

Bermuda Triangle

In about 1957 I was assigned to the USS Brattleboro (EPCER-852), out of New London CT, as the first LT and OPS officer. The ship was a 135 FT patrol boat. It had a crew of about 35. We did Navy experiments in line-of-sight inferred communications and mostly operated at night. We also did some underwater experiments.

We were off Bermuda operating in the "Bermuda Triangle" doing acoustic test, exploding charges at various depths by lowering explosives tied to a 3/8" nylon line. At one point the line got tangled around the shaft of the port propeller. The captain asked if anyone onboard had scuba diving experience. I and a 1st class MM said we did. The captain asked us to volunteer to go over the side and cut the line free. The ship posted 4 gunners mates with M-1s as look-outs, and over the side we went. We took a deep breath, dove down, swam under the stern, and took a couple of quick slices at the line, then up to the surface gasping for air. It took the better part of an hour to cut the line free. After, the two of us got to "splice-the-mainbrace".

Just Lucky

Off the coast of Vietnam, COMDESRON22 ran the "gun line" for South Vietnam. After being there for a month or so, two Australian destroyers were assigned to the line. The commodore told me to go over to the HMS Hobart and see if they knew how to provide gunfire support for the Marines in I CORP. I was high-lined over to the Hobart and showed them how the US Navy provides gunfire support. Shortly after arriving onboard, the ship got a mission near the DMZ. I told the captain to start in toward the coast at 6 KTS and to start firing the forward mount at 15,000 YDS from the beach so the VC would keep their heads down. At 10,000 YDS he was to steam parallel to the coast and start shooting a "broadside" at the target, then turn away from the coast line but keep shooting the after mount until we got out of range of the VC coastal guns. The captain did exactly as I requested and that was the end of that mission.

Shortly after, the ship got another target and the captain said to me, "If you don't mind, LCDR Trask, I will show you how we Australians provide gunfire support." He rang up a speed of 18 KTS, put the forward mounts into "rapid fire" mode, proceeded into about 5000 YDS of the beach, turned broadside, took out the target, turned away from the coast, went to 24 KTS until out of range from VC guns. I went up the captain and said, "Well done, I don't believe you need me anymore".

P.S. About two weeks later, the Hobart was hit by "friendly fire" and received considerable damage with many crew members killed.

Both submitted by CAPT Ace F Trask, USN RET