

TRUMAN REID, QM2

This is from memory. Fifty-eight years is a long time. It is only as accurate as my memory.

On July 17 the USS Frank Knox, DDR-742 left the waters of Vietnam and went on course to Keelung, Taiwan. I was QM2 and leading Quartermaster and did all of the celestial navigation. Eddie Neugebauer QM2 did all of the LORAN navigation.

Weather conditions were calm but overcast. There was no visible horizon for most of the transit except for brief breaks in clouds between the hours of 1000 and 1300 on the 17th. The only assumed celestial position was acquired between those times. The position was approximately 20 miles North and West of our dead reckoning line. Captain Grkovic and the navigator reviewed the position and determined it could not be trusted. Currents in the South China Sea could have accounted for the difference but according to tide and current charts 20 miles is farther than one would have assumed. Because of the haziness of the horizon I was not certain of the position.

Neugebauer attempted to use LORAN to confirm our position. During my time on the Frank Knox, 1962 to September 1965 our LORAN equipment had been repaired no fewer than three times. Add that to the fact LORAN stations in the South China Sea could not be trusted. On one occasion two of the position lines obtained did not cross and the third could not be computed. We usually received radio communication indicating LORAN station outages. Radio indicated they had not receiving any communication on the status of LORAN stations.

We periodically took soundings using the Fathometer. However, we did not record every sounding. This was a grave mistake. If it is not recorded, it did not happen. This was my error.

I left the bridge at approximately 0030 hours on the morning of the 18th. Neugebauer agreed to relieve me. I do not know whether he left the mess deck and went to the bridge or not.

Nothing is more shocking than awakening on a ship that is not moving. Looking over the side all I saw was coral. The radar monitor located next to the chart table clearly showed Pratas Reef. The Officer of the Deck, or

Junior Officer of the Deck said he thought it was weather, a tidal wave or white squall. I suggest you purchase a copy of The Frankie Maru by Lionel Price, for further details on this part. Needless to say, tidal waves do not make breakers at sea. Only land causes breakers. As far as I know there has never been a white squall in the South China Sea.

I recall trying to get the ship off the reef using ship's power. The sonar dome was sheered and a piece of it was wedged into the coral acting like an anchor. The information in the book is accurate. The crew worked to free the ship. Some of the crew was transferred off the ship. For instance, the only time I saw Neugebauer again was in the enlisted men's club in Yokosuka, Japan in 1967.

The day of the grounding we received communication from the Chinese requesting we leave. I heard a Chinese diver came aboard and requested we leave, but I did not personally see him.

When the ammunition was being unloaded, I was told to stay in the area of the bridge. I delivered messages between the salvage team and onboard command.

Several days after the Styrofoam equipment was delivered there was a fire in the vicinity. The fire was quickly extinguished. Had it not been there may have been little chance the ship could have been salvaged.

The most miserable days were the days I was sent to the tender for a hot meal and shower. I was happy to return to the Knox.

I was transferred from the Knox about a week before she was refloated to attend deep sea diving school in Washington DC. I do not know why I was not called to testify at the inquest or hearings. Questions have lingered for almost 58 years.

What could I have done differently? Should the celestial position been plotted on the chart on the bridge and run alongside the dead reckoning track? Could I have made a stronger argument regarding the position? Should I have stayed on the bridge? Could we have taken more soundings? I believe I could have done a better job. One thing is certain. Captain Grkovic was not served as well as he should have been. Love him or hate him we still had a duty to him and our ship.

I encourage you to read the book. Mr. Price took his time to set the record straight. There are minor details we will all see differently. He did a good job.

Signed - Truman Reid
Richard Huehn, YN3 -