

TRUE SEA STORY

Byron Franklin QMCM (SS) RET.

The power of a QM

One of my sea stories is my first time on the Intrepid. I was relieving the leading (senior) QMCS Quartermaster. My first time under way on her is the base of the story. Once Intrepid was away from the pier and the first round of bearings were plotted, I saw a triangle on the chart. I was standing next to the Navigator and peeked over the shoulder of the of the Quartermaster plotter. The next plot was drawn on the chart; once again, I look over the Quartermaster's shoulder and saw the same shaped and size triangle. (Never touching the chart.) The Intrepid was steaming at about 15 KTS.

Fixes were coming in every three minutes; I looked again at the same size triangle, and said, to the Navigator "You have a 1.5 east error, recommend you add 1.5 degrees to the next incoming bearings."

The Navigators said to the QMS add 1.5 to the next round. The next and all later fixes were pin points.

We continued out and back the 1.5 correction gave pin point fixes until along side pier. I went home.

The next day when I came aboard the Captain wanted to see me right away. I reported to the Captains in his cabin where I was surrounded by the Captain, Navigator, Engineering Officer and the senior Quartermaster.

I was asked how I determined the gyro error. After all what I did was unbelievable. Or was it?

I told them that I just looked at their plot and saw it. The error proof is in the correction and pin point fixes.

The Captain turned to the Engineering Office and asks, if he could correct the gyro the Engineer ask the Quartermaster what the error is in the azimuth log? The Quartermaster's reply, 0.pt 0. The Enginee recommended to the Captain he should not touch the gyro it had just been aligned in the Philadelphia Yards the Captain looked at me and said, we are scheduled to go to GTMO for the exercises and that it requires a Zero gyro error. Can I handle the gyro error? My answer was no problem; if I can just look at the charted error I can handle it. AT GTMO navigation got outstanding! After the exercises, we ran the FORAC Range. The range reported to Intrepid a 1 pt. 65 east error. This was not the first time for me to find a major ship with a large gyro error.

From experience I suspected that the Yard alignment was based on the Azimuth circle. I took the circle to a tender where they confirmed the circle in error. The azimuth circle is a delicate instrument that needs to be perfectly level even then it throws a wide beam of light about point three degrees (0.3) wide at it best, if the sun is high add more error. If the mirror is not perfect in alignment add even more error.

In deep water far at sea it must be used because there is no other compass check for most ships.

Whenever NAVAIDS are present, a much better, easier accurate way is to use the Franklin technique especially in the yard for alignment overhaul.

A bearing circle is level with the horizon and is of sturdy construction for accurate cross bearings and compass correction, besides it is the same instrument that you will use in restricted water for that needed accurate fix.

I suspect that the engineer's Bible says that an azimuth is to be the reference to align the gyro, but you, be smart and run a check with the NAVAIDS and Franklin Piloting Technique and save everyone a lot of problems, time and money. I did nothing unbelievable, you can do it too, learn my technique. You may have to touch the chart and drafting machine, but you can correct that error, and stay ahead of the gyro,.