

And the Sea Poacher came in for a yard overhaul. My problem with being there at that particular point in time was, I didn't see much of Charleston it was hard to get passed the strip that we had. You guys remember with the bars going right out of town. (What strip was that? Reynolds Avenue) But to get to the yard there was several things that was happening on board the boat. One of which was, we had come back from a med cruise. And if you go in one of these cruises, they bring all the fresh vegetables on board from some of the ports and you get an infestation of cockroaches aboard the boat. And we had cockroaches that would go ahead and you would lie in your bunk at night and you'd look up and they would be one walking down the chains. Some of them were big enough we gave em names cause they would come back. And, in those day's, when we were in port in Key West and your family was in town, especially on Sunday's, the captain would invite the family to come down and after the crew had mess you could go ahead and bring the family an the cook would cook them a nice meal. And it was interesting, one time I was sitting up on deck with a couple of the guy's. We had the duty so we couldn't get off to go to the barracks Just sitting around after dinner and the family was downstairs, And these cockroaches had a most inopportune time to show up. So here were these ladies, wives, sisters, and mothers, whatever and you heard out of the hatch a blood-curdling scream associated with the cockroaches.

So, the first thing that we had was this cockroach infestation. The next thing that would come along on board the boat was we had an adventure in Gitmo, which I will never forget. For one time the air conditioning was working on other parts of the boat beside the wardroom. So anyway, Gitmo in the summer would get unbearable heat. But here we had the air conditioning working on the boat. What they did when running a battery charge at night was raise the snorkel mast so we could get the effect of the air conditioning. I slept in the after battery with 36 of us in the different bunks in there. And here comes, one o'clock in the morning, and the below decks watch is banging a nightstick, banging away. What had happened was there was a hydrogen alarm. So what does this guy do? First thing he does in turn the lights on. We were lucky that the ship didn't blow up well what evidently happened a guy had kicked a blanket over the ventilation pipe that ventilated he battery well. But prior to this, we also had a hatch that wouldn't close all the way and I tell you a story about the hatch that led from the galley to the deck. So here we are, we are told to abandon ship; one o'clock in the morning, On the other side of the pier was a destroyer. Now her comes all these submarine guy's in there skivvies, running out of the submarine onto the pier. And one guy, I'll never forget, we had a grizzly old chief and he comes up there and you got to picture this guy. He's bowlegged, got his skivvies and tee shirt on. He's got his chief's hat on and a stub end of a cigar mumbling and cursing yelling at us all. By the time we got everybody out, which took forever, we were told to go back, everything's clear. Whoever it was moved the blanket and the hydrogen level went back down. I was wondering all t his time what those surface craft sailors thought was going on.

The story about the hatch was all of a sudden the after battery hatch wouldn't close all the way. We found this out when we dove and water was pouring into the after battery and the first thing everybody did was strip all the bunks and covered the battery well hatch so water wouldn't enter the battery and we could finally get enough ranks in the hatch dogs to close it. Well, once you got to the surface, you couldn't open it. It was a problem because it was clamped down so hard from the water pressure and you gave it extra turns. So the officers and the chiefs came up with this elegant solution. We're not going to fix this thing. So what we did was a messcook got the assignment. Everytime we dove he had to stand under that hatch until we got to fifty feet and give it the final cranks and he always got a shower every time we dove because it would leak until he cranked it down. And then, when we came back up to surface, at fifty feet he had to undo that hatch so we could open it. That was another thing we had to attend to in the yard.

When it was time for us they scheduled us for the navy yard for major overhaul. The first thing we ran into was to get up to Charleston from Key West. We had nine or ten guys that had motorcycles. And all these guys wanted leave so they could take their motorcycles and drive them from Key West to Charleston. Well the captain thought about this for a while as he wasn't sure how many would make it. They would stop and drink before they crossed the Stock Island Bridge and he could lose half of them. So the decision was made take the motorcycles, disassembled. So here we had the lower decks of the forward and after torpedo room full of motorcycle parts. And that's how all the bikes go to Charleston.

Upon arriving in Charleston, all the bikes got put back together and amazing things started happening. One thing that happened with these motorcycles is everything got chromed. The navy yard had a chrome shop. So all these bikes got chrome fenders, etc. They looked beautiful.

The next event that occurred we were in Charleston one week. The first thing was the slush fund went broke. The next thing that happened is that we had some crewmembers come late. So after one week we got a speech at muster in the morning. The XO came over and said, "Okay, you guys, at this point in time the slush fund is broke. The reason it is broke because we had to bail out so many of the crewmembers. We had seven guys thrown in jail already in the first week we were there. If we have one more incident liberty will be cancelled for the whole crew for as long as we are in Charleston." Well, the chiefs got the message real quick. They all concealed us that we were not to get into trouble anymore. And that worked, by the way. At that time I was trying to get into the quartermaster gig, I was still working for bulldog. One of the guys who got arrested was drinking in one of the bars in Charleston and he got a bit rowdy. So the Charleston police sent in a plain-clothes officers who came up and grabbed him by the shoulder. He took one look at this guy and picked up his beer glass and smashed him in the face. Split his head open requiring 19 stitches. Well, this guy didn't come back he wound up with a year in prison. He was a quartermaster and when he left, that how I got his job.

So now we are in Charleston, people cleaned up their act due to pressure from the chiefs and one of the things I did learn in the Navy was that First Class Petty Officers and Chiefs never passed out from drinking - they just fainted. I figured out that rank has its privileges. They also never got restricted. And one morning at muster, two of the chiefs show up and they were drinking buddies. We don't know where they went; we don't know what truth is. But one showed up with his arm broken and they gave a really weird story about what had happened. And it had to do with this chief falling down because he was pushed down a flight of stairs. He swore he was sober. We know that part wasn't true.

So we had a chief with a broken arm, several sailors thrown in jail and we continued our adventures in the navy yard. About half way through, the ship was already starting to be welded. Sea Poacher was getting welded together. They cut these big holes; to me it was a little bit disturbing. Here you are, here's your boat you are going to be on and they take a torch and they cut 5 and 6 foot sections out of the hull to get new generators and motors put in. They had to weld that all back toothier. But anyway, when the boat back in tact again, they were running a battery charge overnight and they always had two guys on the boat when the boat was in dry-dock. They were running a battery charge and they had the conning tower hatch open to let the air come in. One of the yard birds didn't know what was going on went ahead and closed the hatch. The vacuum in the boat immediately went to 11 inches of mercury and bingo the engines shut off. Now the guys can get out of the sub do to the vacuum. They finally got word out and got the hatches open for the outside.

At the end of the day we finally got things all done in Charleston. We left, everybody is happy motorcycles were all chromed and we went on with our business.