

I Remember LCDR Marcel B. Humber, USN

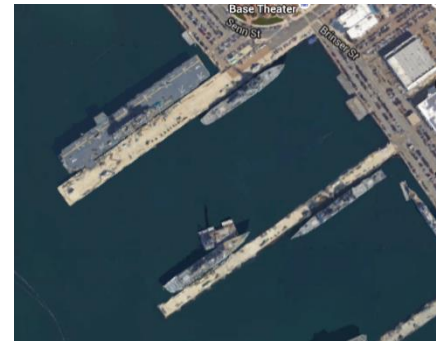


USS Shields DD-596 was my first real duty station; my first choice coming out of Supply Corps School in 1964. LCDR Marcel B. Humber was the Executive Officer. I have such memories of him, some scary, some amusing and some that left me in awe.

He was the most senior officer I had ever spoken to and a bit intimidating at first although I'm sure he would not have shared that observation. But he was our XO and as such the crew loved to tell stories about his trials and tribulations. Like the day a very young reservist was on the bridge and turned to the XO and said, "I think I'm going to be sick..." and he was, all over the XO. Or the day the XO was sunning himself in the Captain's chair with his feet up on the wing of the bridge when a rogue wave dumped green water on the bridge soaking him from head to foot. The crew loved every minute of it!

He also did not drink coffee like the rest of us but preferred tea. To this day I emulate him as he would dunk his tea bag, scoop it up with his spoon, and wrap the string around the spoon to squeeze out the last drops. He did everything at a detail level even down to the model railroad bridge he built in off hours that looked so real.

But one day stands out above all the rest. We were coming back home to the San Diego Naval Station but our assigned slot against the quay wall south of pier 6 was taken. As I remember we were ordered to tie up against the quay wall between piers 2 and 3. There were large ships tied up to both piers 2 and 3 with a narrow slot leading down to the quay wall which, of course, was perpendicular to the piers.



The XO had the conn and came smartly down the main channel. He spun the ship on a dime and headed down the slot. At the end he pointed the bow into the North corner and spun the stern around and gently kissed the quay wall with the starboard side of Shields. Lines over, tied up, done. You hear and read about how this is done. But when you experience it firsthand it is nothing short of amazing. His confidence in the crew, the ship and himself was on full display. Bravo Zulu LCDR Marcel B. Humber, United States Navy.

Do you have someone you remember? A shipmate, a parent, a grandparent that served onboard Shields? If you would like to post their story to our "I REMEMBER" wall, please forward your story and pictures to our webmaster at larry@jlsystems.com or contact him for mailing instructions. It is a wonderful, perpetual remembrance of the men who walked the steel decks of that great ship.