

Brian Vesper - Shipmate Story 07-03-2012

After having too much fun at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, New Mexico, I went on academic probation during my first semester of my sophomore year and was reclassified by the DoD as 1-A. Two weeks later, I received a cordial invitation for a free physical at Fort Bliss, Texas.

I decided I better enlist in the Navy because, although my father had it rough during WWII and his ship was sunk in the Mediterranean, he has some fun stories. I did think that would be a hell of a way to go and little did I know how dangerous it was going to be on an oil tanker! But it was around May of 1969 after boot camp at Camp Nimitz in San Diego, CA (God, I loved that city) I was sent to Clark AFB, PI to catch up with the USS Kennebec, AO-36 filling her up at Subic Bay.

The first thing I found very uncomfortable (other than the top rack next to the asbestos coated steel pipes) was the head. Oh yeah, the toilets were wide open and very close to one another. I now admit it took me a while to get used to that but eventually, it didn't matter to me anymore. Before I did get used to it, I used to hold it until later in the evening. Boy, that was tough! Mother Nature will tell you when to go I learned the hard way.

The other thing that had always stuck in my memories was the decommissioning of the old girl but I lucked out just before mucking tanks and got orders to attend hospital corpsman school at Balboa Navy Hospital in San Diego. Different story there but plenty of fond ones at that city. First time I heard the Ha-ray Krishna (?) and why were there so many people wearing flowers in their hair? First time I saw that was at Hunter's Point in San Francisco. They made a song out of it shortly after that! Ah yes, you're singing it now!