

## Tracer Battle Efficiency award recovered

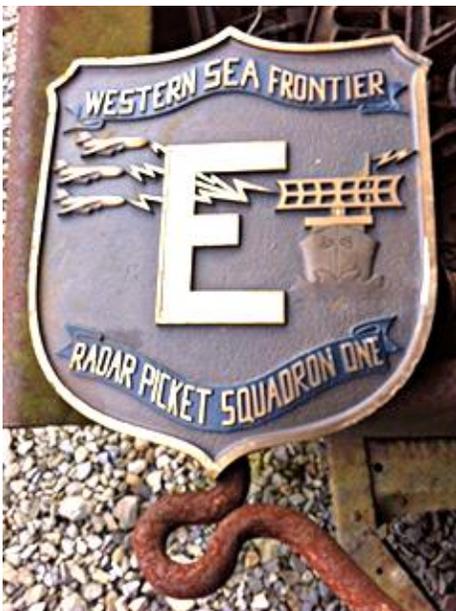
Lee Doyel

Thanks to our web site, just prior to the Branson reunion I received an email from a lady (Sally White) wondering about the plaque shown below. Subsequent correspondence revealed that her father (who was a truck driver) found it along a highway in Pennsylvania 20 years ago leaning up against a guard rail post. That is 30 years after the squadron and ships were decommissioned. She was wondering if it had any monetary value. I told her just for the brass content but there was more a sentimental value attached to it and offered to buy it from her plus shipping cost for the YAGRS museum. We wonder who "appropriated" it and where was it for the 30 years before being found and how did it get on the road side. At any rate, Mrs. White said her father would like to donate it to YAGRS and she and her husband would pay the postage for shipping. I took it to Branson where it was displayed in the hospitality room. The plaque was a "Battle Efficiency" award given to the USS Tracer (AGR-15). Amazing those old

photo by Suzanne Attig



## Tracer crew in Branson with Battle Efficiency Award



ships could have a battle efficiency rating, assuming they would still be afloat after a war started. The Tracer received the award two years in a row and here is a picture of Captain Reid receiving the award from RADM Taylor, Commander Western Sea Frontier. The plaque was in good shape except for some scratches and being slightly bent on the lower right corner apparently from hitting the highway when it fell from what ever was transporting it. It is also amazing it had not been melted down for scrap during the 50 plus years after being "appropriated." Thanks to **Gerald G. Zimmerman**, another aspect of YAGRS has been recovered.



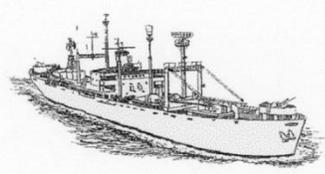
**ship's coordinators** - Ship's coordinators maintain an email list that is used to forward memos from the chair and advance notices of reunion plans to crew members. If you wish to be included, send an email to your ship's coordinator.

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## Sea Stories

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



Submitted by Ralph Tucker, EM2, USS Outpost AGR-10

I was stationed at Harbor Defense in Little Creek, Virginia before going to the USS Outpost. Most people don't realize that we had a shore controlled mine field across the entrance to the Chesapeake Bay in the 1960's. These mines were about 4 to 5 foot in diameter and 3 to 4 foot high. Each was connected by a network of 1 1/2" diameter cables with about 21 wires to the control station on shore. It use to take the minemen about four hours to make a splice.

The mines were all controlled from Fort Story in Virginia Beach. When I was there, the triggers were not in the mines but the field could have been activated in less then 24 hours. There were acoustic devices to pick up any underwater sounds that weren't supposed to be there. Fort Story and Fishermans Island on the North side had observation post so they knew what should be going through the entrance. The deepest part of the entrance was 93 feet. Harbor Defense had a dive boat with seven

divers who did scuba in the summer and hard hat in the winter. The duty electrician had to ride one of the five 65' mine planters in case any of the boats had an electrical problem. It was great to get out of the shop every week or two and spend a day on the water. Only close call I had was when they drove the first ceremonial piling for the new Chesapeake Bay bridge. We were returning to Little Creek from the mine field in a blinding snow storm using only the gyro compass. All of a sudden there is this huge piling dead in front of us, The 2nd class BM was able to miss it by at least a foot. We had all the material to put a submarine net across the entrance. One summer they practiced installing a couple sections of net. One of the mine planters had to sit on the net so no one would run into it. That was "rough" duty, fishing and swim call all day. The only thing I regret is I never took a picture the whole two years I was there.

Submitted by Bob Wiltshire, ET2, U.S.S Lookout AGR2

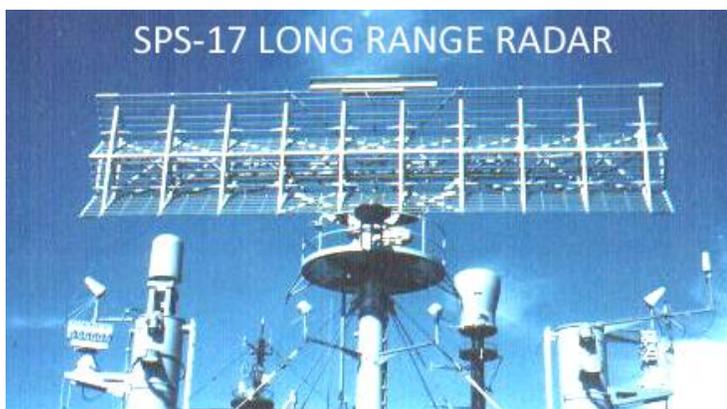
Thought I would send you a SEA STORY about what happened aboard the U.S.S. Lookout in about 1960/61. That was about 55 years ago and this is how I remember it.

We were nearing the end of one of our tours and this time, for the first time, we were going to a port somewhere other than Davisville. ( I think it was Halifax) . It was about 2 PM, two days before we were to be relieved. The aft 3 inch gun was going to be fired and as usual, when the gun was going to be fired, the SPS 8 radar was shut down.

Everyone went to the assigned firing stations, and as the gun was fired there was an unscheduled blackout on the ship. I was in the ET shop in mid ship. I was immediately called that the SPS 17 (long range radar) went down leaving us with no long range radar. I went towards the SPS 17 radar room , it was filled with smoke and a burning smell.



FYI, the SPS 17 had an oil cooled main power output, and the oil was cooled by flowing salt water. When the gun was fired, a salt water line in the oil cooler burst sending salt water all over the electronics causing electrical shorts so bad that the main circuit breakers welded shut instead of tripping. The over current problem went all the way back to the main generators on the ship. Now with the only long range radar down, we had to get the SPS 8 back up fast as we were still on station. When that was accomplished, ( firing of the guns was stopped), I went to analyze the SPS 17 problem. There was so much damage , water and electrical , that it was hard to find where to start. But we knew we had to get it back up as soon as possible.



At that time we had 5 ET's on board. As I recall it was myself, I was an ET2, 3 ET3s, and an ETN. With this

emergency, myself, Jim Ebersol, and Pete Lounsberry started working on the problem. We had a BT put a new waterline in the cooler, then we started the electrical. With so many wires and parts burned, we started scratching through the spare parts, we had to scavenge some working units to get parts and cables. Another problem was slipping on the rubber flooring with it soaked with oil. The 3 of us worked through the night, all the next day and finally, at about 5 in the morning on the second day we had the SPS 17 up and running. We hit the sack, it was about 46 hours of non sleep. My bunk was next to the outside bulkhead. I had just about got to sleep when I heard the ships alarm. As you know the normal routine was to test the alarms every morning. However, as I listened, realized that this alarm was

COLISION. Then I thought about the relieving ship bringing out our mail and I was next to the bulkhead, and the Collision siren. I was out of the rack so fast and out to the center passage way before I put my dungarees on !!!!!

End result is there was a boat transfer, the ocean was like a sheet of glass, and apparently someone wasn't watching what was happening, and by the time it was realized that we were going to collide, it was too late to stop it. We ran into the other AGR, causing damage, although minor, to both ships. It also ended our chance to get to another port and we went back to Davisville for repairs. We did get a "job well done " from the Captain, but never got to Hailifax.

Bob Wiltshire ET2 1957-1961

submitted by Gordon L. Broome USS Seacher AGR-4 1958 - 1962

We were on station in the mid atlantic around 1960, when we got caught in a bad hurricane several miles north of Bermuda. (See classypages.com/Searcher) The hurricane was so bad that 60 ft. waves were encountered. I was an ET working in CIC where the SPA-8 repeaters were getting

vibrated repeatedly, as was everything else onboard, every time the screw would come out of the water. The tubes in the repeater had grids that would sometimes short out as the lay horizontal in the unit. (this was before transisters, etc.) The tubes were taking a beating when one of the units went

down. I uncovered the repeater, cranked it down, and opened it up for service, and sat cross-legged with my trouble lite. Meanwhile, up on the bridge, the Captain, afraid that we were entering too close to Bermuda waters,

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and afraid of running aground, attempted to change course and, without us being previously warned, got caught in the trough of a huge wave, which resulted in a 57 degree roll, almost capsizing the ship. When that occurred, I was catapulted off the deck, backwards, and landed into RD-2 Lopez, who was sprawled against the plotting table and the force cracked three of his ribs. A lot of other things happened at that time resulting in a massive cleanup and a lot of repair work . I remember having just soup and sandwiches for days afterwards. Petty officer Lopez avoided me for the rest of the cruise, poor guy, as he had to be in constant pain , what with a constant rolling ship. He also had some choice names for me.



**Member Correspondence**

**from:** Ray Huther, Scanner - '57/'58

Great job by all those holding the association together. Please pass on my thanks. There is reference to 3" 50mm shells in the last newsletter. That is not a correct description - 3 inches is the bore and the length of the barrel is 3 inches x 50 or 150". There is no millimeter measurement. For example, battleships have/had 16" 50's and the barrel (if that is what they are/were called) is 800 inches long - 66.66+ feet. Naval guns are still designated that way unless the bore is in millimeters. Incidentally, I was on the new USS Milwaukee (LCS 5) last week in the BAE shipyard in Jacksonville and it has a millimeter gun in the bow - a Mk 110 57mm (2 plus inch bore).

