

Sea Story: USS Sand Lance (SSN 660)

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We were in port and tied up to the pier, when all of the sudden, there they were at the dinner table, a small group of “true” submariners and out of nowhere several miniature bottles of “spirits” showed up within our midst. At about the same time that the small containers were circulating around – out of nowhere the Captain appeared - who immediately made it clear that the possession of such items was not to be tolerated. For some reason, I was singled out and was advised to report to the ward room. There I was summarily dress down for having the goods in my possession. I quickly countered the direction that the discussion was headed and advised the Captain that I, in no way, had any part in that incident, since I had just moments before his arrival entered into the crews mess. After taking the time to “listen” to me the conversation began to take another turn. There was an apologetic tone coming from where a few seconds of scolding had commenced. I was twenty-three at the time, young, impressionable and somewhat intimidated by the whole incident. However, after things had settled down and I eventually had time to think about what happened and what almost happened. I began to realize that it took quite a lot for the Captain to recognize that I was not involved and then actually apologize for his error in associating me with the group in general. I was impressed and thankful that he took the time to be so congenial and understanding. I remembered that situation as clearly today as if it was yesterday and I respected that individual for his better judgment ever since that day. It took a real inner strength to adjust to the factual situation as it really was as opposed to reacting simply to general circumstances. Yes, Captain W. A. Kennington – it was you and I and I sincerely have wanted to share this incident for years – and now, I have finally had the chance to do so.

Thank you sir for your leadership and understanding – but most of all – thank you for your courage to be “The Captain”.