I SPEAK RUSSIAN – Paul Fields GMG-3 did take a year of Russian in school never dreaming he would use his language in the Navy, let alone speaking to the crew of a Russian Intelligence trawler. In the Sea of Japan in 1964, FRANK KNOX was escorting a carrier, the BON HOMME RICHARD. The carrier was experiencing jamming signals from a shadowing Russian Intelligence trawler. An officer from the carrier fluent in Russian was transferred to the FRANK KNOX. FRANK KNOX was then detached from the carrier screen to intercept, stop, board the trawler and relay a message to STOP the jamming. The CO of the FRANK KNOX was Captain Orlin Putnam.

FRANK KNOX successfully stopped the Russian trawler. The boarding party including Fields, the Russian Speaking officer, and two other boarding party members approached and boarded the Russian ship. Using his best Russian, the carrier officer delivered the message to “stop jamming”. The exchange was best described as business-like over he jamming incident. Fields could catch some of the comments with his limited Russian. What did the trawler look like I asked Fields replied “Not much like a fishing boat. A lot of antennas and electronic equipment.” The Russian Trawler moved several 1000 yards distant but remained in the area.

The message delivered, the boarding party departed and Fields set aside his role as boarding party member and returned to his role as Gunners Mate Third Class.