

MAKING MORNING COFFEE

After reporting aboard USS Ponchatoula right out of boot camp the E-2's were usually assigned menial jobs by more experienced sailors with more rank. At the time I reported aboard the Ponch I had not developed a taste for, or a dependency for coffee. Because I didn't drink coffee, I saw no reason I should be assigned the duty of making it for the ones who did drink it. It required the person assigned the "coffee duty" to get up about an hour earlier than everyone else.

The coffee pot was located on the aft side of the forward superstructure on the main deck. The closest place you could get water was down two ladders in a head below the forward superstructure. To make coffee (the way I was trained) required you to carry the huge coffee urn and two buckets that held about 4 or 5 gallons of water each to this head, wash them, and carry them back full of water. That required two trips down the ladders, and two trips up the ladders to carry everything. I think the duty lasted for a one week period.

OK, the first day I had the coffee duty I did it as I had been shown, and made two trips up and down those ladders. I'm sure the idea I had (to make things easier) was hatched during this ordeal of carrying everything down, and carrying every thing up the ladders two trips.

The plan required only one day out of seven (the first day) carrying everything up and down those ladders, and the rest of the assigned days of the week were much easier. I made sure the coffee urn was filled as far as possible with water just a fraction of an inch below the level of the bottom of the coffee basket. Then I added the recommended amount of coffee to the basket and plugged it in. I also made sure those two buckets were almost full of water. They were hung on the shelf in front of the urn and were used to rinse out the coffee cups. Then the cups were hung up on the wooden pegs on the bulkhead above the shelf for the coffee urn. Kind of like a dishwasher, but much more crude and Neanderthal.

The remainder of the week I got up early like I had been shown to do, but instead of all that up and down the ladders with water, buckets, and a coffee urn, it was much simpler. I added some water out of each bucket to the old leftover coffee in the urn (from yesterday), and added some fresh coffee on top of the old grounds still in the basket (also from yesterday). I plugged in the coffee urn and relaxed until the boatswains pipe broadcast over the 1MC woke up the rest of the crew.

I was a little worried the first couple of days thinking the coffee drinkers would start wondering "what the hell is this stuff?" I did it every week I had the coffee duty and no one ever complained. I guess the coffee wasn't too good to start with if no one even noticed!!

WRITTEN BY: ANONYMUS