

North Atlantic Ocean, 1947

I was an AERM3 aboard the USS Huntington (CL-107) sailing home toward Philadelphia from a tour of the Mediterranean. We were part of a sizable convoy. It was September of 1947. The weather worsened. The Huntington and a destroyer received significant damage from the hurricane. The two damaged vessels were left to slowly escort each other home while the rest of the convoy steamed ahead. This bit of drivel commemorates the event:

North Atlantic Ocean, 1947

The sea and sky were angry.
The howling wind, force sev'n or eight,
Then ten or 'leven
Tore the ocean asunder
And threw it in our face.
The rain was driv'n like pellets.
Both sea and air howled
Above the ship, and deep in her bowels.
The ship itself was screaming
As she twisted, groaned and creaked,
Straining steel and rivets.
There was no horizon.
The sea became mountains and valleys.
It was a struggle to maintain headway
Into wind and surging sea.
Great mountains of water loomed
High above her bow
Which dipped and dived; the ocean
Rolled majestically upon her deck.
The stern lifted her propellers
To spin without purchase
And howl in the foaming air
Until once more the bow rode up
As if to speak to God,
While the stern slammed down
Against the solid force of the sea.
Drive shafts and engines screamed.
A screw bent. A shaft tore bearings
From their beds.
An engine labored 'til it was stilled.
Could the other props and engines
Maintain headway against the fury?
The storm had moved us backwards
As we faced it down that day.
"How far, how far is land?"
A seaman asked in fear.
The wheelman smartly answered,
"Only a mile or two,
Or maybe it is three,

That is ---
If you plot your course
Straight down into the sea.”

The dark sky darkened even more
As pale daylight fled from view,
And it became God-awful night
As long as a bight can last.
And still the storm washed over us
Another night and day.
The convoy steamed ahead of us
And left us on our own,
Two weather-wounded ships,
A Destroyer and a Light cruiser,
Each an escort for the other
As we lamely turn toward port,
Slowly make for Philadelphia
Home.

As the responsible weather forecaster aboard the Huntington, with helpful information from the Weather Center in Norfolk, I predicted hurricane winds before we encountered them.

Edwin Folk

AERM3, USS Huntington (CL-107)

1947-1948

From Winter 2014 issue *U.S. Navy Cruiser Sailors*, United States Seagoing Marine Assn, Inc.

Submitted by LCDR Bruce DeWald, USN RET