

Shocking Adventures of Cat Aboard Ship—A Prize Story

BY GEORGE SCHREIBER

Wootzie was just an ordinary yellow alley cat, the scarred veteran of many a knockdown and drag 'em out fight, but when he stalked the deck of a seagoing ship his demeanor was proud as any newly licensed captain with his first command.

The Happy Days tavern on Tacoma's water front was where Wootzie first saw the light of day, and where, as a kitten and later in feline adolescence, he lay before the driftwood fire in the taproom and listened to sailor talk. He was known to hundreds of

Panama canal and north to New York, Wootzie traveled with the ship.

Grill Off Transmitter

Then, on the third voyage, Wootzie got it. Erickson, for something to do, had removed the protective grill from the power supply of the ship's radio transmitter. Then, the operator got a speaking tube call from the bridge to relay a message to a shore station.

"I didn't see Wootzie walk into the shack," Erickson relates sadly, "but apparently the open grill was virgin territory for the



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transient customers who sailed the seas in ships, but it can truly be said Wootzie never made a close friend.

Exposed to all that sailor talk, majestic yarns of strange goings on the seven seas, it was only natural that Wootzie should some day feel the urge to seek adventure other than he had known in Tacoma's wharfs and warehouses. He picked his ship with care, and it was a delighted crew of the Henry D. Wheton who, 12 hours out, saw Wootzie crawl from beneath a lifeboat cover, the familiar hiding place of stowaways.

Finds His First Friend

It was on the Wheton, owned by the Universal Sulphur company, that Wootzie made his one and only friend, Ero Erickson, then the ship's radio operator, now the supervisor of operators at the state police station KSB47, at Irving Park rd. and Harlem av.

Hour after hour Wootzie spent in the top bunk in the radio shack, watching Erickson stand watch at the ship's receiver, but after a while laziness palls, even to a cat. Wootzie sought employment, and with his secure position on the Wheton he selected for himself the job of official inspector, shouldering aside with catlike disdain, the mate and bo's'n.

Twice daily the big fellow made the rounds of the ship, poking his nose in every nook and cranny. Twice from Tacoma, thru the

official inspector. When I pressed the key I heard a yowl and there was Wootzie seemingly unconscious. More than 1,500 volts had passed thru his body."

Erickson, like every other salt water man, knows the elements of first aid, and he lost no time in applying artificial respiration.

"It doesn't take long for word to spread on a ship and soon everyone knew something had happened to Wootzie," Erickson said.

Oxygen Bottle Used

"Pretty soon the chief engineer, a character like Mr. Glenn cannon, but addicted to a different brand of dew, appeared from the engine room with an oxygen bottle and squirted a hissing stream into Wootzie's whiskers. After 20 minutes I felt Wootzie's stiffened body go limp, and then he howled. I knew the battle was won."

For the rest of the voyage Wootzie spent all his time in his favorite bunk. Back at Tacoma when the gangplank was pushed up from the dock, Wootzie was waiting. He went ashore and disappeared in the opposite direction of the Happy Days.

"You know," Erickson muses, "neither we nor anyone in the Happy Days ever saw Wootzie again. I guess he just couldn't stand to take a beating from 1,500 volts."

"Perhaps his mother, if he had one, never told him that cats have nine lives."