

And so it began.....

It all started during my senior year in high school. A decision had to be made as to what I wanted to do after graduation. I was always interested in boating and the sea so I thought a career in this environment would be “fun”. During the process of evaluating different schools, my older sister mentioned the SUNY Maritime College. She had recently dated a senior there and he said it was a great school.....and not to let the military aspect of it scare me off. The place was “a piece of cake”very low key. My high school assistant principal, at the time, was also familiar with the school as he had trained there at the end of WW II and said it had a great academic program. So I applied and was accepted.

On September 4, 1962, I arrived with my parents, along with 228 other young lads. About an hour later, we were told to say our goodbyes, and our parents left. I was assigned to a group of other freshman (MUGs, as I would quickly learn) and was told that I was now a member of Section 4E3.....and don't forget it! We were marched over to the armory where we stood in long lines and received uniforms, underwear, pajamas, socks, shoes, sheets, pillow cases, towels, etc. and told to pack them all up and get ready to move out. Oh, yes, and we each received our own personal “name stamp”.

We headed over to the ship to be assigned our sleeping quarters(I was prepared to share a stateroom for two). Going down several decks, we wound up in one of the ship's holds which had a great number of steel frames hanging off chains with skinny mattresses on top. We were advised that this was where we would sleep for the next year. I began to wonder what I had gotten myself into. Was this college? Next we were assigned “a” locker, and then told to go into the hold next door, commonly referred to as the Mess Deck. There we had to take all our clothes and stamp each piece, at least once, with our name. Now I began to suspect that my sister's date, that senior, had pulled a fast one on me. But finally we were told to go to sleep.

At 5:30A.M. the next morning, I suddenly heard this loud whistle blowing and people screaming for all of us to get out of our “racks” and stand at attention. I looked at my watch and saw what time it was and rolled over. The next thing I knew was Frank Giaccio, one of the IDOs, was blowing his whistle in my ear and screaming at me to get up. Now I knew that this

was not going to be what I had expected. The rest of the two weeks was marching, yelling, inspections, shoe polishing, brace parties, marching, yelling, brace parties.....day and night.

And so it began.....a four-year experience that would change many of our lives. We came in as naïve teenagers and left, four years later, as mature, educated mariners willing to accept responsibility and capable of making intelligent decisions. And we were all employable.

Looking forward to once again sharing time and sea stories with the members of the Class of 1966,

Steve Sabo