

BOOK # 1

ANTIETAM

SHORT ACCOUNTS OF PROCEEDINGS WHILE ON SS ANTIETAM KONR

by

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1924

Most of this is written just as it comes into my head.

July 15, 1924 Tuesday - Sign articles today. Went over to Long Beach tonite to see the grandparents. Had a nice little talk with the Capt. this eve. He sure is a fine fellow. Got time at midnight while he was here.

July 17 Thursday - 1st mate either got fired or quit today. He did not seem to get along very well with the others. Now we have a swell bunch. I feel I am going to have a swell time. We pulled out from San Pedro at 4:00 PM today, heavily loaded. I am taking my last look at San Pedro for a while.

July 21 - Not having written for a few days I now have a little to say. 1st every thing is lovely. We have not seen land since we left, and only a few ships. I take the wheel at 8 bells and am relieved at 4 bells for ½ hour, then I wind the clocks listen in & go back to the wheel again. Eat at 12:00 & rest of afternoon to self.

They sure give good eats aboard this wagon. The old man is a kick always kidding someone. The other day he comes up to pilot house & says to the 3rd mate "Well honey, do you still love me?" Mate says "Yes Sir, I guess so." Then the om goes in the chart room & makes a big smack, & says "Don't do that now, honey Sparks will hear you." etc. so it goes.



Last night we had a cold supper. There were some sardines on toast & the 1st mate said "Sparks will you have some of this himming bird?"

Bummed some press yesterday & cut it up to last me two days. The crew are quite elated over it as the other opr never used to get much. I have gotten time tick nearly every day & that puts me in good with the one.

Received a msg for om yesterday & today, bawling him out for using too much fuel. Guess they have some Jew at head of Co.

My gap wrench was busted so I got "pumps" to fix it for me. He is fixing it now.

Everyone says we will have very rough wea in few days.

It will be winter when we get to Magellan Sts & may be ice burgs & we may have to go around the Horn. When it is summer north of the equator it is winger below.

I have quite a time with time. We set all clocks ahead about seven or eight min each day. It is apparent time, so when I want time sigs I have to subtract the amt added to get 120 w meridan or Pacific time.

On this ship they have what they call a Neptune party for those who have never crossed the equator before. It is a sort of an iniation. I will have to be initiated when we cross

I cannot work KSE now, everything must be relayed.

I get time sigs at midnight from NSS (Anapolis) ard.

The static is very very very very bad.

July 22 - Just came off watch it is now 12:30 AM I found out that the Chas Kerry Co. have a time contract with the Get Pet Co & that is why they want us to go so slow. So it will take longer & they will get more money for use of our ship. The bums.

We have a new 2nd mate aboard, we always have a cup of tea in the pilot hour at night. Well, we also have two faucets, one fresh water, & one salt water. The new 2nd mate went down to the faucet to get some H<sub>2</sub>O for the 1st mate for his tea, & he got the wrong faucet. When the mate got ready he made his tea all nice & everything & took one big swig of it. That was enough. But it wasn't all because when he got cold along towards morning & went to put on his coat he found it all marked up with chalk saying for Sale \$1.37 and stripes on the sleeves etc. The third mate & I marked it all up for him. So between the salt tea and the striped coat, I guess his watch was not the pleasantest he has had. But he is a god sport & said nathing about the coat, however I'll bet he knows who did it.

July 22 - We are getting nearer & nearer the equator. It is sure hot today. This noon we hit the South East Trade Winds, which saved us from a lot of heat. The sea is getting a little rougher than it has been. Several of them have broke over the deck

already, but they are not bad.

While on watch at the wheel today, I saw several school of flying fish & upon pointing them out to the third mate, he said we must be on the wrong course and were probably hitting for Mandelay.

Dad would like my job because he would get to ring the bells where they would really mean something. His favorite bell would probably be bong bong, bong bong, bong bong, bong.

I had a lot of trouble with my set this am. The areal switch went on the blink and it took me about an hour to fix it. However it is ok now. I have been waiting all day for a message from Pedro but can raise no one who has it.

I bummed a little press this afternoon. I will divide it and give them half of it tomorrow & half next day fixing the dates to jibe. If I give it all to them tomorrow they will YELL for more next day.

July 24 Well we are now nearly opposite Panama Canal. I guess by tomorrow or the day after we will cross the Equator. I will have to be initiated.

The third mate is just a young fellow about 24. He & I get along good together. He sure treats me fine. I am supposed to stand at the wheel for about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hours at a time, at night when there is nothing to see or do he usually takes the wheel for an hour or so. He is a dandy fellow.

Last night when I got off watch I listened in & some one had a msg for me. I got most of it, & by the time I asked for repeats on certain words, the static was so bad I could hardly do a thing. He could hardly get me either, so we fussed around nearly 20 min trying to get about 3 words over. The static came up all of a sudden & if he had given me the msg 10 min later it would have been impossible to have gotten it. Finally when I went to bed it was after 1:00 AM & when I turned in I found a tomato in by bed. Of course I squashed it & it made a mess of my bed. So I put all the covers over it & slept on top of them. It is so hot now one can do that. In fact I slept that way with nothing on at all. Anyway I'll have to get even with the third mate for the tomato.

Later - I came off watch for  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour at 10 AM and saw that one of my 6 vt storage batts was way down. I tested the generator polarity and found it ok so started charging the batt. while I was on watch which was to be  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours longer. Well when I came down again at noon, I found that they had changed generators & the polarity was reversed. There being no under load circuit breaker on the 6 volt batts., it naturally got a charge in the wrong direction. I found out that they switched generators shortly after I began charging. Of course the batt would not even light the bottles. Instead of waiting until they switched back generators I have changed the leads and am now charging it in right direction. I do not know whether it will pick up or not. I sure hope so.

We have a negro crew & believe me they are sure black. Today the om said to one of them "Paul, do you tink Jesus loves an ugly boy like you dis morning?" Paul said "NO sir, I don't think so." The om is always pulling funny stuff.

⇒ The other day I was at the wheel & I sneezed & the om bawled out "Sparks, behave yourself."

July 15 - Friday - We expect to hit the doll drums tomorrow morning. That is a band which extends about  $5^{\circ}$  north and  $5^{\circ}$  south of the equator, where there is absolutely no wind. It is a dead calm. We expect it to be very hot then. It will take about a day & a half to go thru. Guess if we hit the equator by Sunday they will have their Neptune party.

Later - We are now over 1600 miles from any land and I haven't heard any ship for over tow day. We would be SOL if I had to send out an SOS.



I beat the om in a game of cribbage tonight. I also took a flashlight pix of him playing.

The battery I was worried about, took the charge all right and is now ok.

July 26 - The north star is getting lower & lower that is nearer & near the horizon. After we get about 5° below the equator it will disappear entirely. We are in the doldrum zone now but it is the windy season & we are having a nice cool breeze. We cross equator tonight or tommorrow morning.

The old man, 2nd mate & Steward were all in my room (not my shack) tonight just chewing the rag for about an hour. I sure like the skipper. He says we may go over to Europe from B. A.

Guess Neptune will come aboard tommorrow.

Sunday July 27 - Well we crossed equator this morning about 5 AM. All the sailors were on the poop deck cheering and yelling. I saw an old shirt hung on the line The om said he put it there 7 years ago when we crossed. All the bells and whistles aboard were pealing forth the glad news of crossing the line. Some of the sailors even went so far as to sing short dittys about it. The played a little trick on one of the oilers already for this Neptune party but as yet I have not been asked to bite. It is now 10:30 AM apparent time or 12:32 75th Meridian time. So I have plenty of time to be initiated yet.

July 28th - Neptune party was nix. They did nothing to me. I dreamed this ship was wrecked on the rocks last night, but we are still afloat.

The 3rd mate tells me that this run is about the longest run there is. It is about 8,000 miles and it is only 25,000 around the earth.

July 29 - I found the mates shirt & pants drying today and sewed up the sleeves & pant leg of them.

July 30 - I tried to start my mg today & circuit breaker tripped. I found it to be the starter had stuck, so I filed it and it works ok now.

Mate said he found his shirt sewed up

Developed negs today.

July 31 - Had two msgs of my own I wanted to get off yesterday, because this is last of month, and I can't send them after the 31st. Have not got them off yet. Hope I will do so tonight.

Printed pictures this afternoon. I asked the om how muchlonger it would take to go around the horn than thru the sts of Magellan. He said about two days. Then said he " Which way would you rather go, Sparks, around the Horn or thru the Sts.?" I said thru Sts.

He said then we will go thru the Sts. I was planning on going, if there were too many ice burgs, but if you would rather go thru Sts, then we will go thru Sts.

Aug 1 Friday - When we give our meal order to the mess man, he usually stands right behind. The other day the 3rd mate (Ramsey) sat down, and the Capt. happened to walk in & stand behind him. Ramsey began to tell the om what he wanted & what he didn't want etc. The om stood there, & could hardly keep from laughing aloud. When Ramsey finished the om said "Why in hell don't you get it yourself?"

Aug 2 Sat - Yesterday was the 3rd mates birthday. We celebrated it aboard the SS Antietam.

I was listening in last nite and sending a bit when I was called by ZWH the Madras City QRD So. Africa QRF Vancouver. I found out he was about 100 mi due east of us. and going same direction. He asked me if I could tell him the stations that sent time on spark between Canal and Horn. I told him what I could. Then he asked me to give him a check from our chronometer. I told the om about it & he brought the ship chronometer down in my shack & I sent him time sigs.

While I was on watch this am the engineer wanted to stop the engines and fix them. So at 9:17 we stopped. I was at wheel and just hung around the wheel house until 11:56 when we started again. So I had a short watch.

The om had a funny streak again today. He came up in the wheel house singing to beat the band. He was quiet for about 10 min then all of a sudden he busted out with this, "And the Lord said unto Moses, come down from that tree, what in Hell do you think you are, a monkey?" and Moses answered and said, "Lord I was afraid, thats why I climbed up here. I was afraid of the wireless operator."

Aug 3 - Gave ZWH another chronometer ck today.

Aug 4 - Heavy swells today. I am beginning to feel a bit flippity flop.

Aug 9 - Asked a fellow who had come thru the Sts if he had good wea, and he told me to ask the land stations for wea if I wanted it. He was a Limie.

There is a 3rd Asst Engineer on here whom everyone calls Strawberry, and it makes him sore. Consequently, he gets pictures of Strawberries almost every noon. Some one is always putting a Strawberry someplace where he can see it. He always tears it up, and says that somebody is getting damn smart and that they will have a fight on their hands if they don't look out. Then he won't talk for the rest of the day.

The om sewed up the 3rd mates clothes today, and tied knots in my pajamas. From now on I am going to spend 2 hrs at the wheel and 2 hours on lookout, instead of 4 hrs at wheel.

I am painting my room now and when I get to B. A. I am going to buy some stuff & fix it up swell.

Aug 13 - At night, I now stand 2 hrs at wheel & 2 hrs on lookout. Last nite while on lookout it was raining & wind blowing & cold. The om came up & gave me his rain coat. After a while he said come on inside sparks & look out the window. I sure thought that fine of him as the look out is really not allowed inside. I took the wheel a few moments while Paul read the log. When Paul came back the om asked whether I would rather steer or go on lookout. He is sure a fine fellow.

It is now very foggy, wet, cold, rainy & windy. We have to until fog raises, to see where to go into the Sts.

Aug 15th - Snowed nearly all day today. Having such bad weather that we would not take a chance on Magellan Sts and are now on our way around the Horn. Had such a bad wind yesterday that 2 wires in my lead in broke. The mate gave me about 6 sailors & in 1½ hrs we got it fixed.

Aug 16th - I shall never forget today. The 1st Mate came down & woke the 3rd Mate at 6:00 AM & said that we were passing Cape Horn & he might never get to see it again. So I got up too, and went up on the bridge. It was still dark, but the East was a dull yellow glow of red. The moon was directly astern and very bright. It was ice cold and the wind was blowing from astern. And there, about 10 miles was the silhouette

against the morning sky was Cape Horn. We could see snow on the mountains. I took some silhouette pictures but I am afraid it was too dark to be any good.

Our latitude when going around was 56° 06' Probably the farthest south I will ever go. It is very cold.

Aug 18th - Had a msg to get off for the om tonite, but was delayed in getting it off on account of motor gen trouble. All it was, the brushes & commutator needed cleaning. It spit a ring of fire all around commutator. I fixed it ok.

I got the msg off to CWA a station in Uruaguay. I had trouble getting his charges and am not sure now whether he gave me his charges in Pesos or dollars. I'll ask him again.

Aug 23 - Expect to hit BA today.

The other night a school of black fish followed us for nearly 3 hours. They were just swimming along side.

I was calling my head off last night for B Aires station & some American ship called me & told me to listen for answer on 1000 meter. Sure enough that is where he answered. The om sent a arrival msg to Moss in B. A. on the 19th on the 22nd he sent another. I sent them thru CWA a Uruguay station on the evening of 22nd. I got a SVC back telling me there was no Moss registered. Don't know what became of the other msg.

Aug 24th - Water is so shallow we are rubbing the bottom all the time. It is now 12:30 & the Doctor has just left, we have to go thru more red tape before we can get in. I hear several broadcasting stations in BA now. They all talk Spanish & it sure sounds odd. I can understand none of it.

We are out of quaranteen but are now stuck in the mud and waiting for more water. We have been stuck ever since 9:30 AM & it is now 7:00 PM. Pilots are aboard ready to take us as soon as we can float.

Night of Aug 25 & morning of Aug 26, 1924 - Buenos Aires 10 pesos & 1 dollar

Aug 30 On our way back to San Pedro via Magellan Straits.

The other day the 3rd mate started to clean the Capt's rifle & before doing it he wanted to see if it was loaded. He pointed it at the window & pulled the trigger. Chips put boards over the hole.

In BA all traffic is left handed. What little Spanish I do know was indispensible. I got along very well.

Aerial wire busted last night while I was working a ship. Fixed it next morning in ½ hour. The sailors did the dirty work all I did was splice it.

Sept 3 - In Magellan Sts. In as much as I can't steer very good the om had me stand by all watch today. while in Magellan Sts. I sure enjoyed it. Saw some glaciers today.

Worked a ship 973 miles away. He was out in the Pacific & I in the Sts. The Sts. are beautiful. Snow all over the mountain tops.

I forgot to say that the exchange in BA was about \$2.97 pesos for a dollar gold and 2.91 for paper. It varied slightly. Every place would try to jip you. I have just been figuring and find out that I have been as far as 54° north and



56° degrees south.

Sept 6, 1924 - Saturday - Today being my 21 birthday I am forced to spend it upon the SS Antietam. I am also trying to get the results of the Wills - Firpo fight which is supposed to come off today.

Sept 16 - Tuesday - Fight was to come off on 11th & I don't know results yet. Everybody is hollaring for them.

I saw a thing Sunday night that I never saw before. I saw a rainbow at night. The sun had been down for 2 hours & the moon was just rising & nearly full. It caused a rainbow. The colors were not quite distinct but you could see what it was. The other day I saw a rainbow in a complete circle. Not an arc.

Sept 18th - Om had a msg to get off & I could not work Balboa which is now about 1600 miles abeam. I gave it to WPA Port Arthur Texas about 2500 or 3000 mi away. Was up all night doing it tho.

I also sent one to Fred Coyens.

Sunday Sept 21st - We crossed the line several days ago, and water now whirls in a counter clock wise direction again. Last night, the om, chief mate & myself were on the bridge talking, when the om said "Lets make a dummy for Ramsay." So he got some of his clothes & we stuffed them to make a dummy and set him out on the wing of the bridge. When Ramsay came up, the Steward said, "The old man wants you." He is out on the bridge." Ramsay goes out to the dummy & says, "Yes Sir." No answer, so he says "Did you want to see me Captain?" and when he got no answer he reached out & touched him. Then we all gave him the laugh. Ramsay & I had more fun with it later.

The chief mate gave me an old navigation book today. I couldn't get a msg off for the om last nite on acct of qrm and tonight is just as bad.