

21 April 68

Dear Harold,

I have your 18 April, & also have read your 16 April to Helen - thanks.

Sorry about this, but I just can't commit myself to doing the things you have asked. ~~###~~The reasons are pretty complicated & also boring, yet real. No, I don't have any pressure on me, which might be the first thing you might think. At least I don't know of any. (But ironically, the best & most sophisticated pressures are no doubt those in which the person doesn't suspect that anything is being done to him!)

About the ship-shore ham radio phone patches, the answer is one which just cannot be gotten from published information. When a radio ham moves his station to a ship, he is required to notify the FCC, Amateur Division, Wash DC 20554 of the fact. And there the fact is filed away. Another place the fact would be found would be in the radio log of the ham holding the station license - a log which he is required to maintain, and in which he must enter his geographical position, aside from details concerning what stations he contacted & when & etc. The only other places in which evidence of such "Maritime Mobile" operation would be found would be in the individual logbooks of the individual hams here & there who at one time or another made radio contact with the station in question.

Enclosed is a sheet from a 1966 commercially published list of US radio hams, the US hams at that time totalling some 275,000. Note how you simply don't get even to first base without knowing the man's call letters. While an alphabetical listing, by name, might exist in an FCC file in Washington, it wouldn't exist anywhere else. Another thing is that a ham installation on a merchant ship need not necessarily belong to the Radio Officer or to the Skipper. Any ham can operate from a ship at sea provided he has the correct grade of ham license and provided that the Skipper does not object.

Incidentally, for what it is worth, if you collect addresses: The union which represents radio operators sailing for LYKES is AMERICAN RADIO ASSOCIATION, AFL-CIO, 270 Madison, NY 10016. In fact, will enclose a sheet giving their various port addresses. No, this is not the same union I belong to.

I think you have pulled my chain on Shaneyfelt 23, at least Shaney 23B, re scope length vs rifle length. It is a sad but true & factual fact that people do often see just what they need to see. The printed 23B is a thing you can look at both ways, like an optical ~~###~~ illusion.

Probably I never will get to sorting out & classifying my own notes. However, will enclose a copy of all notes to date. And this will probably be the end of them. On second thought, will send it to New Orleans. Will enclose copy of letter of transmittal. ***

Some points in your letter I can't respond to until I see Helen to find out what you mean. But anyway, Helen will be able to answer for me.

Regards to the Good Wife, and I know she must be a Good one.

***On third thought, am enclosing it herewith.

Regards,


S Sorensen

cc: Helen

PS-

Your line to Helen, "Or any other way of finding out if he had the kind of radio that would have made such communication possible?" -

If there was special meaning to the question, well:

You mention daily contacts. On a moving ship going far offshore, this would imply ~~###~~ the use of H/F (high frequency) radiotelephone equipment. The reason for this is that in order to communicate regularly with a ship whose ~~##~~ ~~#####~~ distance is increasing by some 300 or 400 miles daily from some fixed station ashore, the radio operator simply must have the facility of using frequencies in the H/F spectrum - whether he be a ham opr or a comml opr. It has to do with facts of life, that is. There is no choice.

What I'm leading up to, hoping I'm not getting you question all wrong: If the ship's own radio station were to have been equipped for H/F radiotelephony, it would not have required much ~~ingenuity~~, ingenuity - to place it into service on the necessary amateur bands. It would be illegal as hell, of course, but any ham worth his salt could arrange it if he wanted to. As for whether or not the ship's own equipment ~~###~~ included H/F radiotelephony equipment, this would be a matter of published record & could be easily enough determined if it came down to that.

That's the answer, whether or not I got the whole question right.

Incidentally: A thing to know about using radiotelephony aboard ship, whether it be a ham using his rig on board, or the radio operator in his radio shack or the Skipper in his cabin - you name it - , whatever the case might be it is a practically ~~##~~ unescapable fact that whenever radiotelephony is used there will be 1 or 3 or 6 or 12 crewmembers listening in to it. This is not because everybody has somehow mysteriously been alerted to "tuhe in". Rather, it is because of their close proximity to the transmitter and the fact of their own radio receivers behaving in the very way they can be expected to behave when they are within some 50 or 100 feet of the transmitting antenna: The overloaded receiver will start making noises - and when the crewmember hears this (and knowing what to expect) he will start tuning around the dial in order to hear what he knows is taking place, a radio conversation by someone on board. And due to the usual receiver overloading, it is not too of#ten a problem to locate the "right place" on the dial: the overloaded receiver will have either several or dozens of places in which the local transmission can be tuned in. All anyone needs is the first clue, the hint of a disturbance, and in some few seconds of fiddling he is tuned in to it.

This, in fact, is a condition which has been deplored, hated, by every sailing Skipper since recent times when sailors have gotten rich enough to buy themselves personal radio receivers to bring on board. Wish I had a nickel for every time I ~~##~~ placed a radiophone call for a Skipper, hearing him say less than what I knew must have been on his mind - doing so because of his knowing that "everybody on board must be listening".

The significance of the last two paras is that in a knock-down-drag-out, should anything come to that, there ought to have been crewmembers on the ship who would have been aware of any daily, or frequent, radiotelephoning. Having spent a good part of my life sailing as a commercial radio operator, I simply cannot believe otherwise.

Crew lists from all ships leaving offshore from USA ports are maintained in permanent file by the USCG.

Nuts. After 4 years it is hard for me to believe that all such things as this aren't already thoroughly well known. Anyway, I'm leaving the scene.

Farewell, Y'all...

Steffen