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THE OLD DESTROYERMAN'S TRIVIA QUIZ

compiled by

Captain W.G. Carson, USN

(with help from a few other ancient mariners)

If you served in destroyers in the 1940s, 50s or 60s, you'll find that this quiz triggers long dormant memories. Many of the items were essential to the skills and training necessary to get through the daily business of the fleet, but haven't been used now in a decade or more. Even if you have never served in destroyers, you'll probably find things here that will tickle your memory if you are older, or amuse you if you are younger.

Some of the questions have more than one answer, and in general the more hoary the answer the higher the score. See the next page for the answers and to find out just how ancient a mariner you really are.

1. What order was given to the helm just prior to rolling a depth charge pattern?

2. What was a DM?

3. What was the publication number for the signal book before it became ATP-1 (Volume II)?

4. Why did DERs tend to cause confusion in exercises in coordinated antisubmarine warfare?

5. What was a speed key operator?

6. How many rounds were in a clip of 40mm ammunition?

7. What was the name of the plotting device used for close-in, repetitive attacks on a submarine by two destroyers that were using hedgehogs or depth charges?

8. What was TBS?

9. What were the rules of the road for an encounter between a ship and a waterborne seaplane?

10. What was Sniffer?

11. What was the mental crutch to remember the difference between Method Rum and Method Coke when reorienting a bent-line screen?

12. Of what use was a table of haver-sines?

13. What was Weapon Alfa?

14. What was a cruising turbine?

15. What were the Piano flags used for?

16. Why did "Pouncers Red" cause hearts to skip a beat?

17. What kind of ship was USS *Blackhawk*?

18. What type of craft used the "skimmer-scrapper" tactic?

19. What type of overhead was there on the bridge of your first destroyer?

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Answers to "The Old Destroyerman's Trivia Quiz"

1. "Rudder amidships!" to avoid damage to the steering gear. The spacing for the pattern was determined by the ship's speed and the drop interval. The order for a full pattern was, "Roll one, roll two, mark fire center, roll four, roll five!" (One point if you knew the rudder order, two if you knew the order for the pattern as well.)

2. A destroyer minelayer—essentially a destroyer with mine rails, but DMs were in mine squadrons rather than destroyer squadrons. There were also DMSs—destroyer minesweepers—of which the mythical USS *Caine* is the best known. (One point.)

3. ACP 175. It had a pebble-grained maroon cover. Before it was ACP 175, the signal book was CSP 734. (One point if you answered ACP 175, two points for CSP 734.)

4. Because DERs (radar picket escort destroyers) had the same type of diesel engines as submarines. DERs sounded like submarines snorkeling on passive sonar systems. (One point.)

5. A radioman who had been tested and certified as an operator competent in rapid CW (Morse code) communications using a special sending device. The number of speed key operators was a measure of the communications proficiency of a ship and was a source of pride for those ships that had several. (One point.)

6. 40mm ammunition came in clips of four rounds. Replacement of quad 40s with twin 3"/50s began late in WW II, but there were plenty of 40s around as late as the early 1960s. (Two points.)

7. The Gitmo Circle, a device used on the dead reckoning tracer in CIC for dual ship antisubmarine attacks. The Gitmo Circle, for example, told the attacking ship which way to turn after the attack according to the relative position of the other ship. The device was essential, but not always successful,

in keeping the ships from colliding. (One point.)

8. Many thought that TBS was any tactical voice radio circuit guarded on the bridge and that TBS stood for "Talk Between Ships." Actually, before the "AN" nomenclature was adopted by the Navy, transmitters were designated by "T" followed by one or two other letters. TBS was a common transmitter, but just one of a series. (Two points.)

9. In international waters, rules of the road applied to seaplanes just as to any other powered water craft. In inland waters (as in San Diego where ships and P5M Marlins met often) the rules were silent, although civil aeronautics regulations for seaplanes were the same as rules of the road for ships. In any event, the prudent mariner granted seaplanes considerable latitude. (One point.)

10. Sniffer (officially Exhaust Trail Indicator, or ETI) was an air-sampling device on S-2 Tracker antisubmarine airplanes. Sniffer could detect the products of combustion, hence give an indication that a submarine might have recently snorkeled in the vicinity. Sniffer's usefulness was limited by its false alarm rate. (One point.)

11. Method Rum was a "straight shot" to station. The three methods of reorienting a bent-line screen were Rum, Coke and Ginger. Method Rum was most rapid but also most dangerous since some ships were required to pass near the main body. Another mental crutch was "Rum run through, Coke chase tails." (One point for either.)

12. Haversines were used for reducing star sights by spherical trigonometry before the Work Projects Administration employed itinerant mathematicians to compile H.O. 214. (Two points.)

13. A trainable mount that threw a hedgehog-like projectile to some distance. On voice radio circuits, the code

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words for an impending attack with Weapon Alfa were, "Standby to Pinpoint!" (One point.)

14. An additional steam turbine that produced more efficiency but less flexibility of operation of the steam power plant. The cruising turbine was used when steaming at moderate, fairly constant speed, and had to be cut out of the system for maneuvering. Since commanding officers generally preferred flexibility to efficiency (oil was cheap then), cruising turbines were seldom used. (One point.)

15. Piano flags were alphabet flags used to govern signals before governing pennants came into use. Papa (Peter) was replaced by the Preparatory pennant, India (Item) was replaced by the Interrogative pennant, November (Nan) was replaced by the Negative pennant, and Alfa (Able) and Oscar (Oboe) were replaced by two-letter governing groups. (Two points.)

16. In Pouncers Blue, the pouncers (ships stationed between the screen and the main body) would reorient to the new axis of the bent-line screen after the rest of the screen had completed reorienting. In Pouncers Red, all screening ships including pouncers would reorient together. Reorienting bent-line screens was in itself a complicated business, and having pouncers milling around in the evolution seemed more

than a body should have to bear. (One point.)

17. USS *Blackhawk* was the China Station destroyer tender. (Two points. If China Station needs explaining, deduct one point.)

18. Two antisubmarine aircraft acting in consort. One would be at higher altitude searching (usually with radar). The other, at low altitude, would prosecute any contacts developed. (One point.)

19. If your answer was none, give yourself two points. If your answer was canvas, give yourself one point. If your answer was anything more substantial, you get no points. Captains thought that OODs who were comfortable were likely to be inattentive to duty.

Scoring

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 0 to 5 points. | Still wet behind the ears. |
| 6 to 10 points. | Salty seaman. |
| 11 to 15 points. | Old Sea dog. |
| 16 to 20 points. | Truly an ancient mariner. |
| 21 to 26 points. | Have you checked lately to see if you're still alive? |

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

Now on the staff of the Naval War College, Captain Carson began his extensive service in destroyers in 1963 in the *Colaban* (DD 658), one of the World War II *Fletcher* class.

