



### **Guy E. Noble (CO, AGR-11 1960-62)**

When departing Davisville in early January 1961 headed for the picket line, the Protector was diverted and ordered to establish a picket station about 70 miles southeast of Nantucket Island. A Texas Tower had been at that site for several years but a bad North Atlantic gale had toppled the tower a few weeks earlier with the loss of approximately 40 men. After a week on station, we were then ordered to proceed to our assigned picket station. A picket station in 1961 was an 80 by 40 mile rectangle.

On the night of 19 January, we received warning of a massive blizzard coming off the east coast, centered around Norfolk. I told the OOD to head for the southeast corner of the station at maximum speed. When the winds reached 45 knots, the radars were secured. At midnight, the winds had increased to 65 knots. I knew from the weather reports that the worst was yet to come ... so I headed for the bridge and planned for an all night vigil. By 0600 the wind had increased to 100 knots with higher gusts. The winds continued to increase during the morning and we were experiencing steady 110 knot winds with gusts over 130. The anemometer couldn't register any higher! This storm was far worse than any hurricane or typhoon I had experienced. My greatest fear was we could lose power and broach...putting us at the mercy of the sea. We were fortunate, however, and only were knocked about 45 degrees off course by a massive wave. It took almost 20 minutes to bring the ship's head back into the wind and sea. The storm finally began to abate about 1300 and by 1600 the winds had dropped off to 35 knots.

All during the storm we were unable to establish our position so we had no idea how far off station we had been blown. To our amazement, the wind, sea, and Gulf Stream had carried us about 70 miles BACKWARD in 24 hours.. although we had been making turns for full speed ahead!

The only damage the ship suffered was to the propeller blades. Apparently, we had struck some object in the water during the storm. At the end of the picket, the ship headed for Boston to have a new radar installed and storm damage repaired.



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Late in February 1961, the Protector departed Boston for the southern most picket station. Shortly after arriving on station, the Engineering Officer, Stretch Morss, informed me that we were almost OUT of lube oil. We had a three week picket staring us in the face and the worst thing that can happen to any ship is not being able to fulfill its mission. Apparently, the Oil King was so caught up in some romance problems that he had neglected his duty and had not procured a sufficient amount of lube oil for the trip.

I called a meeting of all officers and chiefs to kick around ideas for solving the problem. We had sufficient lube oil for 4 or 5 days. This would be held in reserve for the trip back to Davisville. During the picket we would use the main engine as little as possible and drift within our area ... Also pray for good weather which is quite unusual in the Atlantic during the winter. Another suggestion, which we immediately effected, was to confiscate all the cooking oil, butter, margarine and any other items that could be used as a lubricant. This meant a drastic change in meal planning but it couldn't be helped.

We lucked out ... The weather was beautiful for almost the entire three weeks and for the trip to Davisville, or as we affectionately called it, "Gruntville". Thank God the Commodore never found out about our predicament .... He would have scalped me!

**Do you have a good sea story that you would like to pass along?  
Send it in for possible publication in one of the YAGRGRAMS.**