

Log 10 Sunday

1. 112100Z September 2005
2. Position: Lat: 1-00.0N LONG 140-00.0W
3. Course: On station
4. Speed: 0 kts
5. Distance: 89.7 NM
6. Steaming Time: 9H 12M
7. Station Time: 14H 48M
8. Fuel: 2769 gals
9. Sky: Ptly ClDY; Cs, Cu
10. Wind: 110-T, 12 kts
11. Sea: 110-T, 2-3 ft
12. Swell: 100-T, 3-5 ft
13. Barometer: 1012.4 mb
14. Temperature: Air: 26.2 C, Sea: 25.7 C
15. Equipment Status: Stbd (S band) radar CRT, Sperry C2140 SSB radio loudspeaker, and Navtex receiver inoperative.
16. Comments: On station #5.

MASTER, R/V ROGER REVELLE

As you can see we are just one degree north of the equator and we are heading south. It is a very deal to cross the equator on a ship and there are very serious ceremonies for those who have never "Crossed the Line" before. They will be having a ceremony on the ship this cruise. Those who have already crossed are called "Shellbacks" and those who have never crossed are called "Pollywogs". Well the Shellbacks have begin to whisper and the "wogs are getting nervous..... To find out a little more about this sea tradition and maybe a hint of what might be in store for us...read on....

Oh and its BBQ time again tonight!

Adapted from: Silvey, Frank. "The Certified Sailor." *All Hands* 633 (Oct. 1969): 16-21.

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There are serious ones, humorous ones and unusual ones. But any sailor worth their salt will never rest until they have a scrapbook full of them.

They are the unofficial certificates that document where a sailor has been, what they have done, and most importantly, what they are - a Shellback or a Blue Nose or a Mossback or a Double Centurion. Or even a Goldfish or Sea Squatter.

On any noteworthy occasion - and perhaps on some that might be otherwise forgotten - somebody in the crew is sure to spend hours at a drawing board to create a memorable certificate, replete with salty language, drawings of mermaids and tritons and anchors and chains, and the signature of Neptune Rex or some other high potentate, And forever after, the crew of that ship will treasure their copies as they treasure their rating badges.

Nowadays it's all in fun and without official recognition. But mariners of earlier years, when it all began, were in earnest. As all sailors knew well, Neptune, god of the sea, was fickle. He played an important role in ancient rituals just

Also, in those early rituals, the location of the rites had to be right. If every element surrounding the ceremonies was not just so, all Hades might break loose. The location of the ship had an effect on how acceptable the honors to Neptune were. A rite performed off certain capes (for instance, those with temples on them) would work best.

And finally, the apprentices had to be instructed in the behavior that was acceptable and unacceptable. As a later Ancient Mariner discovered to his grief, the rulers of the deep frown on anyone who kills an albatross. There were dozens of such strictures - and woe betide the sailor, no matter how green, who transgressed just one.

As previously stated, an ox or a goat was normally sacrificed to appease the sea gods. But not always. Jonah, for example (as our Bible experts recall), was dropped over the side when the crew of the ship on which he was a passenger decided he had brought on the storm that threatened to wreck them. It worked. The storm stopped, Jonah was picked up by a passing whale, and the ship sailed on.

Even as late as the 17th century, when no one (well, hardly none) believed in Neptune or other marine deities any more, initiation into the mysteries of the deep could be a rough process. According to a writer of the time, apprentices "who pass certain places, where they have never passed," undergo various penalties - for example, to be dropped "from the yardarm into the sea."

Such are the origins of the granddaddy of all seagoing ceremonies: the shellback initiation when a ship crosses the Equator, in which "pollywogs" (sailors who have not previously crossed the Line) become "shellbacks" (fit subjects of King Neptune).

We won't go into detail on what occurs when Neptune and his court are piped aboard and the pollywogs join the Order of the Shellbacks, because that's a mystery of the deep, after all. Suffice it to say, that when the day ends, the Shellback has arrived.

To prove it, he has a certificate of impressive size, festooned with drawings of fish, mermaids and a trident-wielding Neptune, which proclaims in effect:

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TO ALL SAILORS WHEREVER YE MAY BE and to all Mermaids, Sea Serpents, Whales, Sharks, Dolphins, Skates, Suckers, Lobsters, Crabs, and other Living Things of the Sea, GREETINGS:

KNOW YE: That on this ....., day of ....., 19..... in Latitude 000° 00' and Longitude ....., there appeared within Our Royal Domain the ....., bound for .....

BE IT REMEMBERED: That said Vessel, Officers and Crew thereof having been inspected and passed on by Yourself and Our Royal Staff,

AND BE IT KNOWN: By all ye Sailors, Mariners and Land Lubbers, who may be honored by his presence, that

Seaman W, T. Door, USN, having been found worthy to be numbered as ONE OF OUR TRUSTY SHELLBACKS, has been gathered to our fold and duly initiated into the SOLEMN MYSTERIES OF THE ANCIENT ORDER OF THE DEEP.

BE IT FURTHER UNDERSTOOD: That by virtue of the power invested in me I hereby command my subject to show due honor and respect to him whenever he may enter Our Realm.

DISOBEY THIS ORDER UNDER PENALTY OF OUR ROYAL DISPLEASURE

Obviously, the sailor who isn't so certified is little more than a landlubber. Ask any shellback. The pollywog simply hasn't been around--and a worse stigma for a sailor is hard to imagine.

Through the years, the wish to mark other seagoing milestones has given birth to certificates for all kinds of distinctions. Most of them are what the television industry would call "spin-offs" - imitations with variations from the shellback idea; they document, in salty language, passing certain places for the first time. The Domain of the Golden Dragon, for instance. (You enter the dragon's empire when you cross the International Date Line by sailing west (say some), or sailing east (say others). With the extensive Navy operations in the Far East since (and before) World War II, this passage has become so common that few initiation ceremonies are actually held. But the certificate, decorated with Chinese-style dragon, will still find its way to a place on the wall of a sailor's den.

Other notable line-crossings have their certificates too. For the intrepid sailor who crosses the Arctic Circle, various documents will attest his entrance to the Northern Domain of the Polar Bear or the Royal Order of the Blue Noses.

The Arctic Circle certificates have a long seafaring tradition behind them. In the middle ages, when European sailors almost never got to the Equator, they held ceremonies similar to the shellback initiation on crossing the Arctic Circle or entering the tropics. Nowadays, King Polar Bear is piped aboard at the limit of his domain, and lets his wrath be known to the "Red Noses" - the uninitiated.

At the other end of the world, you enter the Royal Domain of the Emperor Penguin by crossing the Antarctic Circle, and His Imperial Majesty inducts you as a Frozen Stiff. The bearer of this certificate is entitled "to all of the privileges of this frozen realm of blizzards, including freezing, shivering, starving, and any other privileged miseries that can possibly be extended during his stay in this land of answer to a well digger's dream."

And while you're in southern latitudes, you might qualify for a distinction that has become rare in this age of the Panama Canal: the title of Mossback. Members of this exclusive brotherhood are those who have completed the fearsome voyage around stormy Cape Horn. They are given the right to spit into the wind, if they want to risk it.

But even if you were a Shellback, Mossback, Blue Nose, Frozen Stiff and subject of the Golden Dragon, there would be more distinctions you could gain. Sailors' ingenuity has given rise to several combinations of these awards - based on a ship's achieving more than one on the same voyage, or even at the same time.

For instance, those who cross the 180-degree meridian and the Equator at the same time become Golden Shellbacks. And in 1965, the submarine USS *Capitaine* (AGSS-336) topped nearly everybody by crossing the intersection of the two lines underwater.

Or if you round the Horn and cross the Equator on the same voyage, you are duly honored as a Horned Shellback. Of course, it's hard for a Mossback to avoid becoming a Shellback; but this certificate is rare.

And it's a safe bet that some ships have made out Blue-nosed-Shellback cards or Frozen-Mossback certificates. We just haven't seen them yet.

Of course, certificates are available for round-the-world voyages and similar out-of-the-ordinary cruises. We suspect that some special certificate is made for achievements such as that of USS *Edisto* (AGB-2) in 1955. In that one year, her crew became Blue-Nosed, Frozen-Stiff, Golden-Dragon Shellbacks. That's hard to top.

But the most exclusive certificate of the century has already been issued: the plaque taken to the moon by former Naval Aviator Neil Armstrong and his *Apollo 11* shipmates. Not even a Golden Blue-Nosed Shellback can match the distinction of being the first men on the moon."