

Midway Magic and a Sailor's Memory

Back in the late 70's I served aboard USS Midway (CV-41) homeported in Yokosuka, Japan. She was my first tour of duty as a result of the AG Detailer confusing my request for orders to Midway Island. After the initial disappointment of not being assigned a duty station so pivotal to military and world history wore off, I looked forward to meeting the people of Japan and exploring everything their ancient culture had to offer.

Midway's keel was laid on 27 October 1943 in Newport News, Virginia. She launched on 20 March 1945 and was commissioned on 10 September 1945, just eight days after Emperor Hirohito formally signed the document of Japan's unconditional surrender, thereby ending World War II. The first of her class, she was named in commemoration of the historic battle of Midway fought 3 to 6 June 1942. Midway Magic was a term of endearment used by crewmembers for the grand old lady they called home. Her service to our nation which began just after World War II spanned the Korean and Vietnam Wars, the Cold War, Detente, and finally, Desert Storm, a remarkable 47 years. She answered every call, both military and peacekeeping. On April 11, 1992, the Midway was decommissioned in San Diego and remained in storage in Bremerton, Washington, until 2003 when it was donated to the nonprofit San Diego Aircraft Carrier Museum organization. It opened as the USS Midway Museum in June 2004.

Now for the memory. It took place during the 1830-0630 watch with AG1 J.R. Fanning and AGAN Larry Kingsley. Now Larry was a big ole strapping farm boy from Durango, Colorado. Strong as an ox and one of the nicest guys you'd ever want to meet. He did however, lack finesse when handling things of a delicate nature. During the course of the watch Larry and I were doing the obligatory field day and everything was going along quite well. Yes sir, not a spec of high dust overhead to be found, brass shined to a mirror like finish (using diluted Kool-Aid of course), all horizontal and vertical surfaces spotless and a deck you could eat off! Indeed, all was right with the world. Until that is, Larry, who was putting the finishing touches on the coffee mess, dropped AGC Fred "Typhoon" Brown's prized Lakehurst NJ instructor mug breaking off the handle, to which AG1 Fanning promptly replied, "damn Kingsley, you're in some deep Kimchi!" For those of you who've never had kimchi, I'll try my best to explain. It's a fermented spicy pickled vegetable dish common to South Korea that includes cabbage, garlic, chili pepper and other spices. Depending on amount of garlic used and how much is consumed, it can leave one who eats it with a pungent odor emanating from their pores for quite some time.

Thereby, one who is in deep kimchi is usually in something quite intense. Anyway, I thought poor ole Larry was going to die of a heart attack right then and there. So he glues the handle back on best he can, let's it dry and hangs it back on the cup rack, all the while praying Chief wouldn't be the wiser. Unfortunately, that was not to be. Now I don't recall if Larry fessed up before the deed was noticed or not, but I do recall Chief saying a few choice words before unceremoniously tossing his once cherished mug into the circular file. Thus, it goes without saying, silence about the decks was the better part of valor, at least until watch turnover was complete.

Note regarding AGC Fred Brown: He was an old school Chief who had the wonderful ability to be a mentor, disciplinarian, teacher, leader and friend. Many times he helped me out both professionally and personally, something a then young sailor such as myself truly needed, and shall always be grateful for.

Submitted by AG1 Steven Smith, USN RET