

The After Battery Rat

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The Great 'Ska-Loosh' Locker

Adrian Stuke created the concept... He didn't invent the idea.

Sailors had been aware of how it worked since before Noah discovered positive buoyancy. What Stuke did was define it and explain the rules.

First, all bodies of saltwater throughout the entire world became known as the 'Ska-Loosh' locker. Only E-3s were allowed to use the term or employ the concept. If you continued either one after making third class, the *Goddess of the Main Induction* would give you a rare form of venereal disease, where your dick would turn green and fall off.

Anything tossed in the Ska-Loosh locker was gone for good.

For example, we once had a Chief of the Boat that was slightly enamored with his own sense of importance and had been given power derived from a direct relationship with Satan and every other rotten sonuvabitch in Hell.

One day, this paragon of virtue and naval leadership, assembled the Requin deck force and delivered to us a pneumatic three-prong scaler, known in professional E-3 circles as 'a frigging knucklebuster'.

Any idiot who has spent more than three months on an operating smokeboat, knows that the last thing you want to use on the pressure hull or attached superstructure is a contraption that makes noise like dental work being done on the tin man. You light off a three-prong knucklebuster and start it pounding away in the vicinity of the *Kingdom of the Wardroom* during the after chow siesta of the *King and his Court*, and you will know the wrath and displeasure of the disturbed.

There was nothing worthwhile you could do with a pneumatic scaler that would not make you the focal point of mass displeasure.

So we held a tribal council of the policy makers of the E-3 community... The Wizards of Pier 22. We decided that the best place for this creation of the Devil was the 'Ska-loosh' locker. Someone mentioned that the COB had signed for it and would be held accountable if it was misplaced... An added bonus that confirmed the brilliance of our decision.

There was stuff known in our day as 'Title B' gear. I have no idea what 'Title B' meant, but if you lost it, the United States Navy made your life hell and you could wind up buying something you never knew the exact location of. I once bought a set of 7x50 binoculars. I didn't know their exact location, but I knew it was a helluva lot closer to the Titanic than we were because when I cleared the bridge, the strap popped and it did a Briar Rabbit leap... Hit the tanktops and made it's way to what I assumed to be the bargain basement of the North Atlantic... *The Great World-Wide Ska-Loosh Locker*.

Well, that's where we deposited that thirty-pound pneumatic knucklebuster. The sonuvabitch did a triple flip forward of the starboard screw guard and made the obligatory 'Ska-Loosh', then made it's way to join ten million coffee cups, chipping hammers, paint scrapers, and assorted naval inventory, previously E-3 float-tested and certified 'negatively buoyant' for test purposes.

Take a busted Fairbanks piston destined for the scrap metal dumpster. We applied E-3 logic and our calculations... A determination even Admiral Rickover could not have disputed... Our calculations showed conclusively that it was one hundred yards plus to the dumpster and less than ten feet from the After

Battery hatch to the Adrian Stuke designated Ska-Loosh Locker.

At 0200 we float-tested the worthless sonuvabitch.

The sea bed between Pier 22 and Pier 23 must have had the appearance of a New Jersey junkyard... A naval archeological treasure trove of assorted useless metal crap going back to the original stuff Noah's leading seaman float-tested... Big rock anchors and a dead camel... Maybe two... Dinosaur bones... Jonah's boot... All kinds of worthless, discarded bullshit.

The Elizabeth River will never become a source for bottled spring water. Mankind will be sipping the contents of Pakistani septic tanks through a straw before any sonuvabitch ever gets stupid enough to take a drink from the Elizabeth River... You could percolate iguana crap and get something one helluva lot better than anything passing Des Sub piers.

With that in mind, we could be fairly certain that the evidence of our transgressions would remain undiscovered until two days after Judgment Day, when all E-3s will have their sins either forgiven or vacated for lack of DNA evidence.

According to Adrian Stuke, who was an expert on all things related to saltwater disposal, there were magical powers at work in the Ska-Loosh locker.

Stuke had a theory. After you pulled in and the boat was secured, the skipper cleared with the Squadron and returned to the boat. Shortly after his return, the COB would come on the 21MC,

"All hands... Section three has the duty... Liberty commencing for sections one and two."

This had the same effect as opening the front door deadbolt for freebie night at the local cathouse... Folks took off like they were shot out of a cannon.

"Section three will throw in a top-off charge on the batteries before turning in. Topside watch and below decks watches will assume normal relief assignments. I repeat, liberty commencing for sections one and two."

Once all the homeward-bound liberty hounds had answered the starting pistol, one of the animals would take a trip up to the pay phone at the head of the pier. He would place a call and within thirty minutes, two six packs of cold beer would arrive in a light blue '57 Chevy, to be retrieved by the duty guardmail runner in his big leather mail bag.

Once the charge was completed, those not hauling for the rack immediately would gather at the after capstan, down a couple of cold ones and deposit their cans in an old ratty laundry bag or GDU bag, equipped with the appropriate weight. When all the nocturnal communicants had partaken, all cans were deposited into the Ska-Loosh locker.

"Hey Stuke-man... What if they caught on to what we're pulling off and sent some diver down. Man, they would light us on fire for drinking aboard ship."

"Hell Dex, they wouldn't find anything. The *Goddess of the Main Induction* is in charge of the Ska-Loosh locker and she details a mermaid to catch that crap before it hits bottom and haul it over to the Destroyer Piers."

Made perfect sense to me.