

THOMAS G. PLETZ

October 23, 1997

Holiday Inn South
9940 Airline Highway
Baton Rouge, LA 70816
% U.S. Richard B. Anderson Reunion
Tom Richarme or Bill Beebe

VIA OVERNIGHT COURIER

Gentlemen:

I thank Bill Beebe for tracking me down and apologize to him that my trial schedule does not permit me to attend this reunion, which is the first one to my knowledge, since my service aboard the RBA from 1965-67. I look forward to seeing former shipmates at the next reunion and hope to learn of its date and location from someone.

I have wonderful memories of shipboard life aboard the RBA from 1965-67, perhaps because I had nothing to compare it with as a callow young ensign just graduated from the University of Notre Dame.

I learned a lot about leadership and life from men like Captains Langille and Alberta, Lts. Crolick, Lane, Abbey and Lambertus, FTCS Lehane, BMC Anderson and many others. Among other things, I learned how the informal pecking-order of expertise and experience properly counted as much as rank or rate. If any one from the 1965-67 era wants to reminiscence, I can be contacted during business hours at our law firm at 1-800-444-6659.

I had learned in school before the RBA about academics. Aboard the RBA, I learned about essential interpersonal hierachial relationships from true leaders. After detachment, I stayed in the Navy Reserve for another 24 years and tried to pass on that knowledge and perpetuate those intrinsic values in younger men and women. Our superior officers and peers aboard the RBA afforded invaluable opportunities, which we were able to emulate and apply directly.

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One pleasant recollection was when Tom Knudsen was relieved by a young supply officer named Steve Diekman and I was not only Bull Ensign but also First Lieutenant, I convinced Steve that we followed the British tradition making me third in line of succession to command after the CO and XO, so I required him to call me "Number One." Upon arrival, Steve had a rather combative attitude, pitting his department against the others, so I was given the duty (by Howie Lane or Don Abbey, I don't remember which) to explain to Steve that "we were all on the same boat" and that it was up to us together to make RBA better than any other can in DESRON V. When Steve understood where the lines of loyalty should lie, he became so acquisitive in favor of the ship that it took me aback. Not only did he approve any "comshaw," but I think he once requisitioned and got a Jeep on the pier just before the 1966 deployment (for the embarked Commodore), outside normal authorization channels, but I couldn't figure out how or where to stow it securely top-side and we knew that the questionable paperwork would surface before we completed the transit to Westpac. I remember Steve and me standing on deck as RBA stood out of San Diego practically with tears in our eyes, not because of any loved one on the pier, but because we had to leave "the Commodore's Jeep" behind.

One of my many role-models was George Crolick. He gave the regulars no respite. When a new "canoe U. ring-knocker" came aboard, like Steve Katz, George immediately explained as "Big Boats" that if the regulars had spent their own money on their expensive undergraduate education as all the reserve officers had done for themselves, perhaps the academy grads would not have needed all these reservists to come and do the regulars' jobs for them.

Captain Langille was always an impressive and imposing figure. When I first came aboard without a specific assignment, and had met most of the wardroom, I was scheduled for some basic communications schools. All of a sudden, one of the other ensigns, named Jerry Lustig, was detached, and I was put into the 5" Battery Officer Slot. I did not find out until much later that apparently ENS Lustig just "didn't fit in." I have regretted that I didn't get to know Captain Langille better, but I later bragged about him at home when I saw his name leading the first navy group into a Soviet Union port some years later.

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However, Captain Alberta was and always will be one of the most formative influences in my life. He became a real role-model for me, an unassuming leader with a sense of true self-confidence, good humor, compassion and understanding for rather undirected youngsters, and an innate sense of how to lead men effectively. In the last thirty years, I have come across very few men with Captain Alberta's talents in motivating men to do their best, not just for his approval, but for their own self-satisfaction. Any number of memories flood back, and I still dream about him from time to time, but as I page through the enclosed cruise book, several indelible memories arise.

During one rather tedious transit, some place in the open Pacific, he developed a competition among the J.O.'s to make the ship ride comfortably during supper so that the first sitting could eat in peace. ENS. Dale Hicks and I were selected to be the chow-duty ensign OOD's to "make it so." Somehow Dale and I managed to do so, so that the ward room and crew could eat supper comfortably. I think that we then were given opportunities to go along side in replenishment underway and ultimately given OOD(F) status as Ensigns, which we considered to be quite an accomplishment at the time.

I also recall that soon after getting on the regular watch bill rotation as an Ensign (probably with Dale Hicks again) while plane-guarding for the Ticonderoga, as it searched for the wind, I was distracted by something on the bridge with Captain Alberta sitting in his chair, with full super heat on the boilers, when I heard the Captain say "tell the engine room to stand by for a backing bell" and I looked up and saw that we were broad on the carrier's beam looking through her elevator decks. I looked at Dale, who had the conn, who immediately motioned to me that we could easily slip under the carrier's stern if necessary with a quick but drastic move, leading Captain Alberta to give one of his wonderful chuckles and say something to us like "just testing." Captain Alberta imbued in us a sense of complete trust and confidence, for us to do whatever he thought appropriate, that I remember once in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, after he had taken us to a favorite Mama San's for dinner, that he was tired and ready to go back to the ship. So I "borrowed" a pedi-cab to take him back immediately, which the owner of the bike did not immediately understand. Others in our group were afraid it would cause something of an international incident, but apparently the pedi-cab owner understood that strange

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young U.S. Naval Officers thought that whatever their captain wanted was law. I also remember his sage advice as we entered Hong Kong and the maze of Sampans and Junks crossed our bow to "just set your course and hold it, they'll get out of the way."

Captain Alberta's sense of good humor and understanding was demonstrated for me many times, but perhaps best when he let me off lightly after I missed ship's movement from one San Diego pier to another on a Sunday morning, because he knew from the Saturday night party the night before that I had met a really cute girl from Chula Vista, so he excused my absence which was inexcusable. That compassion on the part of Captain Alberta brings me directly to my reminiscence of FTCS. Lehane who, with BMC Anderson, was a truly unforgettable character.

The week after I missed movement at the San Diego piers as 5" Battery Officer, I told Senior Chief Lehane that I expected to be busted from O-1, and that I had given it a lot of thought. Since I had charge of both the GMG's and FT's, I had decided to elect to become an FT when I was reduced in grade, and I told him with a straight face that as an E-9 FT, I looked forward to continuing to have him carry on the leadership of the division, and that I was still so green behind the ears that I would still expect him to cover for me in terms of competence. I promised him that I would choose FTCM, not GM when I was busted from O-1, so I could stay in his chain of command. He looked at me incredulously and tried to determine whether I was that naive, but I gave him no slack or solace, and he continued to give me a wide berth, for obvious reasons.

My other favorite memory of Lehane was that because he had something of an involuntary tic which caused his hands to shake, I would take a perverse glee, when I was in the director and he was down in plot, and the mounts were in automatic, as they would occasionally shudder, usually as they approached the stops, I would call down and tell him to get his hands off the computer, because he was making the mounts shake again. I enjoyed always reporting the latest Notre Dame football victory at divisional quarters on a morning when the men wanted to hear nothing at all, which made most of them keep their distance and preserve my position as the goofy guy from Notre Dame. The FT's were truly a challenging group, with whom I really enjoyed associating, and they not only taught me how to make my own A-scope, but taught

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me the term IPD, which I have used since then in criminal cases whenever the defendant had beady eyes.

This long reminiscence is just a superficial scratching of memories which include saving the XO from falling into the dry dock at Mare Island, San Francisco and keeping track of the body count of pack animals destroyed at Hue. I enjoyed editing the enclosed cruiser book and hope that it will be raffled off by Captain Alberta or Bill Beebe to the 1965-67 shipmates attending the reunion. I enclose a copy of my resume to show what I have done after leaving the Richard "Butterfingers" Anderson and look forward to hearing from any of those shipmates.

Cordially,

Tom Pletz
Thomas G. Pletz

TGP/sab

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Attorney Name: Thomas G. Pletz (born Toledo, Ohio, October 3, 1943)

College: University of Notre Dame Degree: B.A. English, 1965

Special Honors: N.R.O.T.C. Commission as Ensign, USNR

Law School: University of Toledo, J.D. 1971 (evening division)
Special Academic Honors: Top grade in numerous courses

Judicial Clerkships: Lucas County Common Pleas Court, Judge George N. Kiroff (1967-71); Northern District of Ohio, Western Division for U.S. District Judge Nicholas J. Walinski (1971-72)

Courts admitted: Ohio State and U.S. Dist. Court, N.D. Ohio (1971), U. S. Sixth Circuit (1978), U. S. Supreme Court (1985)

Primary area(s) of practice: Civil litigation, especially products and complex cases; special remedies; religious dioceses, parishes and educational entities in all areas; electronic media and libel law. Certified for death penalty case defense.

Professional awards: Who's Who In American Law (1996-97); 1995 Order of Heel Award from Toledo Junior Bar Association (senior Toledo Bar member most helpful to young lawyers); 1980 - qualified as U.S. Navy Surface Warfare Officer; 1965-67 - U.S. Navy active duty, aboard WESTPAC Destroyer, with Vietnam Service medals.

Bar associations: ABA, OSBA, Diocesan Attorneys Assn. and Toledo Bar Assn. member; Toledo Bar Assn. Board Trustee (1981-1994); President, Toledo Jr. Bar Assn. (1982-83); President, UT Law Alumni Assn. Board (1979-80).

Professional associations: CDR, U.S.N.R.-R. (Surface Warfare, qualified for ship command); Life Member, Sixth Circuit Federal Judicial Conference; Dean Search Committee, U.T. College of Law (1991).

Community organizations: Local area and state Judicial Campaigns; many church groups, e.g. local parish council member (1985-date); Diocesan Commission on Aging (1992-date); Toledo Navy League and Sea Cadets.

Publications: Numerous Sylvania Municipal Court written judicial opinions, in criminal, civil and procedural matters (1990-date).

Significant speeches: Procedural and substantive subjects to local bar assns., UT College of Law seminars; Sylvania grade school students speeches as Judge (1995); Annual Ohio law up-dates to 100+ school principals and presidents (1985-date); private chamber conferences with Ohio Supreme Court Justices regarding Bar Examiner Board Issues.

Other items of interest to prospective clients:

Acting Judge, Sylvania Municipal Court (1990-date)
Member, Ohio Board of Bar Examiners (1993-date, Chair-1996).