TAPE 25 SIDE A

MICKEY MOUSE

Z: I would have to say my days as a midshipman were pretty enjoyable notwithstanding the hazing that went on because I always considered it more of a game than anything else. As a plebe my attitude toward the chicken rules was that one merely tried to gain victory over the enemy by seeing what he could do to outsmart him. And I din't resent the process at all, recognizing that the theory of it was to teach you to deal with high stress situations in a lot of confussion, As one got into sea duty.

R: What were some of those chicken regulations at the Academy?

Z: Such things as the fact that as plebes walked down the passageway in Bancroft Hall, passageways that were 25 or 30 feet wide, they must square the corners, that is walking exactly in the center of the passageway and then turning exactly 90 degrees in the next passageway. Answering with standard answers to standard questions and being invited around to the room to be paddled with a broom if you didn't know the answer. Shoving out and sitting on air by pushing one's seat out from under himself on command as another punishment at the dinner table. Rules like this.. After graduation I was assigned first to the USS PHELPHS, where after a very brief period of a few days under a CDR Beck. CDR Beck was relieved within a matter of weeks after I got aboard by the Executive Officer of the ship, a man named Bruce Edwards Stretevont Triponzi, who had stood among the top 4 or 5 in his class in year group '30, as I reaall. And who was without a doubt one of the greatest tyrants and martinets the Navy has ever had. His style was that of utter and absolute ruthlessness and it manifested itself particularly in the manner in which he harassed new officers of the

deck on the bridge with temper tantrums, stretching downs, and all other forms of Queegg-like activity.

R: [illegible] Was this an individual style of his or did it represent a certain Navy style.

Z: I believe it was an individual style [illegible]. It was a certain Navy style carried to great heigths as a result of this great personality traits. He was a man who was a life long bachelor, exclusive love for the Navy, and no other interests or hobbies. A perfectionest who so abhorred any lack of perfection that he would go into terrible driving temper tantrums. The net of it was that it drove individuals in one of two directions: either [illegible] people became so shaken they were not able to learn to become officer-of-the-deck and were thrown off the bridge permanently or they just learned to tune out the tantrums and go about doing their best without really paying any attention except as background music.

R: Did [illegible] he treat enlisted men the same way?

Z: He was much tougher on officers than on sailors. I took the latter course and I think it was one of the reasons why I was able in times of operational stress to maintain my cool, because I had had to learn to be that way working for this man.

R: This was in a combat situation in the Western Pacific, right?

Z: That's right. This man remained in command when PHELPHS came back to Mare IslandNaval Shipyard for overhaul. Because he was a bachelor and didn't understand family problems, because his whole life was the Navy, he was simply incapable of understanding that the younger officers and the sailors must have some liberty after months at sea and to be with their families. Although I was not in the same status as many of the married people on the ship, it was absolutely impossible for me to understand the man's attitude toward leave and liberty. Almost no

leave was granted and he very early began the practice of making liberty start at 8 or 9 o'clock at night in order to get more work per day out of the force. As a result of this, absentee rates began to soar and within a matter ofweeks wonderful sailors who had been willing to fight and die for their country were AWOL. The punishments they were given were excessive, in my view. And the whole approach to leadership was one that appalled me. Capt Tripinzi was certainly an anti-model of the type I had in mind in making changes but in truth, in World War II with the tremendous influx of civilian sailors, and the very very large number of reserve officers, the Navy very rapidly became one in which most of the Mickey Mouse was knocked off. This was certainly true on destroyers and auxilliary ships and the smaller ships. Some spit and polish may have remained onboard battleships and carriers. But as a result, I had nearly 3 years during which I had a chance to see the tremendous dedication and esprit that could be achieved by manitaining a well-disciplined, well-trained crew in which chicken regs did not exist. It was after the war as the citizen sailors departed and the regulars took over and we lost the motivating thrust of the war that we began to see a return to the so-called chicken regulations. These involved such things as requirements that a crew invariably be in blue or white uniform during evening meal, not being permitted to eat in dungarees although this meant in many cases that hard working machinist mates would have to leave a pump repair, come up and change clothes to have a meal, and then go back and get into their dirty clothes again to finish the job. Not only an inefficient use of time but also the kind of thing that is just very hard to explain to a consientious sailor who is trying to get his work done. The Navy returned to the custom of one liberty, two liberties in three, that is one having duty every third night, keeping a full third of the crew on board, as a readiness

factor. Whereas during the war it had been rather commonplace to permit beards and moustaches, in the post-war Navy it was very unusual to skipper who would permit these to be grown even though, acoording to Navy regualtions, neatly trimmed beards and moustaches have always authorized. In other words, here was a case where command authority freely usurped the perrogative of deciding whether or not on his ship they were going to do what Navy Regulations permitted. Sailors who were busy working onboard ships were in most bases required to shift into a liberty uniform in order to go to leave the ship to go to do essential purchases at commissary or exhhanges. My concern about these kind of practices was exascerbated by the fact that I was an executive officer of a destroyer in the post-war period and had to live through the so-called Louie Johnston economy era when, as a result of great curtailments in budgets, sailors and officers were getting out of the Navy in large numbers. And it seemed to me that one had to begin to deal with these problems at the individual level if we were going to retain enough of our experienced people to get through what appeared to be very dangerous years as the Soviet forces under Stalin proceded with their program of using power and policy to overrun eastern Europe. And so in a very real sense I saw the battle at the unit level of being one of kicking around that ball by doing the things necessary to improve the situation in the Navy for the people we wanted to keep. The principle problem, there were two sets of problems with which we had to deal. One was that the sailors who had gone almost all the way through WWII getting almost no leave, had great amounts on the books. And they just didn't believe the Navy was ever going to make it possible for them to have sufficient leave in peace time to make it worthwhile career. On my ship I initiated the practice every man 60 days leave if he wanted it. This was the maximum that was permissible and it was an almost

unheard of practice. In order for us to achieve it we had to keep about 1/6 th of our people on leave through out periods of operation at sea as well ashore. I persuaded my commanding officer that this was an important thing to do to accept the reduction in readiness during that period in order to get the benefit of improved morale and re-enlistment rates. He backed me up on it and we got an immediate payoff in terms of impressive re-enlistment rates for that era.

R: Thirty days is what you're entitled to?

Z: Yes, and a sailor almost never got it. It was kind of custom and tradition to ask for thirty, to give him 15, and you know, get by with as little as you can give him. The second major set of problems had to do with the demeaning and abrasive regulations which was largely corrected in the Z-grams, and here as Exec. on two destroyers, I was able to experiment with the elimination of these regulations at the ship board, level, and found that they worked wonders on morale. That is, wherever we could adapt within the life of the ship, such as permitting our people to go to dinner in dungarees, when they were working, we did so. And this made a clear and important contribution to morale without reducing good order and discipline. As a result by the time I left these two jobs as Executive officer in 1948 to go my first shore tour, I knew first hand of the impact of these kinds of changes. I had the opportunity to practice the changes in the course of my next three tours of sea duty, during each of which I had command of a destroyer type ship. And never found that this system failed either to improve morale, or to retain a high sense of order and discipline and esprit. These kinds of changes were not unique. In each of my tours of duty, I discussed them with many of my junior officers, all, almost all of whom had served both under those who went strictly by the book and those who made

reasonable exceptions, and almost in every case, found that they apreferred the latter style of leadership. My estimate would be that well over a majority of leaders in the post- war era, were inclined in this direction, and that the martinets, were those who went exclusively by the book, were always in a minority.

R: Did you get any static by the officers over you in the course of doing these things?

Z: I had superiors, who on occassion would discuss with me whether or not one should be permitting certain specifice rules to be relaxed. For example, the one dividion commander, took offense atthe idea of sailors being permitted to go to the evening meal in dungarees. But in each case, I was able to convince the superior, that the results in terms of the ships performance are what ought to be judged, and were were obviously successful in each of these commands, and this ended up kind of being the final proof of the pudding.

R: You never got any bad marks in fitness reports, or anything like that for being permissive?

Z: No, never in my career.

R: Well, that should take us to Vietnam.

Z: Now, I've discussed, see I might describe each of the commands a little bit. In 1950, I was assigned to be commanding officer of USS Tills, a destroyer escort operating out of Charleston. I had on board only 3 other officers. . . this was my first command. The other three officers were all mustangs, that is officers who had come up through enlisted ranks. They were extremely competent professionals, who initially tended to go by the book, but with whom after discussion we came into agreement that the approach could be one,more enlightened, and we eliminated the demeaning and

abrasive regulations within the ship. I didn't stay long enough on this ship to have as meaningful a data base, I was detached after about 10 months, because the Korean War broke out, and the battleship Wisconsin was being recommissioned, and I was ordered as navigator there, but the morale was clearly greatly improved on the part of our people, and we had very successful mission performance.

R: What were things like on the Wisconsin in this respect?

Z: The Wisconsin was commissioned under a skipper who was an extremely competent ship-handler, and seaman, Captain and later Rear Admiral Thomas Burrowes, who had never had anything but command at sea. That is he went directly to a tug when he graduated from the Naval Academy which he commanded, and had progressively larger ships as he went up the line, or divisions. He therefore paid primary attention to the sea-going and ship-handling aspects of the ship, and left the administration to the executive officer who ran the show in the tradition of the old school. That is the ship did conform to all the customs and traditions, and as a result, the ward room officers felt pretty thoroughly harrassed by the executive officer. And there was much discussion within this ward room about the need for demeaning and abrasive regulations. My next command, 1955 to 1957, was the USS Arnold J. Isbell. . .(question from Rice - inaudible) As the navigator on theWisconsin, I spent almost all my waking hours on the bridge, and was working there directly with the skipper, and didn't myself have to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous chickenregs, but did listen to many bull sessions about them. On the Arnold J. Isbell, I described in the tape earlier on the changing of the voice call, of the conditions I found on arrival there. This was a two year tour. At the end of the first year we had come from the

eighth position in the squadron to number 2, and by the end of the second year to number 1 in the battle efficiency competition, which is after all the best measure of a ship's readiness to perform missions, and yet we had done this in a milieu in which we had clearly to the extent that it was within our power within that ship, eliminated all of the demeaning and abrasive regulations. We made intensive efforts to insure that every officer and man on the ship not only knew what we were about, not only understood why we were having to do each evolution, however onerous, but also managed to understand enough about how it all fitted together that he could begin to see some of the fun and challenge that those of us in the top slots could see.

R: How did you do this, by messages over the . . .

Z: This involved frequent announcements over the loudspeaker, as to what was going on in the way of a specific event. Discussing at the end of the day or at the beginning of the day, what was about to happen or what had happened, writing notes in the plan of the day for the benefit of the crew, as to accomplishments, or interesting vignettes discussions with the officersin the ward room, who in turn had discussions withtheir men, as to what our objectives were, what the competition was doing, and how we visualized we should proceed. Frequent bull sessions, in chief's quarters on my part as we toured the ship and stopped there for a cup of coffee.

R: There were about 300 men on the ship?

Z: The ship had about 300, sometimes 330 men. This two year tour involved two six month deployments, and we averaged only about half of the remaining time back in the U. S. in our home port, so that 75% of our time, we were away from families, and this involved there-

fore working very hard to provide through the team onk board the ship, some compensation for the separatiom from families. My third command, USS Dewey, this was the first guided missile destroyer leader. A new class of ship, unlike the Tills which had been/very old destroyer escort, and the Arnold J. Isbell which was an older, World War II destroyer. Because it was a first of a class, I was given a handpicked ward room of outstanding officers, and found that the personal leadership required on the Dewey was far less demanding than on the previous two. Here it was possible to adapt to a more traditional role of having lots of interaction with the ward room, and counting on the ward room to carry the technique down to the sailors, although I also made it a point to keep in close touch with chiefs' quarters and to maintain a close interest in their views, and sense of problems. The Dewey was a beautiful ship to handle, having lots of power, and we made much of perfecting for the ward room the technique of ship-handling. I made it a practice after having done the first few landings myself, to pass this around through every officer in the ward room, and before we got through, we had some of the chiefs who were also handling the ship. Indeed, on some occasions, as visitors came aboard, we had them handle the ship all officers who had previous experience.

R: This is not a traditional thing to do I take it?

Z: This is not a traditional thing to do. Good skippers will let their senior officers rotate, but it's rather unusual to get down into the new ensigns, and almost unheard for a visiting officer or a chief to handle a ship.

R: I'm right in remembering a couple of Z-grams on this subject, is that correct?

Z: That's correct. And that did come from that experience. Although when I was exec on the Zellers back in 1948, I had also qualified chiefs as officers of the deck on that ship than have them stand watches. And on the Isbell I did the same thing. A great constraint on our commanding officers to pass this around is that if a ship gets banged up in ship handling, it's the skipper's responsibility no matter who was at the conn. And one of the efforts in my Z-gram was to reduce the pressure of that somewhat by in essence authorizing modest collisions in the interest of giving people a chance to rotate around. The primary challenge on the Dewey was that the missile system was a very poor MK system. The Navy had sought to produce this missile system with such economy, and it had been produced in such a fragmented series without an overall integrative effort, that there were very serious bugs in it. The destroyer tradition has been a can-do tradition. That is, that one is taught never to complain about why he can't do anything, but just figure out a way to get it done. I had on board the ship a very outstanding lieutenant, named Tom Mulland, who was the weapons officer. And who sought to carry out this tradition. But after a few weeks, he became convinced that there was just no way , that the MK ship itself could ever make an unsatisfactorily designed, and installed system work. He took me on very briskly, as I persisted in the can-do attitude, I until he was able to get me down into the details sufficiently to convince me that he was right. And at that point, we had to reverse field and begin to march on Washington, demanding help and assistance. Admiral Bergen, who was commander of the operational test and evaluations force, had exactly the same attitude, at this point, that I had had, when Lt. Mullane first approached me

and sent a task force down to find out why the ship wasn't able to do the job, and then followed that up by a personal visit, in which he had told his staff that he was going to go down there to decide whether Zumwalt. After he had been aboard a few hours, and had seen the nature of our problems, and based on the council of the action officer,he had had riding the ship, he concluded that we were absolutely right and in turn went to the NCNO who set up a huge task force to begin an effort that has taken nearly 7 or 8 years to, inessence, upgrade all of the guided missile systems, on Dewey and on all subsequent ships.

R: Is there a real danger to all of this kind of stuff?

Z: Yes.I think in retrospect, looking at what I went through that it was almost unheard of to you know, say I can't do it. We knew we were going to have a real tough job convincing people that we weren't just a bunch of crybabies. (end Side A)

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