

The Light from Above

One very calm and dark night (about 0200) onboard the USS. Kraus (DD-849), we were headed north off the coast of Florida. I had just reported onboard from graduating from Monterey PG School. LT Mert Pearson was the OOD and I was the JOOD. He had the "CONN" and I had the "deck". The conning officer is responsible for the ship's movements and the JOOD was responsible for the radio traffic, navigation, etc.

We had no surface contacts close-by. All of a sudden, just off the port bow, was a close aboard bright white search light! Mert said, "What the h--- is that!" I replied, "I don't know but I suggest right full rudder!"

As it turned out, it was a P-2 patrol plane checking us out as they did along the East Coast in the early 60s.

Bad Start

Standing watches in the Merchant Marine is a bit different than the USN. In the Merchant Marine the mate that has the watch is the look-out, navigator, etc. while the ship's steering is done by the automatic "iron mike". The bridge is large with lots of space. The quartermaster is in the area doing maintenance and is called if needed.

My first ship in the USN was onboard an LST. With my background I was made an "Officer of the Deck" (OOD) immediately. The first day underway I went to the very small bridge of the LST and relieved the OOD. After he left, I realized there were too many people in the area. So I sent the port lookout, the starboard lookout, and the quartermaster down to the next level below the bridge. Now I had some elbow room. Shortly after the CO came to the bridge and after about 10 seconds he yelled, "Where is everybody". I told him what I had done and he went "ballistic"!

The last line of my first fitness report read, "This officer is naïve and unused to Navy ways". He retired shortly after as an O3.

Both submitted by CAPT Ace T. Trask, USN RET