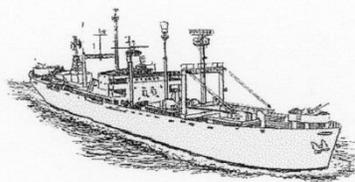


# Sea Stories

Please send your sea stories to [mel.harder@snet.net](mailto:mel.harder@snet.net).

The sea story below is from the YAGRS website.



**Andrew M. Guglielmo - USS SEARCHER AGR-4** (The engine room fire on November 13, 1955)

I, as well as BMC Joseph Dymerski and CM3 Bob Henry, drove from the SEVEREN RIVER COMMAND at Annapolis, MD. to Charleston S.C. to become proud plank owners of a YAGR. No one knew what YAGR meant including Joe Dymerski. The ship was commissioned on April 3, 1955 and I believe we had a severe snow storm in the east two days prior. The commanding officer was LT. CMDR. James Paulick. When we had the engine room fire on November 13, 1955, I was bunked on the port side forward of the #3 hold which had been used during WW2 for armed guard personnel. I recall we were all Petty Officers assigned to the supply division. When the general alarm sounded, we got to our feet and there was a strong odor of smoke and oil. A great guy, CM2 Bodkins, would always have a cigarette the first thing even before getting out of the bunk. Two of us said "Hey Bodkins put that butt out". When he replied in his southern accent, "I ain't smoking", we knew we had a severe problem. As I left the cabin, the passageway was full of black smoke and the EXEC approached me and asked, "Do you have a watch"? I replied I do, so he



assigned me to the Chief Corpsman. I believe his name was Loftus. The Chief assigned me to give injections and note the time and date on a tag attached to the severely injured shipmates. I noticed a German ship off to the port which had a sign indicating she was loaded with gasoline, and according to the Quarter Master, she was approaching to assist us but was asked to stand down. Then the US Coast Guard Cutter, I believe INGHAM, came up to the stern and ran two large fully charged fire lines to extinguish the fire. The ship was now listing. Injured personnel were air lifted from the ship via helicopter. I don't recall if it was the same day or the next day when we heard the USS CAPRICORNUS - AKA 57 was approaching to tow us to the Brooklyn Navy Yard. When she approached our port side, she struck our port Gunwhale and caused same to sustain damage. We then were towed to Brooklyn backwards and faster than we had ever gone forward under our own speed (top speed was about 11 knots for a Picket ship). We were met at the shipyard with all types of medical assistance and buses and were transported to the barracks on Flatbush Avenue. That night we had a fire in the barracks and had to evacuate same. The ship was tied up alongside the BB WISCONSIN. She was having new barrels installed. I lived in New Jersey at the time and life was great. Went home on the subway to moms cooking and handling the laundry. And one day it came to an end. The scuttle butt was we were going to take the ship to Boston, MA. to have her refitted. Not being Admiral material I suggested, "Hey why not bring the plans down here from Boston and fix her here, nah that makes too much sense, I will go get the plans now at my own expense". Several days passed. I chided the deck force and snipes - they should have a great trip being towed to Boston from Brooklyn in a carcass of a ship with no heat, no water, nothing typical Navy. They made remarks about me and my heritage but we all laughed, except three days before the movement of the ship to Boston I was notified that I would be part of the skeleton crew, the only member of the supply division. They took us out past the AMBROSE LIGHTSHIP which is no longer there. Then a sea going tug took us in tow on the trek to Boston, MA., no heat, no lights, no food, and no beds, and during the night the cable either broke or came loose and there we were on the round bottom of the SEARCHER rolling and pitching and listing until they connected us again. Boston was cold and damp and the people were hostile and we lived in the Fargo Building which I now hear is a high end condo. I made one last patrol with the SEARCHER and was transferred to OGU in Newport, RI and was discharged on 9/5/56. The men I met in the Navy were good people and loyal Americans. I thank god for them and I really thank god for our youth of today being in the forefront for our nation. The only thing I can't square away is when I see the reunion pics, who the hell are these old folks? The guys I was with were tough and ready guys. Again, thanks to Ski and Harry and the rest of you for taking the time and effort and expense to keep the tradition going. In conclusion, I would add that I had one or two conversations with ENG 1 Buzbee (he was one that was killed in the fire) in the mess hall, and he was preparing for retirement prior to that horrific day of Nov 13, 1955. He was a gentleman and a loyal American, and told me when he retired he just wanted to sit on the porch and have the mailman put the check in his pocket.

On Nov 7, 2015 Ron Berlier (uss Interpreter)

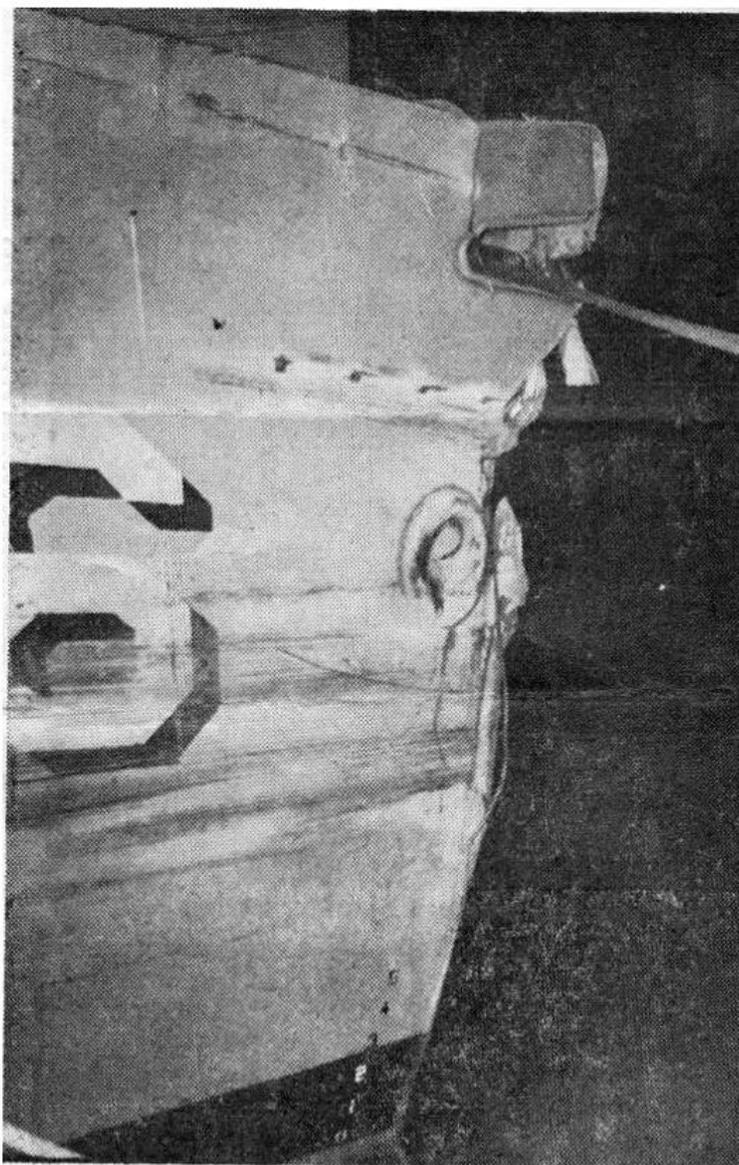
[berlier@jps.net](mailto:berlier@jps.net)> wrote:

Hi Lee, I was going through some old boxes and came across this newspaper article regarding the Locator's mishap. Unfortunately, there is no date with it and, so far, I have found no references on the web. But I'm sure it was between 1962 and 1965. If you would like it for the historical display I would be happy to mail it to you the original. Just let me know.

Ron



**Online research found reports of this incident in several Bay area newspapers on the dates of January 16 & 17, 1965 - Mel Harder, Secretary**



**NAVY SHIP DAMAGED IN BRIDGE COLLISION**  
USS Locator hit Richmond-San Rafael span

## Navy Radar Ship Crashes Into Pier

The Navy radar picket ship USS Locator, enroute down the Bay after having fueled at Ft. Molate, crashed into a pier of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge late yesterday afternoon.

The Locator suffered damage to her starboard bow and port quarter in the fog-enshrouded mishap.

The bridge was struck on the upstream fender of the second pier west of Main Channel No. 1, then struck again at the middle pier on the west end of the Channel. Timber fenders on both piers were damaged& along with part of the concrete structure on the main pier.

It was not necessary to close the bridge to traffic, however.

No one was hurt in the accident.

The Locator limped back, partly under her own power and aided by tugs, to Treasure Island. The Navy plans a full investigation of the matter.

Divers were to go down as soon as practical to further check the Locator's hull.

Navy officials said the Locator, with civilian Bay pilot P. L. Stiltz at the helm, cut its engines upon passing under the bridge. An unusually strong ebb tide pulled the ship into the pier.

At about the same time, another ship, a tanker flying the Liberian flag, apparently struck a channel buoy on the south side of the bridge after leaving the Standard Oil Co. long wharf.

Sight of this tanker, the William F. Allen, was believed to have prompted the Locator to cut its engines.

The Locator is a converted Liberty ship, one of 16 ex-cargo vessels transformed into a seagoing radar net. It was enroute to its ocean station off Seattle, where it is scheduled to relieve a sister ship, the USS Interpreter.

Officials said the Interpreter now would stay on station until another relief could be sent.