

Sumner T. Beardslee

Yesterday we crossed the Equator - we entered the domain of Neptunus Rex, his mermaids and his court. all those who had previously crossed the equator are now "M. I." & "H. I." who haven't ~~are~~ ^{are} "lowdown, stinking, slimy, land-lubbing, loathsome polywogs," they are the uninitiated. The day before "Davy Jones" came aboard for an inspection and several polywogs were called up for offenses like taking eggs from the cove nest and had their behinds paddled. all this is accompanied by great pomp and ceremony. all the characters are gradually dressed and there is an air of false austerity. yesterday was the big day - all the polywogs, officers, Navy personnel, and army enlisted men went through the initiation. First down on your knees and a strong stream of salt water is played upon you as you run the gauntlet of some 15 shellbacks who paddle your wet fanny with pieces of canvas. Then you "praise Allah" and pay homage to Neptune and his court; from there you stick your face into the mustard covered posterior of some shellback. Next you sit in

hot seat - about 100 volts and you wet
clothes assume your getting a shock. Then
the "royal" barbers clip odd sections of your
hair out - leaving you looking like a patch work
quilt. Then you were smeared with French
marmalade and sprayed with blueing. And
that was it. It was over fast - it was fun
to watch the others especially in the hot seat.
So now we are all honorable shellbacks

Tom

Today is our second day at sea. It has been a fine trip so far. We are on a Navy transport which has been chartered for this trip by the army. That means we get Navy chow - and the food is good; 3 superb meals a day. The enlisted men only get 2 meals and a noon meal of sandwiches and fruit. (Another reason I am glad I endured those 13 weeks at O.C.S.) It is tough on the G.I.'s. There has been little sickness as far as I have seen; the sea has been smooth. Sleeping is excellent; it is like being rocked to sleep. Time does tend to hang heavy. The chaplain runs a very adequate library; I am browsing through several anthologies when I am not playing cards - bridge, poker, hearts what have you. The sea air gives you an appetite despite the fact that life is inactive. I spend a lot of time on the upper decks; it is the best place to read.

I got the mail distribution today - a card

from Florida and the Bulletin with H.B.'s
picture. There may be a second distribution
when they dig up more sacks of mail - I
hope so. We, of course, can send no
mail while in transit. I will have these
letters ready for mail (and censorship)
as soon as we hit somewhere where we
can post them. I will also write a V-
mail letter and post it at the same
time. You can then judge which service
is best. As yet we have not been
informed as to what we can write and
what we cannot - for that reason, I
am writing only to you and at that forced
to skip the specific details of my ship etc.
I know damned little, anyway. I am
only sorry that so many days have
gone by without your receiving any-
word from me. Perhaps later on it will
be permissible to tell you our direction
etc. Needless to say conjecture and
rumors are running rampant around
here.

Sumner T. Bernstein

Another note - and nothing special, still on
route. We are getting books and pamphlets
orienting us on the Southwest Pacific. Yesterday
wasn't yesterday, it was the day before
yesterday because we lost Thursday
when we crossed the dateline. I must be
almost $\frac{1}{2}$ the way around the globe
from Pittsburg. Bridge playing is
still the rule; doing lots of reading as
well. Day passes very very quickly although
we gain time as we move west daily.

Incidentally - I now play cribbage and
even chess and I still keep every game
in sight - I'm incurable. I just wish I
could remember half the dirty jokes I
hear. My gang of men are a

cheerful bunch - we pull ourselves into
our hums and into our ribbing of a
violently southern warrant officer.

I have not missed Friday night
services in my 3 weeks on this boat.
They are what are not very satisfactory
but I'd rather go than fail to attend. On the
whole I like ship board life. it is certainly
easy enough - better enjoy it while I can.

Strangely enough I feel very unphilo-
sophical about this whole business of
going and being overseas. Perhaps
when I get there, get assigned, and
have something to judge by, I can
write something intelligent. Right now
I guess I am lazy enough to just
avoid thinking too seriously.

The Pacific remains as blue as ever. Sunset
is really beautiful on the ocean - yellow, reds,
mingled by the clouds against the very
blue sky. You really get to know what
"sky blue pink" is; for that is really the
color of that last glow of sunshine. I
guess I should have been a poet.

Sumner T. Carpenter

I don't remember when I first met him or even saw him. In the army, you come in contact with so many people that first meetings are usually vague since they are group affairs. I do remember his being called out to take charge of some troops when we arrived at somewhere; I remember my surprise when on the train to somewhere he explained that these blue chips were worth a dollar. And I shall never forget his disdain, his caustic remarks, his air of superiority when he found us playing our usual nickel and dime poker. We played "baseball" - a wild game, yet compared to "wildcat" and some of the others relatively mild - his comment, always with a self-appearing grin was "Well, that's not poker." The story of a friendly game, and of the fact that we were playing to pass time, not for blood, affected him not the least. He was quick to organize the 25¢ games and so on.

I don't know when I finally associated the name Warner with him; Roy Warner. He ~~was~~ ^{is} in his thirties I guess; average physique, small features, a somewhat flabby face and chin. His two classic expressions are his grin - which appears smirking and supercilious and his grimace - which is a down

dispirited look, almost pleading for sympathy. His eyes are small and all rather expressive. The game of poker was my first common game with him - usually he was a participant and I the spectator. I quickly learned several things about him - should I say that I gained several impressions - the first was that he was sure that Roy Harvey is the best poker player in the world and that he is - perhaps by poetic justice? - the worst card holder. I will admit that he plays poker well; he knows when to stay and when not to, when to draw and when to drop out. In the long run he undoubtedly is ahead. But his manner, his superior line of chatter is oppressive. No is never beaten by skill, but only by luck. As soon as some one (like Morris Baumgartner) figures out how he plays, he can easily be beaten. It was Roy who talked Morris into playing; now Morris always has Roy's goat all the time since he plays the same type of game and has the advantage of Roy's having given his game away while luring Morris into his clutches. When Morris wins, no matter who the opponent, no matter what the game, Roy always places the blame & the credit on luck, with some comment like "he went in like a skunk, and came out smelling like roses." Roy isn't angry, he just seems sadly disinterested, he doesn't hold it against anybody, he

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Doesn't begrudge his losses to the winners, he takes it all somewhat philosophically - why does it just have to happen to me, the best card player around these parts?

Bridge, rather than Poker, proved to be the medium for the true expression of our chum; for we were to meet the Harner system - the perfect system - to replace Culbertson, Van Vleet and all the rest. It is based on point value, indicative bids, forcing bids and the rest. But just a word -

Part of Harner's makeup, it seems, is the need of a stooge; someone to keep his ego up, to second his ideas, to echo his words, to support his case. In this instance Dick Boag (personified Harner by Harner) fills the bill. In poker he plays against Roy but they are always whispering together, sending a chuckling like two old women, obviously trying to make the others feel the lack of the Harner system and blessing of Harner himself. In bridge Dick was the obvious person to be let in on the system, to learn it, and then to go forth with the master and his point count and his key bids to conquer the world.

as yet Harner & Co have conquered no one. Roy is a good player, his system has its merits and its faults. The biggest fault is Boag - he has not

got the five points of the system mastered despite his many protestations. "Next time" is his cry but sometimes Ray feels so bad that he has to say "maybe we ought to play culbertson!" Incidentally, Ray with his system never errs in his bidding. He is right when he says that the system has never really been tried but he keeps hoping that Boag will see the light and they will march on to new found success. The amusing point to the doubting Thomases who are playing against the system is to hear & see Narver with a look combining angelic dignity and resignation explain to his partner what should have happened. It is all a negative assertion of his brilliant system, a negative boost to his cocky conceit which is really amusing rather than reassuring since Narver takes his brilliance as a recognized fact. If only Boag could see! This bid means 16 points and that one 10 points etc. and Boag's play, after the bidding - I think Ray wonders whether it is better that he is unique or ~~whether or not~~ it might be better if he had one suitmate. I don't think he wants to win money; he just wants a subtle sort of recognition, and, of course, from his personal grudge against Baumgartner which is rather secondary, any way. Narver is good natured - for the most part he takes Boag's errors well in stride because they are Boag's

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curs; he just gets somewhat peeved after a while.
It is a classic move for him to explain his 2 heart
nd which forces his partner to pass. "Now I have
invented a bid which forces my partner to pass..."
is his refrain, explaining his old difficulty with
partners who refuse to pass. Boag, of course,
ignores the invention, hds + monkey wrenches
the works and Warner just curls up a little
more and looks pleasantly, if disappointed,
around for sympathy. All of Warner's effusions,
his trials with Boag, his sayings from "I have
invented a bid" on down, are really laughs for us
all and, in fact, a satisfaction probably to Roy
since they afford him recognition. Warner is not
smug, but he is pleasantly sure + certain. I guess
my writing this would tickle him. He is different, no
doubt about it. His guide is not ordinary; if you are
not awed by him or repulsed by him in your reaction
to him, he proves enjoyable company. In fact, at
the Pher + Bulge tables it is Boag with his smug
homage to Warner who proves somewhat disgusting.

a last word on Warner; he recognizes the judgment
of others, is in fact seeking the participation and the
acknowledgement he has already accorded himself. He
does not hesitate to praise the good play of others unless
he thinks it may be blind luck - he feels himself
very unlucky - probably considers it the handicap
to compensate for his abilities. a last incident with

present writing: on the boat deck this morning,
I noted that Naves had shaved his mustache in
a well defined area on his chin. I asked if he
were trying to grow a beard. "Trying?" he responded.
why ~~if~~ how could I say trying - he is Naves -
he as good as had his spade grater - grater
only 2 days growth right now.