

Things in Motion ...

All things are in motion and nothing is at rest...you cannot go into the same (river) twice. --Heraclitus (540?-480?)B.C.

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GRADUATION GOOF UP

GRADUATION exercises for my class were scheduled for Monday at the Navy's School of Justice in Newport, RI—and the traditional party for the students and faculty was to be held on Sunday evening before the big day. Wouldn't you know it? I drew duty on that entire weekend and could not attend the party. I was eager to head back to Ellyson Field in Pensacola, so I managed to shake off the disappointment, although I did suspect Chief Wozniak of arranging the Watch List to favor his cronies. I knew that he was aware of the cartoons I had drawn in my copy of The Uniform Code of Military Justice (as well as those of some classmates) which depicted the grizzled old salt as we all viewed him—a sort of paunchy Popeye. Our barracks were quiet by the time I turned in on Sunday night—everyone not on duty was at the graduation party.

We were just settled in our classroom for final instructions on Monday morning when the School's Executive Officer marched in, rapped the desk for attention and in a harsh voice that brooked no questions, demanded that each student deposit the sum of eighty-three cents in the hat that was passed around.

After the required money was collected, he paused long enough to state that the money was to buy the Captain a new hat and gloves. I was confused, having heard nothing about plans for the class to give a new hat and gloves to the commanding officer, but we all liked our leader, so I contributed willingly.

In the next hour, we marched to the auditorium for our graduation exercises and as we settled in our assigned seats, I heard what had happened. Before the graduation party ended, two rascals from one of the tin cans (Destroyers) in the far east decided it would be a good idea to toss the Captain's hat in the drink—and proceeded to do just that, without removing the gloves that were stored in the hat. They then left the party and finished their celebrating in the Skoal Room of the Viking Hotel in Newport.

When the Captain's hat and gloves turned up missing, there was little doubt about what had happened, and because the Captain had only one hat, it was imperative that it be replaced immediately so he could report for duty on Monday. Like a well-oiled machine, the staff went into action, and by the time we assembled for graduation, our commanding officer was present. We sailed smoothly thru the ceremony, then marched back to the school and assembled for the last time. The Captain made a short speech which did not include any reference to the loss of his hat. His final comment, preceded by a salute, was “Gentlemen, I take off my hat to you.” With that, he doffed his new hat and we cheered loudly as he left the formation. #



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