

23 November 2009

My name is Michael (Mike) Paulette and this is the story of my first day aboard the USS Sand Lance (SSN 660).

I am a Machinist Mate 3rd Class (Auxiliaryman) just finishing refrigeration school at the Charleston Naval Base. It had been exciting joining the Navy, but I was getting tired of schools and wanted to get my assignment to a boat. I had been told about the big difference between the "Boomer Boats" and the "Fast Attacks" and was hoping to go to a "Boomer" out of Charleston.

As luck would have it, and I consider myself now, the lucky one, on a sunny Charleston Friday afternoon I received my orders to the USS Sand Lance (SSN 660) docked at pier M (mike) just down the street from my school. I reported directly to the boat and was notified to return on Monday morning, with no further instructions. The weekend went by quick and on Monday morning, 0700, my wife dropped me off at pier M.

As I showed my orders to the topside watch I noticed what I thought was a lot of morning work going on, but it was not. My escort arrived and as I went through the forward hatch I heard over the 1MC "The reactor is critical".

At this point I was wondering what the hell I had gotten myself into. After being escorted to the personnel office, I was asked if I had brought my "Sea bag", which I had not, I showed up in my dress blues. I then learned that the boat was getting ready to get underway in a couple of hours.

Arrangements were made to get me back to my apartment and get my "Sea bag".

Upon arrival at my apartment, I found out that my wife had gone shopping and I had no way of contacting her. I left her a note on our coffee table, "Gone to sea, don't know where I am going, don't know when I will be back".

As you can guess, this did not go over well with her. This particular deployment lasted for three weeks, during which we had one weekend in Fort Lauderdale, Florida as a port of call.

I can't begin to explain how different it was to leave Charleston and when I saw light again it was in sunny Florida. Upon arrival back in Charleston, I was greeted by my frantic wife, she was just happy to see me alive.

This was the beginning of my USS Sand Lance (SSN 660) experiences, November, 1977.

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