

### Bat-A-Rat - 3

I actually remember having pancakes that morning. Chief Bubba, who always wore shoes with no heels and was our cook, must have been in a festive mood to have gone to such lengths. Real Navy syrup right outta the can and everything.....Yum-Yum. While sitting in the AB following my delightful repast, someone came below decks and said the Limeys were all dressed as pirates and were motoring around in a launch.

I decided to see for myself and headed for the bridge. Once again, it was a fine spring morning with the sun shining. Sure enough there was a motor launch, flying a string of colorful flags from stem to stern and a large "Jolly Roger" that flew from the masthead. This gaily trimmed craft was manned by six or eight "pirates".

These guys were performing for the locals. It seemed that they had visiting ship that morning and their deck was crawling with Sicilians.

Each "pirate" had a bandanna 'round his head and a complete pirate costume, right down to silver Masonite swords. Mounted forward in the bow of the launch was what looked like a large brass shell casing. Every now and then, one of the pirates would light a fuse on something and throw it into the open end of the casing. Suddenly, a large "BOOM" would erupt with billows of white smoke. It was a fake cannon and an impressive one too!

I stood watching, thinking about going below to get my camera, when the pirate ship came along side. Suddenly all but one of the pirates clamored over the tank-tops and were on the deck! They grabbed both topside watches and before I knew what was happening a pirate was in the sail with me standing on the bridge waving a huge English flag!!

Without a second thought, I leaned forward to the 1MC speaker, pushed down the lever and bellowed, "ALL HANDS LAY TOPSIDE TO REPEL BOARDER, WITHOUT ARMS!" I don't remember saying it twice. I didn't have to. Suddenly every hatch on the boat opened and submarine sailors poured out like yellow-jackets when you kick their nest. In two minutes all of the boarding party was swimming, 'cause we threw them over the side! The motor launch helped as many as possible, others made their way back to shore as best they could.

Once the launch had deposited their wet passengers, they continued to putt around. Rick Canada stepped to the edge of the deck and waved a watch at the launch. It was his, but the boat operator thought it was one of theirs and that Rick had saved it from a briny submersion. The launch came alongside and six Cobbler sailors jumped into the boat and threw the Brit overboard! That was a mistake, because they didn't know how to operate the damn thing and drove wildly around the anchorage, often bumping into either our tanks or the side of the frigate!

The Limeys rigged fire hoses and every time the launch came within range, they drowned them with water. Following several excursions out to the entrance of the anchorage --- which we didn't think they would return from due to piss poor helmsmanship --- they finally returned the launch and came back to the boat... heroes. Jim Tschroner, ETC/SS reminded me about this event and I wish he'd offer his memories of it. It was such a wild time, that I must have missed something with only one perspective. I have enjoyed steaming with all British sailors from that weekend forward. Although, I soon learned not to try to out drink them!!!

I also learned that there is indeed a fine line between "fun and fight" and you really shouldn't say derogatory things about the Queen. Especially if you aren't interested in crossing over the "fight line.

So there was the chapter of Piracy and English treachery, more or less where it belongs.