, they picked out this third class ET. Of course he had his club, we didn't give him a gun or anything, and he had his SP armband. Now one of the things absolutely you never do is drink while you're on Shore Patrol. You can't do it - no way - not ever. That's worse than bringing the booze on board. You just can't do it. Well guess what? This guy goes ashore in Palermo Sicily and buys some of this booze, you know they used to sell it in these little bottles with some kind if trash in it. He bought several bottles of this stuff and drank it while on Shore Patrol. Not only that but he bought himself a little Beretta pistol. Ended up later on that night, for some reason the two SP's were in the police station of Palermo Sicily. So this SP is pretty well drunk and he's showing off the Beretta to his friend and he fires off a round or two inside the police station. Well, of course, the police in Palermo are a little bit shaky anyway because, you know, that where the Dons are you don't fool with this family or that family if your a policeman or not or they will toss a hand grenade inside and end the problem.

Well they cuffed this fella and threw him in the slammer and sent word back to the boat. The XO came and woke me up in the middle of the night and said "Captain, we got a problem". Well I knew we had a problem when he came in. He told me roughly what had happened and I said give me the gun I'm going to shoot myself because I hate McDonalds. So I sat up the rest of the night thinking about what can I do.

And so the next morning I got up and I got my best uniform on. And I got a couple cartons if cigarettes. Went down to the police station and talked to the head of the police department there.

I told the Chief, "I got this sailor in the slammer, I can't understand it. I believe this guy has been suddenly possessed by the devil. Now, this boy I know is one of our best men. He is a good catholic boy from New York City and his mother sells newspapers in the morning. He only makes a few dollars and whatever he doesn't send back to his momma he gives to the church."

"He's got to be possessed and if you give him back to us, I guarantee you we'll take care of him." Well that chief of police looked at me, as I remember him, he was a middle-aged man but he had deep lines around his eyes and his hair was going gray. And he looked at me, now I can't speak Italian at all, but he said something that I could recognize and it had to do with horses eating oats. And he finally said, all right you can have him.

I thanked him profusely and left a carton of cigarettes. Got him and took him back to the Sea Poacher and gave him to Vern Barnett. I said, " Barnett would you council this young man here?" I think Barnett

probably got a dogging wrench and took him to the after room or something like that. Well, the thing is, I was in hot water myself because I had, you know, if word got out to the sixth fleet or back home I was cooked. So what could I do? Give this guy a general court marshal? No, I can't do that because it takes too much paper work. So I broke him as far as I could and gave him thirty days restriction to the boat. We couldn't have a court marshal anyhow until we got in port and the first port we hit was Naples and there was a destroyer tender there. So we gave him a couple days in the cooler on the tender. Brought him back and went the rest of the tour on restriction.

Well, the end of the story was our last liberty port in the Med was going to be Naples. So Barnett says, look this guy has not been off the boat for sixty days, can we take him ashore and get him drunk or whatever, we'll be in charge of him. Anyway, they took him ashore and that was his last European liberty on that tour.

Came back and I was relieved and later on I heard that he re-enlisted and so Father Flannigan would be proud of him.