NAVAL SLANG DICTIONARY

A

ABAFT (adv)
Toward the stern, as in, “Two points abaft the beam, starboard side!” indicating an object lying 22.5 degrees toward the rear of the ship, as measured clockwise from a perpendicular line from the right side, center, of the ship, toward the horizon. (See points)

ABSENT WITHOUT LEAVE (adv)
(Also “AWOL”) Said of a sailor absent from duty station without proper authority. Absence longer than 30 days can be designated desertion.

ADRIFT (adv)
Out of place. The Navy has what newcomers perceive as an obsession with keeping everything shipshape, tidy, and in its proper place. Any time an inexperienced sailor asks where something is, (say, fid) an impertinent answer is often given, as "It's in the fid locker, under F."

AIRDALE (n)
Term given to sailors assigned to the air arm aboard a carrier or at a Naval air base.

ALL HANDS (n)
Every person within a command, male, female, officer or enlisted.

ANCHOR (n)
A device used to prevent the action of current or wind to cause a vessel to move from its intended stopping place, or anchorage. Originally consisting of a line secured (not “a rope tied”) to a large rock, and progressing to multi-ton steel hooked instruments which secure the largest vessels to the sea bottom.

ANCHOR CHAIN (n)
The chain used to fasten the anchor to the vessel. The links in this chain range in size from a few inches to several feet, and the largest of these individual links may weigh several hundred pounds. The anchor chain, when not deployed, is housed below decks in the chain locker. The very last link, called” the bitter end” is not secured to the hull, for the reason that if all of a secured chain were to be let go at once, the weight and momentum of it would tear a large hole in the bottom of the ship.

ANCHOR POOL (n)
Sailors are always eager to get under way, and even more eager to get back into port. As the weather may interfere, or orders may change, it is not possible to know in advance exactly when the anchor will drop, or the first
mooring line will be secured. Thus, the gambling spirit often dictates a betting pot, to be won by the lucky sailor who guesses closest to that moment.

ANCHORS AWEIGH (n)
Since 1906 the semiofficial song of the US Navy; the last line of which refers to the annual football contest between the service academies, and ends in “Sink the Army, Sink the Army, Gray.”

ANTI-SUBMARINE WARFARE (n)
Efforts to scare off or to sink opposing undersea craft. Until WWI, the submarine was not really a force for surface navies to worry about, but the German U Boat was a considerable threat in that first conflict, and by sinking millions of tons of Allied shipping, almost turned the tide of the Second World War. The frenzied development of sonar, sophisticated depth charges, sonobuoys, the convoy system, and especially, the breaking of the German secret communication code, brought ASW back into dominance. The war between surface and undersea forces, however, is never finally determined. With the development of super quiet nuclear-powered submarines, carrying nuclear weapons, we can only be grateful that our surface Navy has not, so far, been faced with this kind of opposition.

AYE, AYE (adv)
Reply by a subordinate to an order by a superior, indicating, “I have understood, and will comply”. Synonymous with radio voice procedure of “Roger, Wilco”.

B

BAIL (v)
To exhaust the water from the bottom of a boat. If the boat has not got an operating pump, one had better have a can or bucket handy. “Bail” (n) also denotes what sailors are often in need of, after a night ashore.

BARBETTE (n)
A short, cylindrical, armored tower, designed to hold ammunition and to serve as the base for a large (e.g., a 5”-38 anti-aircraft) gun.

BARGE (n)
A cargo vessel, generally without power. Also, an admiral's boat. (See Captain's gig). Both of these latter small boats are for the convenience of these very senior officers in transiting ship-to-shore, and are expected to be kept extremely shipshape (tidy). Which brings to mind the tale of the "phantom shitter", who made a fecal deposit on the admiral's barge, to the utter horror of its coxswain (petty officer-in-charge), who, of course, cleaned it up immediately. However, when the drunken perpetrator was apprehended, the case was dismissed for lack of evidence.
BARNACLE (n)
The tenacious marine bivalve which begins life as a free-swimming form but soon attaches itself to any solid body immersed in seawater. As a ship's hull fits the latter definition, the little devils grow there by the millions, reducing the ship's speed significantly and costing the Navy and other ship owners dearly to have them removed. A budding chemist would have his fortune made if he could come up with a glue equal to that produced by the barnacle, which is able to glue itself to a smooth steel hull moving rapidly through seawater!

BATTLESHIP (n)
Formerly, the largest naval warship, carrying perhaps 3000 men and two batteries of huge surface-to-surface guns, with a range of 20 miles or more. They have been superseded by aircraft carriers, which can mount an offensive thousands of miles from the ship, and by guided rockets, which have a range of several hundred miles, and can be carried by many types of ships.

BATTLE STATION (n)
Every person on a vessel is assigned a battle station; i.e., a work assignment and location which is essential to the safety and efficient operation of the ship in emergency, whether combat, fire, flood, or other disaster. These assignments may not have much to do with their day-to-day jobs; for instance, yeomen (ship’s clerks) may be assigned to a magazine as ammunition passers. Upon sounding general quarters, all hands must go immediately to battle stations.

BEAM (adv)
The direction indicated by a line from the center of the ship perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the vessel extending right (starboard) or left (port) toward the horizon.

BEARING (adv)
The distance in degrees, to a designated object measured either clockwise from a line extended from the direction pointed by the ship’s bow to the horizon, which is called relative bearing; or clockwise from north, which is called true bearing. Thus, an object directly to the right of the vessel as seen from the bow, is said to be “at 090 (zero nine zero) degrees relative. If the object were directly to the left, it could then be described as “bearing 270 degrees relative”. The relative bearing designation is most often for an object close in and in sight, whereas true bearing is used with reference to a distant object or one displayed on a radar screen.

BELAY (v)
Command meaning, “Stop that, instantly.”

BELOW DECKS (adv)
Any location aboard ship (or at a Naval station) which is beneath the main deck (ground floor). This contrasts with topside, meaning above the main deck.
BEND (v)
To tie a knot, as in “Bend a bowline around that Marlinspike!”

BEFORE THE MAST (adv)
Refers to the traditional placement of enlisted men’s quarters in the forward part of the ship, thus, to an officer formerly enlisted, as, “He served before the mast”. (See “mustang”).

BELL-BOTTOM TROUSERS (n)
Traditional part of the enlisted uniform, reportedly larger at the bottom so as to facilitate their removal if the wearer found himself in the water. Zippers have now taken their place, but for a couple of hundred years, the upper part of these trousers were fastened (in honor of the original thirteen colonies) with thirteen buttons. This led to the often heard, but mostly futile, advice of the Captain to the liberty party of; "Keep your thirteen buttons buttoned!"

BILGES (n)
Spaces at the very bottom of a vessel in which water leaks are allowed to collect for evacuation by the ship's pumps. Thus, the expression, "That's bilge!", meaning "Nonsense".

BITTS (n)
A single (or, more often, double) heavy metal post on the deck of a vessel to which mooring lines are attached. A similar pair attached to the dock are called "bollards".

BLACK GANG (n)
The engineering staff aboard ship, (also called snipes). The term arose from the (mid-19th century) days of steamships propelled by coal, when all those working on or near the engines were perpetually covered with coal dust. Most modern ships are powered by diesel fuel, and a few by nuclear engines.

BOAT (n)
A small floating conveyance, propelled by a paddle, oars, sails, or an engine. In private hands, it may also be defined as “A hole in the water into which you pour money.” In Naval parlance, a boat is something small enough to be carried aboard another vessel, and only a landlubber would refer to a ship as a boat. It must be said, however, that modern technology sometimes blurs old definitions, as in the recent case of a bomb-damaged naval frigate (ship) which was actually loaded aboard a huge, quasi-submersible cargo carrier and shipped thousands of miles to be repaired.

BOATSWAIN (n)
This naval rating (pronounced "bosun") involves many varied duties. Abbreviated BM. The term originally meant the "swain" or keeper of the boats, and the maintenance and handling of the ship's boats is still charged to the boatswain and his apprentices. General ship's maintenance, cargo handling, refueling, line handling, etc., are the province of the boatswain. Often called "deck apes", and derided because they get perhaps more than
their share of the Navy's many mindless tasks, boatswains take a lot of flack as not being mental giants. Some of them, indeed, are not too swift, and I had at one time in my division, perhaps the all-time champ in that category. This particular sailor, whom I'll call "Jones", was the BMOW (boatswain's mate of the watch), and received a telephone message, which he copied longhand, and then picked up the microphone of the ship's general announcing system (In this case five thousand men were listening). He blew his authoritative boatswain's pipe, and then stentoriously announced "Now hear this!.... Now, Jones, boatswain's mate third class, report to the ......Oh!.... that's me!". You can imagine the ribbing he received for that, for years afterward.

**BOLLARDS** *(n)*
See bitts. This reminds me of a dictionary I was issued in the third grade. I had occasion to look up the word “puma”, and found that the one-word definition was given as “cougar”. Unaware of the characteristics of this particular kind of cat, I then searched for “cougar”, and found another one-word definition—“puma”.

**BOOT CAMP** *(n)*
The Navy’s (and Marine Corps’) initial training period of three months, which some condemn as being too rigorous, but which traditionalists insist is the only way to preserve the OLD Navy’s custom of “wooden ships and Iron men”.

**BOW** *(n)*
The forward, (or, for landlubbers, the pointed end) of a vessel.

**BOWDITCH** *(n)*
A navigation manual, after Nathaniel Bowditch, author of the definitive book on celestial navigation. Modern Navy sailors are still required to attain proficiency in celestial, but the recent electronic marvel of the geographical position finder, with its instantaneous availability to give a ship’s (even an automobile’s) exact position, can save a powerful amount of time.

**BREECHES BUOY** *(n)*
A pair of oversized canvas trousers, fastened by lines to an overhead cable passed between two ships, by means of which, in weather too rough to launch a small boat, an emergency transfer can be effected.

**BRIDGE** *(n)*
The command center, located high and forward on a vessel, in which the officer of the deck is stationed, and from which maneuvering orders are given.

**BRIG** *(n)*
A space aboard ship designated for the detention of personnel guilty of offenses requiring incarceration.
BROWN WATER NAVY (n)
US Navy small gunboats patrolling coastal waters, the Mekong River, and other rivers of South Viet Nam during the war.

BULKHEAD (n)
The naval term for “wall”. Aboard ship, and even at a naval shore installation, naval designations are expected from all hands. A ceiling is an overhead, a floor is a deck, a hall is a passageway, a bathroom is a head, a stairway is a ladder, a kitchen is a galley, and so on and so on.

BULL (n)
Senior, as in the "Bull Lieutenant", meaning the one with the most seniority. Sometimes a senior position can be abused, as in a circumstance I remember, in which a certain Bull Lieutenant was in charge of instruction aboard ship, for a number of green Ensigns, of which I was one. He was supposed to be instructing me, and I was supposed to be learning as fast as I could. He and I had a number of personality conflicts, and although I asked him a large number of questions, the only answer he ever gave me was "Godammit, Davis, you ought to know that!"

CAPSIZE (v)
To turn upside down, and usually, to sink. There is no vessel so large that the largest ocean wave, taken broadside, cannot capsize.

CAPTAIN (n)
The person in sole command of a Navy vessel or establishment. This title is applied to the person in authority, whatever his rank. There are few jobs in the world which carry such concentrated responsibility as that of a command at sea. Accordingly, the authority vested in that one person is almost without limit.

CARRY ON (v)
When a senior commissioned officer enters a space, those present are expected to stand at attention, as a mark of respect, unless doing so would interfere with assigned work. The entering senior then gives the command "Carry On", or "As you were", as permission to resume ongoing activities.

CAT-O'-NINE-TAILS (v)
This many-stranded lash was used in the Old Navy (days of wooden ships and iron men’), to effect physical punishments, which were the order of the day. Many old hands now feel that too much "progress" has been made in the field of discipline, so that outlawing physical punishment, and restricting confinement and loss of pay as punishment, has produced a diminution in respect for authority. An illustrative anecdote of this feeling is the following: In the old days, two SA’s (Seamen Apprentices) were shooting the breeze on the fantail when one said cockily, "So, I told that Chief off! I said "Chief, Go
crap in your hat! Wow!, said the listener, expecting next to hear how long the braggart had spent in sickbay. The present-day version shows the change: Two SA's are chatting on the fantail, when one says cockily, "So I told that Chief off!." I told him "Chief, Go crap in your hat!". Whereupon the listener said in boredom, "And then?".

CHIPPING HAMMER (n)
Bane of the seaman apprentice's existence, this device doesn't look like a hammer at all, but is simply a strip of steel bent into an "L" shape and sharpened into a blade on the short end. Its purpose is to remove the battleship gray paint which covers all Navy vessels. This removal is frequently necessary because of the caustic effects of seawater, which seeps under the paint and begins to eat away the steel of the hull. On a major ship there may be a million square feet of painted surfaces—a never-ending job!

CHIT (n)
A note, voucher, or permit, as in “Chief, I need a chit to draw a replacement pair of dungarees”.

CLOSE-ORDER DRILL (n)
Not only soldiers and marines, but all sailors, too, receive training in formation marching, called “close-order drill”. This is where the recruit becomes familiar with the terms “Fall In!, “Attention!, Parade Rest! Shoulder Arms!, About Face!, Forward, March!, etc. Although little such marching is done aboard ship, it is Navy policy to give everyone this type of practice in instant obedience to commands, on the ground that such habits will save lives and win battles in situations of stress.

COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER (n)
Spaces on a ship which contain the concentration of radar, radio telephone, sonar, message receivers, and plotting displays. Information about the whereabouts and movements of the ship itself, other ships in the area, and of aircraft within range of these instruments is received, displayed, evaluated, and digested for transmission to the bridge. The concentration of so much data coming in all at once is, indeed, awesome, and it has led to the nickname of CIC as “Christ, I’m Confused!”

COMPARTMENT (n)
Civilian equivalent is "room".

CONN (n)
Temporary maneuvering command of the ship, exercised from the bridge when underway. The Officer of the Deck, or “OD”, normally maintains this control. Even if the Captain is on the bridge, he must specifically relieve the OD of the Conn if he wishes to direct the ship. This is so that there is no doubt as to whose primary responsibility is the maneuvering of the vessel.
COURSE (n)
The direction in which, generally expressed in (true) degrees, a vessel is proceeding.

COVERED (adj)
Wearing a hat. Naval practice differs from that of the other services in that the hand salute is to be rendered only when covered. Informal etiquette requires removal of the hat when entering a bar. Failure to remove it causes the bartender to sound a bell and to invite the house to have a drink at the expense of the offender.

D

DAMAGE CONTROL (n)
Every Navy vessel has a damage control officer and a damage control party. These members of the crew have the critical duty of identifying, reporting, and repairing, with due haste, the effects of any fire, explosion, or significant water leak. It is ironic that in the present days of steel, not wooden, ships, that the greatest danger of any modern vessel is that of fire.

DAVIT (n)
A vertical, rotating support on a ship which supports a lifeboat and which serves as a crane to raise and lower the boat.

DEAD RECKONING (v)
The process of determining the approximate position of the ship, by plotting out the ship's known course and speed (including changes in same) for a given period of time, commencing from a known point.

DECK APES (n)
The members of a deck division, (See swabby.) The latter term is derived from the Navy's name, swab for a mop, and the practice of swabbing decks frequently. The term "swab" never fails to remind me of the time, in the far North Sea, I was standing a watch on an exposed deck. I noticed that a swab rack at that station was fashioned of half-inch steel. As Naval vessels are supposed to be concerned about excess weight, it seemed to me that such construction was wasteful. I did, however, change my mind very quickly when, at my next watch there, I discovered that a wave had swept it clean off the deck! Had I been standing there at the time, wow!

DESTROYER (n)
A naval warship, often called a “small boy” or "tin can". These ships are the workhorses of the Navy. They carry 300-400 men, and are speedy, well-armed vessels. Their primary duty has evolved from scout to ASW (Anti-submarine warfare).
DINGHY (n)
A small boat often carried aboard small yachts, etc., to provide transit from anchorage to shore, or for emergency use.

DISPLACEMENT (n)
The weight in tons of the seawater displaced by a vessel afloat. This number may range, for naval vessels, up to 100,000 tons, and even larger for the newest supertankers carrying oil. The landlubber is often surprised to learn that such a mass of steel can float, and that ships can be made of concrete! So long as the vessel itself and her voids (empty spaces) within a vessel, and whatever cargo she is carrying, together weigh less than the water displaced, the vessel will float.

DIVISION (n)
One of the working departments aboard ship, such as deck, gunnery, engineering, navigation, supply, operations, etc. A carrier may have 13 divisions, and smaller ships only a few.

DOGWATCH (n)
Aboard ship, most activities must continue uninterrupted 24 hours every day. Duty periods, therefore, are usually divided into 4-hour watches. To avoid the monotony or hardship of having the same work hours every day, the period between 1600 and 2000 is often divided into two 2-hr watches called the first and second dogwatches.

DRAFT (n)
The distance between a vessel’s waterline and the lowest part, or keel. This, plus a safety factor, represents the minimum water depth in which a vessel may operate. For a small, flat-bottomed boat this may be only a few inches, up to 40 feet for the largest vessels.

DRYDOCK (n)
The submerged part of any vessel eventually becomes covered with barnacles, which greatly increase fuel consumption due to increased drag through the water, and protective paint is lost to the corrosive action of salt water. The only solution available is to put the ship into a floating container larger than the ship, called a "drydock", and pump out the water, leaving the ship resting upon form-fitting blocks, high and dry, with the whole hull accessible for necessary work. Anyone who has not viewed a major vessel in drydock would be amazed at first look, because a ship which is a monster when seen floating, suddenly becomes about one third larger, when seen in its drydocked entirety.

DUNGAREES (n)
Enlisted’s working uniform trousers of heavy blue cloth. The term is of East Indian origin, and dates back to the days of sail.
ELE <br><br>ELECTRONICS TECHNICIAN (n)  
Enlisted rating given to personnel charged with maintenance of electronic equipment. With the recent sophistication of the Navy's advanced weapons and communications gear, this rating has come to bear enormous responsibility. Abbreviated ET.<br><br>EM’s (n)  
Enlisted men (or women), often further specified as EM1, EM2, EM3, (i.e., Seaman Recruit, Seaman Apprentice, and Seaman) etc.<br><br>ENSIGN (n)  
The rank of a commissioned officer immediately above that of a warrant officer. Equivalent to an Army Second Lieutenant. Also, a national flag.<br><br>EVAPORATORS (n)  
Equipment aboard ship designed to make pure fresh water out of seawater. It is necessary to heat the brine to boiling and cool it to condense out purified, distilled water. This water is essential not only for drinking but especially required for consumption by the ship's boilers, which make steam that powers the turbines, primary propulsion for most ships.<br><br>EXPANSION JOINT (n)  
Very large vessels are constructed with such flexible joints so that the ship can actually bend under heavy swells. If a 1,000 ft.-long vessel were a perfectly rigid beam, and the ship encountered large swells of 1,000 feet separation, the torque created by such waves might very well break the ship in two. The principle is the same as that of the palm tree, which bends with a gale, while the rigid oak is shattered by the same wind.<br><br>F  
FANTAIL (n)  
Stern area of the main deck.<br><br>FATHOM (n)  
Nautical measure of length, equal to six feet. Usually used in measuring depth of water. A length of light line attached to a lead weight is dropped to the bottom and the result in fathoms announced. From this measure, the ship’s draft, plus a safety factor, is subtracted to assure that there is sufficient water under the keel. This practice, by the way, provided Samuel Clemens with his pen name of Mark Twain, for he was a Mississippi riverboat pilot, and he always wanted to be sure that the leadsman’s call of “Mark Twain” (two fathoms) meant that his sternwheeler could safely pass. Modern days, of course, an electronic fathometer performs this function, especially in deep water.
FATHOMETER (n)
An electronic device which bounces impulses off the bottom and records the depth in fathoms.

FID (n)
A conical-shaped form of wood or metal by means of which the strands of a heavy line or cable may be manually separated for splicing. (See Marlinspike).

FIREMAN (n)
Abbreviated FN. Naval enlisted rating given to those who tend the ship's fuel system.

FIVE-INCH-THIRTY-EIGHT (n)
For many years, the most common Naval artillery for surface and anti-aircraft carried on ships of all sizes. Now largely superseded by 5"-54's, larger guns, and rockets. The “five inch” referred to the diameter of the shell, and the “thirty-eight inches” to its length.

FLAG (adj)
Refers to “flag rank”, i.e., that of an admiral. When a fleet commander, for example, moves his headquarter, it is said that "the flag” has moved.

FLAGSTAFF (n)
A slightly raked staff or pole arising from the ship's stern, from which the national ensign is flown while the vessel is moored or docked.

FLOTSAM (n)
Objects floating in the water.

FLYING BAKER (v)
When loading ammunition or other dangerous materials, Navy ships display a red pennant called “baker”. Somehow, this signal of 'Danger, do not approach!' became an expression among male sailors that the wife or girlfriend was having a period.

FLYING DUTCHMAN (n)
The fabled ghost ship, dating from the 17th century, which is fated to sail forever without ever being able to make port. Sailors love the sea, of course, but the idea of never going ashore is enough to frighten the most grizzled old salt.

FOULED ANCHOR (n)
A very common representation of an anchor with a line or chain entwined, which is in wide use in US Navy insignia. It is said that this design goes back 500 years, but woe to the sailor who is inattentive enough to drop his anchor line directly over a real anchor and foul it in such a fashion, for then the slightest tug would uproot the anchor and result in a vessel on the loose.
FOUNDER (v)
To sink.

FREEBOARD (n)
The distance between the surface of the water and the gunwale, or open edge, of a boat.

FREEDOM OF THE SEAS (n)
Civilians in general are not very likely to have thought very much about this very old and very important principle of maritime law. It specifies that all vessels, domestic or foreign, have the right to peaceful passage through any nation's waters. The importance of this principle to Navy men is to be seen in the case of the USS Pueblo, which was boarded in international waters and seized by the North Koreans, and her crew imprisoned and mistreated. While it is true that the Pueblo was, in fact, an intelligence gathering ship, this happened during the cold war, at a time when ships belonging to Russia, China, and others were operating close aboard US coasts doing exactly the same thing, with impunity, because of our Navy’s respect for the law.

FRIGATE (n)
A modern naval warship in size between a destroyer and a cruiser carrying a full complement of guns, rockets, torpedoes, and even a helicopter.

G

GALLEY (n)
The ship's kitchen. Navy chow is routinely quite good, but that does not protect ship's cooks from a barrage of bitching. I recall an announcement (made in jest, of course) on the 1MC (ship's announcing system) of "Now, the duty chicken, lay below to the galley and walk through the soup!", thus suggesting that the chicken soup was a trifle weak.

GENERAL QUARTERS (n)
Emergency alarm, sounded either by boatswain's whistle or bugle call, or both, and the announcement that all hands are to proceed with all haste to their battle stations.

GEOGRAPHIC POSITION FINDER (n)
The newest tool in navigation, rendering what was a complex and time-consuming operation into an electronic signal bounced off an orbiting satellite, instantly presenting a vessel's location on the earth's crust, accurate to within a few yards.

GREATCOAT (n)
A long, lined, heavy blue wool topcoat worn in extremely cold weather as part of the officer’s uniform.
GROG (n)
The British Navy still has the custom of a daily ration, or "tot" of grog, which is a watered-down drink of rum. Although the US Navy has retained a great many customs derived from its origins under the Brits, the USN policy of no alcohol aboard ship is strictly enforced. This may explain, in part, the reputation that sailors ashore have of being a hard drinking lot.

GUNNER'S MATE (n)
Abbreviated GM. Enlisted rating assigned to personnel responsible for the operation and maintenance of the ship's guns.

GUNWALE (n)
(Pronounced “gunnel”) The above water edge of an open boat. In the case of a rowboat it is this edge into which are fitted the oarlocks or pintles. Anytime water comes over the gunwale in quantity, the boat is in jeopardy.

H

HOLYSTONE (n)
A porous volcanic rock, fashioned into a sort of grinding mop (See swab) which was used daily in the days of wooden decks, with a generous application of elbow grease by a crew of sailors (see deck apes) to remove the nightly encrustation of salt from the deck. *Sailors in general have earned the reputation of having an amazing command of cursewords, and I thought that I had heard them all; but once, I heard an old sailor come up with perhaps the saltiest cussword ever, when he said, in response to a minor frustration, "Well, Holystone my ass!"*

HOSPITAL CORPSMAN (n)
Abbreviated HM. Only major Navy vessels carry physicians, but all have enlisted hospital corpsmen, who are often called "Doc" by the crew. These sailors receive medical training adequate for the care of routine illnesses and injuries; more serious cases are transferred to major vessels or to hospital ashore. *As sailors will be sailors, a good deal of the corpsmen's time is taken up with the treatment of venereal diseases. In fact, there is a longstanding custom, especially when in certain foreign ports, to hold "short-arm inspection" three days after sailing (to give, e.g., gonorrhea, time to develop symptoms). As the "Doc" presides over this unpopular ceremony, he is often also called a "pecker checker", or a "chancre mechanic".*

I

IRISH PENNANT (n)
A stray or unnecessary piece of line, fabric, or anything else of an untidy appearance. The Navy's insistence on neatness is sometimes irritating to the uninitiated. And, it can be embarrassing. *Once a certain Jones, Boatswain's Mate Third Class, had rigged a sidecleaners' scaffold alongside the ship, about fifteen feet above the water. The ship's (Warrant Officer) Boatswain*
leaned over the lifelines, peering down at the BM3 and his two helpers as they prepared the side for painting. Seeing an untidy line in the rigging, he yelled down an order, "Jones, cut off that Irish Pennant there!" Jones obediently pulled out his knife and severed a line, but the one he cut was the one holding up the scaffold, and all three men went straight into the drink!

**J**

**JETSAM** (n)  
Objects floating in the water, which have been cast overboard. To throw something overboard is to "jettison" that thing.

**JUMP SHIP** (v)  
To leave the ship in a foreign location, without authorization.

**JURY-RIG** (v)  
To effect a repair or innovation, as quickly as possible and using only materials at hand. Not to be confused with the derogatory Britishism of "Jerry built", which connotes "of inferior quality".

**K**

**KEEL** (n)  
The lowest longitudinal strength member of a ship, which runs the fore and aft length of the ship. This is usually the first piece laid, in the construction of a vessel. There is an oft-told tale that when a certain sailor requested a leave so as to attend to the birth of his child, he received the following negative response: "Your presence is required for the laying of the keel, but for the launching of the vessel, you are superfluous! Request denied!

**KING** (n)  
Title given to a person in charge of a particular function aboard ship, as "oil king", (person responsible to see that fuel tanks are kept at appropriate levels, leak-free, and contaminant -free). The "water king" on my ship once became a very unpopular fellow, when someone in his crew opened a wrong valve, and allowed a small quantity of fuel oil to enter into the ship's drinking water supply. Fortunate landlubbers have been spared the experience of actually tasting even a drop of this foul stuff, and complaints around the scuttlebutts were frequent, loud, and almost as foul as the taste of the water. I have to give the snipes a lot of credit for group loyalty, however, for when an engineer was seen to take a drink of this horrible water, he would first grimace in shock, quickly wipe the expression off his face, and then say loudly, "Boy, that's good!"
LANDLUBBER (n)  
A person who has never been to sea.

LAY (v)  
To proceed to, as in, "Now, the Boatswain's Mate of the Watch, lay up to the quarterdeck." To "get laid", of course, is quite different, and it is certainly a primary goal for the lonely sailor coming into a foreign port. If any credence at all is to be accorded to his tales of conquest during a single night ashore, the US sailor puts Casanova in the shade!

LEADSMAN (n)  
A sailor designated to stand near the bow of a vessel when navigating in shallow waters, and cast overboard a lead weight attached to a cord and marked off in fathoms. He then calls out the depth of the water for the information of the OOD.

LEAVE (n)  
Permission to be absent from the duty station for a period longer than a few days, (or, the period of time covered by this permission), as opposed to liberty, which term covers short periods.

LEE (adv)  
On the side of the ship away from the wind. Also, "Alee", or "leeward". The opposite of leeward is windward. Oft said of a new recruit, "He's so green he would piss to windward!"

LIBERTY (n)  
Permission to leave the ship or station; off-duty time, of no more than 24 hours or a weekend. Longer periods are called leave.

LIFELINES (n)  
These lines are erected all around the weather decks to prevent personnel from falling or being swept overboard.

LIGHTS (n)  
The lights which maritime law requires every vessel to display at night follow a strict code, and spell out for the attentive mariner a great deal of information about the vessel, which may be invisible except for such lights. For example, all vessels must carry a red light (shielded so as to be seen only from forward) on the port side of the ship, and a green light, similarly configured, on the starboard side, when under way. Such lights (requirements for which are spelled out in maritime law under Rules of the Road) reveal the direction the ship is headed, whether it is anchored or underway, and in some cases, what type of vessel it is, and in what activity it is engaged. I recall a session of instruction on lights, in which the instructor would draw on the board a pattern of lights displayed, by a mystery vessel, and ask the class to describe...
the ship, whether it was underway, and its activities. As a lark, the class then
drew a pattern of lights on the board—three vertical red lights over one white
light, plus the usual red and green running lights. When the puzzled instructor
admitted that he was snowed, the class cutup said, "That's the harbor
cathouse, Sir, and she is indeed under way; she's hauling Ass!"

LINE OFFICER (n)
The most broadly trained, and the first in line of authority, of the various types
of Naval officers, as contrasted with specialized ranks, as Engineering Officer,
Supply Officer, Medical Officer, etc. The line designation, which appears at
the cuff of both sleeves on the uniform blouse, and above the stripes of
relative rank, is a gold star. On the khaki uniform, the line officer wears a rank
insignia (e.g., one gold bar for an ensign, one gold eagle for a captain etc.) on
each collar wing, while specialized officers wear one rank insignia and one
specialty designation (e.g. a caduceus for a medical officer).

LOG BOOK (SHIP's LOG) (n)
Everything of consequence which happens aboard a Navy ship is entered in
the ship’s official record book, or log book, by the quartermaster of the watch.
Always included are the (24hr Navy) time, the ship’s position, course, and
speed, the name of the Officer Of The Deck, and who had the Conn, if not the
OOD.

M

MASTER-AT-ARMS (n)
Usually a boatswain's mate or a gunner's mate, this person is charged with
administration of the ship's brig, and by direction of the Captain, can arrest
and confine in the brig any person guilty of crimes aboard ship.

MAYDAY (n)
The official voice radio signal (since 1948) for distress. Modern radio practice
is now mostly voice, as against the original Morse telegraphic code
transmitted in dots and dashes. The long-standing Morse distress call is SOS;
or, dot, dot, dot; dash, dash, dash; dot, dot, dot; still handy to know if voice
transmission is not available.

MESS DECK (n) (or Chow hall)
This is the space wherein meals are served to enlisted personnel.

MILITARY TIME (n)
The system (in use by all the services) of designating time in a 24 -hour cycle,
instead of the civilian 12-hour cycle, to avoid the possible confusion of AM
vs. PM. In this system, midnight is the starting point, named 0000 (zero hours
and zero minutes). One minute after midnight is 0001, one minute after one
P.M. is 1301, etc., When describing the end of the day, midnight is termed
2400, (twenty-four hundred), and the same instant is called 0000 (zero zero
zero zero) when speaking of the beginning of a new day. It may interest the
landlubber to know that there places in the world (such as parts of Australia), in which the local time does not differ by an even number of hours from that in Greenwich, England, where the military time system originated. When the British first arrived in Saudi Arabia, they found that the local system of time directed that every day when the sun went down was twelve o’clock, so that there was very seldom a coincidence of Saudi and Western time. When asked if he would care to adopt the custom of the rest of the world, His Majesty King Saud said, "No, any time system used here must originate here, not in England, so that instead of Greenwich plus three hours, which would be complete conformity, Saudi Arabia will quote time as originating here!" As a consequence, persons may be seen in that country wearing three watches, so as to know the time, whether Greenwich time, the original Saudi time, or the (quasi-conforming) Saudi time.

**MUSTANG** (n)
A commissioned officer who was formerly enlisted.

**MUTINY** (n)
An uprising of military personnel intended to overthrow appointed authority, as the captain of a vessel.

**N**

**NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER** (n)
(NCO. Also called petty officer). See Table of Ranks And Ratings.

**O**

**OAR** (n)
A long-handled paddle used in pairs, to propel a rowboat. The oars fit into swivel fittings (oarlocks) in the gunwale which provide leverage for propelling the boat through the water. Also see thole, and rowboat.

**OARLOCKS** (n)
Swivel fittings in the gunwale of a rowboat which provide leverage for the oars.

**OFFICER** (n)
A person of authority in the Naval Service. Some confusing similarities exist between the grades, or ranks, of officers in the US Navy, US Coast Guard, which are similar, and of the and those of the US Marines, US Army, and US Air Force, which latter three are generally similar. Non-Commissioned Officers (often called NCO’s) ratings are included below. (The following table is taken in its entirety from Webster’s Third International Dictionary). Note that a Navy Captain is commensurate with an Army Colonel. The terms are further confused by the fact that Navy usage refers to the person in command of any vessel as the “Captain”, irrespective of the formal rank he/she holds. The Army also has a rank of Captain, which is formally commensurate with
the Navy’s Lieutenant. Nowhere on this list appears the title of Midshipman, which denotes an officer-in-training, or cadet.

**OFFICER OF THE DECK** (n)
Abbreviated OOD) The Captain of a Navy ship is in absolute command of his vessel (except for limitations on his authority placed upon him by the Uniform Code of Military Justice). As it is not physically possible for him/her to be in active charge of the vessel twenty-four hours a day, he must have a surrogate in command, who is called the Officer of the Deck, and who is in charge of all others on board during the time he holds this temporary title.

**ON THE DOUBLE** (adv)
Adjunct to a command, meaning "with haste".

**OVERHEAD** (n)
The ceiling.

**PAINTER** (n)
A light line used to make fast a boat to a ship or a pier.

**PARTY** (n)
A group of designated sailors, such as a “shore party”, meaning those going ashore; a “working party”, meaning those assigned a particular task, etc.

**PASSAGEWAY** (n)
A hallway. Below the main deck, most passageways pass through hatches, incorporating watertight doors (WTD’s), which must be closed and dogged (i.e., sealed) in the event of imminent danger.

**PAYDAY** (n)
That happy day, historically every two weeks, on which all hands receive their money. A common profane expression for it is "The day the eagle shits!"

**PEA COAT** (n)
A short topcoat of heavy blue wool worn as part of the enlisted uniform.

**PETTY OFFICER** (n)
A non-commissioned enlisted person with authority over others subordinate to him/her. (See Table of Ranks/Rates below).

**PHONETIC ALPHABET** (n)
The service’s names for each letter which serve to reduce confusion in voice communication. The following table contains the names of each letter in current usage.
PIER (n)
A structure usually of stone or wood, projecting into navigable waters, to which a vessel may be secured for loading or unloading.

PILOT (n)
In harbor, a person with specialized knowledge of channels, currents, winds, and other hazards relevant to entering and leaving a dock. This is so demanding a job that, under US administration of the Panama Canal, some of the highest-paid jobs in the US government were those of the Panama Canal pilots. In aviation, of course, a pilot is the person in command of an airplane. Naval aviators are a breed apart from ordinary mortals. They perform daily acts of boundless danger and daring, just flying on and off a carrier, and they do not hesitate to remind ordinary salt bound sailors of this fact. This difference in status came painfully to mind on one occasion when I had gone ashore in Marseille, and wound up playing tennis with two French girls and a young Norwegian fellow, who spoke English somewhat haltingly. He and I had showered and changed clothes, and were awaiting the return of the ladies, when he turned to me and said, "You fly?". In response I said, "No, I thought I had explained, that although I am on a carrier, I am ship's company, not a pilot". Puzzled, he then said, "Your fly, man, it's open!". Not a thing wrong with his English!

PLIMSOLL LINE (n)
A horizontal line within a circle located on the side of a seagoing freighter which indicates the maximum load (or minimum freeboard) considered safe by law. This level is higher (lesser permitted load) for a vessel in fresh water, because salt water is heavier.
POGY BAIT (n)
An immature or inexperienced sailor.

POLLYWOG (n)
A person who has not been initiated into the Royal Order of Shellbacks, i.e.,
one who has not crossed the equator aboard a Naval vessel.

POINTS (n)
The ancient system of 32 equal divisions of the (360 degrees) compass, used
to designate direction of an object seen from the ship. For instance, an object
designated as lying “two points forward of the port beam” would be found
22.5 degrees in a clockwise direction from a perpendicular line leftward from
the ship extending to the horizon.

PORT (adv)
Standing on the centerline of a vessel, facing the bow, or forward, everything
to the left of the ship's centerline is to port.

Q

QUARTERMASTER (n)
The Naval rating which is charged with assisting the Navigator in keeping the
ship's position, maintaining the ship's log, manning semaphore flags, etc.
Abbreviated QM.

R

RADAR (n)
Electronic device used to obtain bearing and range of an object, either on the
surface or in the air, by measuring the echoing pulses from an electronic wave
generator aboard ship. *This equipment is the predecessor of the "radar range"
(microwave oven) so popular in American kitchens, due to the ingenuity of US
sailors, who soon discovered that a sandwich inserted in the path of these
waves would soon be toasted brown.*

RAFT (n)
A simple float, most often without a power source, allowed to drift with the
current or pulled by a powered craft.

RANK (n)
Term denoting the grade or relative authority of commissioned officers of the
Navy. (See Officer, above) The term rating is used to denote relative authority
of non-commissioned officers. The following table gives both current ranks
and rates of the US armed services.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>ARMY</th>
<th>MARINES</th>
<th>NAVY</th>
<th>AIR FORCE</th>
<th>COAST GUARD</th>
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<tr>
<td>general of the</td>
<td>general</td>
<td>fleet admiral</td>
<td>general of the</td>
<td>admiral or commander</td>
</tr>
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<td>lieutenant</td>
<td>Admiral</td>
<td>air force</td>
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<td>major general</td>
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<td>brigadier</td>
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<td>brigadier</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colonel</td>
<td>colonel</td>
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<td>captain</td>
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<td>lieutenant</td>
<td>major</td>
<td>commander</td>
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<td>colonel</td>
<td>captain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>first lieutenant</td>
<td>lieutenant</td>
<td>captain</td>
<td>lieutenant, j.g.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>second lieutenant</td>
<td>lieutenant, j.g.</td>
<td>first lieutenant</td>
<td>Ensign</td>
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<td>chief warrant</td>
<td>Ensign</td>
<td>second lieutenant</td>
<td>chief warrant</td>
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<td>W-1</td>
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<td>warrant officer,</td>
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<td>W-1</td>
<td>W-1</td>
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<td>sergeant major</td>
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<td></td>
<td>coast guard</td>
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<tr>
<td>sergeant major</td>
<td>or master gunnery</td>
<td>Master chief</td>
<td>chief master</td>
<td>master chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the army</td>
<td>sergeant</td>
<td>petty officer of</td>
<td>sergeant of the</td>
<td>petty officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sergeant major</td>
<td>or master gunnery</td>
<td>the navy</td>
<td>air force</td>
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<tr>
<td>command</td>
<td>first sergeant or</td>
<td>Master chief</td>
<td>senior chief</td>
<td>chief petty</td>
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<tr>
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<td>master sergeant</td>
<td>petty officer</td>
<td>sergeant</td>
<td>petty officer</td>
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<tr>
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<td>gunnery sergeant</td>
<td>senior chief</td>
<td>senior master</td>
<td>chief petty</td>
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<td>officer</td>
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<td>staff sergeant</td>
<td>chief petty</td>
<td>master sergeant</td>
<td>petty officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>sergeant or</td>
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<td>officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>sergeant first</td>
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<td>class or</td>
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<td>specialist 7</td>
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</table>
The relative authority or grade held by an enlisted person within a rating, as, boatswain' mate third class, which is promotable to a boatswain's mate second class, which is promotable to a boatswain's mate first class, which is promotable to a boatswain's mate, chief, etc.

An occupational grouping for enlisted personnel. Such groups include boatswains, quartermasters, gunner's mates, electronics technicians, firemen, yeomen, etc. Each sailor in such a rating holds a rate indicating his/her relative authority or grade.

An operation in which two vessels, one a tanker carrying diesel oil and/or aviation jet fuel, first approach each other to within 50 yards, proceed at exactly the same course and speed through the water, and pump fuel through long rubber hoses from the tanker to the ship low on fuel. This is an intrinsically dangerous operation, requiring the most expert seamanship, and the US Navy deserves great credit for perfecting this technique to the point of routine. It has, of course, been extended to the air arm, and air-to-air refueling from tanker airplanes to fighters and others is also routine. I was once involved in a refueling operation which did not go smoothly, to say the least. This was between the USS Midway, a very large carrier chockfull of jet fuel-laden airplanes and thousands of tons of bombs and rockets, and a tanker carrying several million gallons of highly flammable fuel. Landlubbers should understand that the choice of course for this maneuver is very important: a course heading into the wind will cause the ship to pitch, and a crosswind course will maximize the side-to-side roll movement. Unfortunately, somebody chose a crosswind course, and forgot about three problems: Number one: when the tanker made its approach from the lee side of the carrier, the enormous size of the carrier blocked off the wind from the tanker, thus drawing the two ships closer than planned. Two: the venturi effect, which dictates that the pressure in an enclosed “pipeline” such as that produced by the adjacent vessels, falls sharply, producing further suction. Three: The extreme rolling caused by the crosswind course caused the tanker’s masts to
rake the carrier with each roll to port. This produced a string of sparks twenty feet long. The carrier’s starboard anti-aircraft barbettes, armored with 1” steel, were actually broken open, and live ammunition scattered about the decks. Because of the ponderous reaction of these large ships, even to emergency course changes, this situation endured for six minutes, during which time, those aboard who knew what was going on were ready to bend over and kiss their rears good-bye! Miraculously, not a soul was hurt! Go figure.

REGULATION (adj)
There is an old expression, “The right way, the wrong way, and the Navy way!” Meaning that there are laws, customs, and requirements of a seagoing existence which make no sense (at least initially) to landlubbers. This is the origin of the Navy adjective “regulation”, as in “Get yourself a regulation haircut!” A synonym often used is “squared away”, meaning all in proper order.

REST AND RECREATION (n)
Abbreviated “R and R”, this is a period of leave given to relieve the stress and fatigue of extended foreign duty or combat. During W.W.II, a story circulated that a group of Navy combat veterans enjoying R and R in a fancy hotel in Honolulu were apprehended and charged with “conduct unbecoming an officer”. They had been detected running up and down the halls of said hotel, nude, in pursuit of certain nubile young ladies, also nude. After careful review of the details of the case, the charges were dropped, on the ground that they were” properly attired, for the sport in which engaged”.

REVEILLE (n)
Wake-up time in the Navy. Aboard ship, it is announced by a blast from the boatswain’s whistle, and accompanied by a voice saying,”Reveille, Reveille (pronounced “revelee”), all hands on deck! Clean sweepdown, fore and aft!

ROWBOAT (n)
A small craft propelled by oars. American practice differs from that of many other countries, in that the American rower sits on a thwart (a bench seat) and pulls on the oars to propel the boat backwards, while others stand in the boat and push on the oars to propel the boat forward.

S

SALUTE (n)
A motion of the right hand to the forehead rendered (in Naval practice only when covered, or wearing a hat) as a mark of respect toward a superior (commissioned) officer, a flag, or other person or object to which respect is due. A salute may also be rendered by a Naval gun, or with the hand horizontally across a small arms weapon held at port arms. A salute may, strangely, be the occasion for obtaining a small measure of revenge. It is no secret that there is interservice rivalry, even petty friction, between members of the Navy and the USMC. I once worked in a three-story building guarded
by US Marine sentries. The top two floors were security spaces, and required a photo-identification tag for access. An illustration of this rivalry may be seen in the conduct of these sentries. I knew them by name, they saw me every day, and yet, if I came downstairs without my pass, they would not let me back upstairs; I had to call my office and ask someone to bring down my jacket with pass attached. At the Navy exchange, also guarded by Marines, there was a peculiar traffic pattern requiring all vehicles to pass the guardshack to the right of a particular post. Late one evening, I was driving the last car leaving the compound; all others had gone. For convenience, and so the sentry could see me better, I approached the shack via the left of said post. Immediately, the sentry brought up his weapon, and ordered me to halt, back up, and reapproach from the right side of the post. Gritting my teeth in annoyance, I did so, as the Marine stood there motionless, savoring his dominance of the situation. I proceeded to a point about three feet past the sentry, and then jammed on my brakes with a screech. I then roared back in reverse, stopped, and slapped the Naval rank insignia on my uniform shoulder. “Do I rate a salute or do I not?” I snarled. “Yes, Sir”, he replied sheepishly, and I added, “Then, you had better render it!” Oh, what is so sweet (and rare) as instant justice?

SCREW (n)
The revolving fan-blade-like device located underwater astern which pushes a vessel through the water. Similar in shape and function to an airplane’s propeller, it may range in size from a few inches in diameter to several meters, and a weight of many tons.

SCUBA (n)
Acronym for “Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus”, which enables a swimmer a depth of 200 feet or more.

SCULLERY (n)
A space adjacent to the galley where kitchen cleanup is done.

SCUPPERS (n)
Channels located on the sea edge of weather decks to carry away wave and rain water.

SCUTTLEBUTT (n)
Originally, a cask of fresh water for drinking, and now, any water fountain. As it was the habit of the crew to gather around the scuttlebutt and swap stories, the term grew to mean any gossip, true or untrue.

SEA ANCHOR (n)
A large canvas bucket-shaped object fastened to a line tied to the stern of a vessel and designed to retard its forward motion in heavy seas, if the craft has lost power. This serves to keep the boat headed into oncoming waves, minimizing the risk of capsizing.
SEXTANT (n)
A manual instrument used by the navigator or his assistants in celestial
navigation to ascertain the exact height, in degrees, of selected heavenly
bodies (sun, moon, or stars) to determine the ship’s position. It is used in
coordination with a chronometer, or ship’s clock, and books of tables of the
known positions of these bodies at given times. Only a generation ago, tedious
celestial navigation would yield a ship’s position at sea to within a mile or so,
but today’s geographic position finder can electronically bounce a signal off a
satellite and give you position within a few yards, at the touch of a button.

SHELLBACK (n)
Title bestowed upon a sailor who has crossed the equator. And endured the
required induction ceremony, and can produce the required membership card
in “the ancient order of shellbacks”. The ceremony consists of various hazing
activities.
For instance, in the case of my own initiation, the crew of the cruiser I was on
built a canvas tank about three feet high on the fantail, filled it with seawater
and garbage, and let it ripen for a few days in the tropical sun before
assigning two burly sailors to grab each initiate as he was pushed into the
tank and ask him sternly, “Are you a pollywog or a shellback? Seeing the
hapless victim just before him get dunked in the garbage upon saying “I’m a
pollywog!’ The next guy, of course, said, “I’m a shellback!” Of course, he was
immediately dunked, too, as it didn’t make the least difference what you said.
After crawling on hands and knees about a hundred yards around the deck,
clad only in skivvies and passing through a gauntlet of about a hundred
sailors, each armed with a section of fire hose soaked in salt water with which
to paddle initiates, each pollywog was allowed the opportunity to “kiss the
Royal Baby’s Belly”. This latter person was the fattest crew member
available, whose belly was smeared liberally with fuel oil and graphite. As the
victim approached on his knees for the kiss, his head was pushed firmly
against this mess, so that he acquired an immediate blackface mask. And so
on...... Don’t lose that card!

SHORE PATROL (n)
A party of ship’s company (or from a shore installation) which is charged with
enforcing lawful conduct by ship’s company on liberty. They circulate among
onshore locations where sailors congregate and where drunkenness, fighting,
or other misconduct may cause trouble. The SP has authority to make arrests
and to bring offenders into the Naval justice system. Their presence is
intended to minimize friction between local authorities and sailors on liberty.

SICKBAY (n)
Hospital aboard ship.

SIDETHERUSTER (n)
An auxiliary propeller, or screw, which is designed to push the nose of a large
ship to port or starboard, overcoming much of the difficulty in maneuvering in
close quarters, as in docking. In some cases, this modern invention is able to
obviate the use of a tugboat, which, until recently, was required to assist large vessels.

SKIVVIES (n)  
Navy-issued underwear.

SNIPES (n)  
Engineering staff. (See black gang)

SONOBUOY (n)  
A floating electronic device which emits sonar waves underwater and relays reflections to a monitoring aircraft or surface vessel; used primarily in ASW. It may be dropped in numbers from an aircraft around the reported sighting of an enemy submarine.

SPEED (n)  
The velocity, expressed in knots, with which a vessel proceeds through the water. A knot, or nautical mile, is slightly longer than a shore mile, being 6,075 feet, so that a speed in knots is about 15% faster than one measured in miles per hour.

STANCHION (n)  
A vertical support member.

STARBOARD (adv)  
Ancient Viking longboats used one long steering oar always mounted on the right side of the vessel, thus this side was called the “steerboard”, which became starboard.

STEAMING (v)  
A naval vessel is said to be “steaming” (i.e., proceeding under power) when at sea and under way.

STERNWHEELER (n)  
A type of boat popular in the 19th century, which utilized a large revolving paddle device for propulsion rather than a screw. The paddles made it easier to navigate shallow rivers.

SUBMARINE (n)  
Today’s Navy’s most awesome weapon. The nuclear (never say nook-u-lar!) version of this vessel can stay submerged almost indefinitely, and, in addition to torpedoes, can launch intercontinental missiles capable of annihilating cities while submerged.

SWAB (n)  
The Navy term for a mop.
**TAPS (n)**
Official bedtime in the Navy. Aboard ship, usually announced by a bugle call by that name, and with the pronouncement “Lights out in all sleeping quarters!” The bugle call “taps” is also played at funerals.

**THOLE (n)**
Vertical metal pin, set in pairs in the gunwale of a small boat to serve in lieu of oarlocks.

**THWART (n)**
A crosswise bench seat in a small boat.

**TILLER (n)**
The long handle at the rear of a boat by which the steersman turns the rudder (a submerged vane) to change the direction in which the boat is headed. In a fashion which seems backward to a landlubber, pulling the tiller to the right, or starboard, alters the boat’s course to the left, or port.

**TOPSIDE (adv)**
Any location aboard ship on a deck above the main deck.

**TOW (v)**
To pull a powerless vessel to its destination, by means of a long cable, or towline. In the case of river barge traffic, the barges are lashed together and pushed, because there is not room for a long cable. The barges are, however, still called “tows”. The barge traffic on the Mississippi River and its tributaries, plus that on the inland waterway system, makes an enormous contribution to the US economy. Coal, steel, and grain come south, and cotton, frozen chicken, and other bulk commodities flow north in enormous quantities, at a freight cost a small fraction of alternative transportation. Even greater savings originate with sea traffic, to and from the rest of the world. Other methods are faster, but if the quantity of the shipment is over 100 tons, it has to go by water. From the need for sea commerce comes the need for a navy to protect it. It is also necessary to maintain a marine police and emergency rescue function in both inland and coastal waters, which is the duty of the Coast Guard. Special mention has already been made of the hazards faced by Naval aviators, and it would be remiss to omit praise of the Coast Guard, whose frequent duty it is to plow out through raging seas to rescue survivors of craft larger than their own.

**TUGBOAT (n)**
A small but powerful vessel designed to assist large ships in maneuvering, as to a pier. Such craft usually operate in only one port, but the Navy also maintains a few very large seagoing tugs, called fleet tugs, which are sent out in the event of a distant emergency, as in the case of a major vessel which has lost power.
U

UNDER WAY (adv)
See Uniform Code of Military Justice.

UCMJ (n)
A vessel is said to be “under way” (i.e., free to move through the water) when it is not anchored nor tied to a buoy or pier.

UNIFORM CODE OF MILITARY JUSTICE (n)
The UCMJ contains the legal rules by which the Navy is governed. It defines offenses, punishments, and judicial proceedings for Naval personnel. Minor offenses are adjudged and sentence passed at Captain’s Mast, at which the Captain is the only authority.

USS (adj)

V

VIET CONG (n)
US term for the North Vietnamese troops under Ho Chi Minh, during the Vietnam war. Also called “Charlie”, or “V, C”.

W

WARDROOM (n)
Officers’ mess. (dining room), which also serves for assemblies, instruction, as a dressing station in battle, etc.

X

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Y

YEOMAN (n)
Naval rating designating ship’s clerk. Abbreviated YN.

Z

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