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2700
5-80
BLB

Distress- 6ZDW

Abt May 17th 1975

SHIP - SS ASIA Loyalty - 6ZDW Bulk Carrier Type. About 30 OFFICERS & CREW
QTH - 3 DAYS out FROM LAGOS
CAPTAIN - Slightly INJURED
By BRIAN DERKSEN. 4603-M

Whilst on passage from Santos Brazil to Lagos Nigeria we were disturbed by loud yelling and banging noises coming from the area of the crews mess about 10 pm.

The Captain investigated and was attacked by one of the Filipino crewmembers with a knife and suffered a slight head injury. The Captain locked himself in the officers mess.

Not knowing what was going on I went down for a look. I grabbed the seaman(not knowing he had a knife) who chased the Captain when he made a break for the gangway heading upstairs. The Danish chief mate disarmed the crewmember while I held him.

At that time the Chief Mate and I were accosted by another crewmember with a monkey-wrench, the size of which I didn't know existed.

Anyways, he didnt seem to bear any great grudges towards the chief and I and he soon wandered off, glassy-eyed . We figured out later that he must have been partaking of some home-brew because,as it seems to me, the crew had their tap cut off a while back due to a few rowdy incidents which occurred during their weekly saturday parties in the mess.

He was bouncing this wrench off the walls and doors as he proceeded on his way back to the general area of the crews mess.

The other officers apparently deemed it wiser to stay behind locked doors and we didn't see much of them except for the occasional hasty peek through doors.

We called the rest of the senior officers to the bridge in order to get some consensus about how we were going to handle this.

While we were discussing this on the bridge with the assemble officers we could hear coming from 2 decks below, the fellow with the wrench smashing to his hearts content. Later we found out both TV's were smashed-in and most of the dinnerware from both messes were broken.

During all of this there was no help from the other crewmembers. Apparently the guy doing all the wrecking earlier with his buddy had tried to smash in the bosuns and a couple of others cabin doors. So, they were pretty well battened down.

Anyways, while we were trying to decide on some action we smelled smoke which quickly filled the accomodation through the air conditioning system.

The Capt. and Chief Mate organized a fire-fighting party and with the help of crewmembers who were now galvanized into action proceeded to attack the fire.

The fire was concentrated in the cabin of the seaman who had attacked the Capt with a knife.

I went directly to the radio room on the first shout of "Fire", awaiting instructions from the Captain.

It was quite hard to see in the radio room what with all the smoke. I flashed up the main transmitter and turned up the receivers. The qrn was quite fierce on 500khz.

Word came down from the Captain on the bridge to send out an SOS and ask any ships in the area to steer towards us for possible assistance.

I raised 2 vessels on 500khz after sending out the Auto alarm and SOS. One was Argentine and the other Panamanian registry. The static was so bad on 500khz that after informing "CQ" on 500khz I was doing so, went up to 8mhz to get ^{BETTER} contact with the 2 vessels. Only one ship, the Panamanian agreed to steer a course towards us. At about this time the smoke started to clear and word came down from the Captain that the fire was out and no further assistance was required. I thanked the 2 vessels concerned and cancelled the SOS on 500khz (QUM).

By the time all the fire debris was cleaned up it was daybreak. Two cabins were gutted and the crew had lost many of their personal belongings from water and smoke damage being on the same deck as the fire.

Where were the two offending crewmembers during all this? We didnt see them til later in the afternoon. Guess they slept through all the bothersome commotion.

Later we found out that the fire-starter had earlier tried to start a fire in the engine-room next to a oil tank which the chief engineer had quickly extinguished and then chased the fellow out of the engine space. A short time later he was succesful in starting a small fire in a changing locker which was put out by some crewmembers.

The two crewmembers sheepishly apologized to all concerned ^{after the fire was put out.} Strangely enough they were completely harmless at that point.

That afternoon we landed the two after diverting to Tema, Ghana for shipping back to the Philippines.

The boarding party comprised of 3 or 4 soldiers with automatic weapons and with fixed bayonets no less. Guess they wondered what the hell was going on when the offending seamen were given a royal send-off by their country-men amidst back-slapping and shouts to say hello to so and so back in Manila or their home provinces. The only information our agent had of the incident was our cable to them detailing the fire and mutiny and also from the Ghanian coast guard which had heard our call on 500khz but were not able to raise us. Apparently they had sent out a boat to come to our aid but recalled it after our QUM was sent. (In the SOS we mentioned the fire only.)

A few days later we arrived in Lagos where after being anchored for 5 days I was taken ashore in the ships lifeboat for repatriation as my scheduled relief had arrived.

I heard later that the 2 crewmembers got other ships, though needless to say, not in our company.

In hindsight , Ive always wondered if we were justified in sending out an SOS so quickly and also why the chief engineer didn't inform the captain of the serious trouble brewing.

But it did make for an interesting story to tell to mates over a beer in one of my favorite bars in the Chinatown -Yokohama or Kobe "minefields"