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**Seasick** - The moment of pure joy came with my head hanging over the leeward side of the Vance. The delight was in realizing that I had barfed in an acceptable spot, the Pacific Ocean. Naval officers did not vomit on themselves. If they were prone to vomiting at sea, the navy in all its wisdom would not have insisted on white uniforms. Naval officers were dashing figures, Renaissance men, and gentlemen born to command not barf. We smile as our ships plunge and buck beneath us, the rougher the ride the better.

As sick as I was I could not imagine me, a naval officer, vomiting on the deck. Someone else, some poor sailor, would have had to clean up my mess because officers had an image to protect. Cleaning the vomit from the deck was not in the script. No one had to tell me this. I was not above cleaning up my own barf. It was just counter to everything the navy taught me about being an officer. This particular situation was not covered in the officer training classes I completed just a few short months ago. We learned the correct social posture, such as, how and when to deliver our calling card on our first visit to our commanding officer's home. We received a lot of coaching on responsibilities but nothing specific on how to handle an officer's previously eaten meal. The closest guidance I could recall was that the naval officer was a leader of men, a calm stoic figure on a burning deck charging into Hell's way. I suspect, when under fire, one just wiped away the barf and kept on fighting. Impossible, absolutely ridiculous, I could not imagine this shining example of a seafaring man, in dress white uniform, on his hands and knees wiping up his lunch from the deck. Still I would have been mortified to learn that some poor mess steward or deck hand was cleaning up after me. To guard against my worst fears, I found a bucket to carry, not particularly nautical and certainly not dashing, but workable considering my options.

**Testing a Friendship-**My relationship with Les Horne continued to be positive during this my last year aboard. Only once did I test his self-control. We were alongside the tender prior to going into drydock. I was on the fantail talking with my officers when the 1MC loud speakers bark out, "Engineering officer report to the XO's state room on the double." I hurried forward and looked for him in his stateroom. From the forward officers' head, Les Horne's unmistakable voice erupted with an icy, "Get in here." There stood the XO, his immaculate white uniform covered from

head to toe with his own shit. His face was red and he was trembling. "Get this fixed and report back to me" was all he could manage to say, as he fought to control himself. "Aye, aye, Sir," was all I dare to say as I beat a hasty retreat. Apparently one of our shipfitters removed a valve from the fire main for repair and then replaced it, but forgot to bleed the air from the system in the forward officers' head. The fire main ran fore and aft through the ship distributing salt water for fire fighting, toilets and urinals. With the system back in operation under pressure, an air hammer built up in the forward officers head. The XO came in to work that morning decked out in an immaculate white uniform, took a dump in the small-enclosed toilet compartment with the door closed. Les must have stood up before flushing judging from the shit pattern on the bulkheads, door, overhead, and of course on Les. The moment he flushed the man didn't have a chance. He must have liked me because I survived this incident. A year and a half later, when Les Horne, now a lieutenant commander, was captain of his own ship, a minesweeper, he offered me the XO billet, to be his second-in-command. Needless to say, I had no intention of leaving dry land ever again, but I appreciated the generous offer and Les' confidence in me.

**The Quiver-** We steered into the oncoming monster waves riding high and then dropped off the crest nosing into the trough only to rise again, quiver and then drop once again. So long as the ship took the waves slightly off the bow we were OK, a terrible rough ride but acceptable under these conditions. The quiver and the hard slam of the hull were unnerving as the Vance shook its bow free of the crest of the monster wave and plunged down into the trough. Then she did it again and again as if the old gal wanted to destroy herself. I could not ignore the doubts running through my mind. How much of a beating could the hull of this old ship take? The shipyard slapped her together in three hurried months during WWII and that was a long, long time ago. At that time the idea was to get hundreds of these escort vessels to sea as soon as possible to protect the Atlantic convoys from German U-boats. The Vance, an economical short-term assembly line solution for convoy protection, was never meant to be in Antarctic waters in September eighteen years later. Here was the Vance, a ship overdue to join the hundreds of other WWII vintage destroyer escorts in the scrap metal market, testing her rivets, welds and basic design flaws on perhaps her roughest ride to date. We were riding the up and down motion of a 306-foot 1,680 ton ship dropping off an eighty-foot wave crest, with the propellers, commonly referred to as screws, suddenly spinning wildly in the open air.

They lost all resistance as the bow nosed into the trough causing the stern to kick up free of the ocean before slamming down, the screws once again grabbing at the ocean and propelling the Vance forward ever so slowly up the wall of the next incoming wave. The explosive force of the forward half of the hull slamming down jarred the crew; 157 pairs of hands instinctively hung on, feet braced, awaiting the next inevitable wave.

The crash of the hull against the waves was unnerving but more upsetting to me was the Vance's quiver because the pauses lead to thinking and therefore questioning. I could handle the loud collusion of steel against water; there was no time to think, just to hang on and react. The quiver was different, a lull in the action. The quiver permitted, no, it demanded my attention. The quiver came in the quiet seconds that seem like eternity, when the bow was out of the water, suspended in the air before crashing down once again into the sea. A few seconds of utter silence, nothing moving, like a roller coaster car at the peak of the highest track, those few moments balanced on the edge of the shear drop before the descent. Only suspended here was a huge steel box containing a little city of over 157 human beings, galleys, sleeping quarters, offices, engine rooms, weapons systems, fuel and every thing else necessary to function. In these quiet moments I could hear the ship groan. One felt or heard the barely audible sound of quarter inch steel hull plates stretching, support frames straining, the keel and main deck flexing. The quiver was more of a fore and aft twisting action than a simple flexing of the hull as the ship fought to be free of the pounding waves. The quiver was experienced as a quiet reflective moment between collisions.

The quiver reminded me of a dying whale breaching for the last time, one final mighty thrust to the surface, the huge body briefly suspended, twisting in the air, as if trying to free itself from the sea, then exhausted heavily slamming down onto the sea one last time. The next year in the North Pacific, I witnessed a dying whale making this last mournful thrust breaking the surface, reaching up for the last time only to fall back with finality into a calm sea with sharks clinging to its body. The ship's quiver differed...