



seabags!

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barracks officer

History tells us that Cleopatra had her Antony and Delilah had her Samson. We, too, were not alone! We had our SEABAGS. Night and day, we were the ones. Seabags to the right of us, seabags to the left of us — a never ending torrent of onrushing canvas, which threatened to inundate us on our Island bastion. Although they were the bane of our existences, nevertheless, they contributed greatly to the humorous side of our endeavour.

I remember quite clearly our jovial and persuasive seabag-master-inspector-in-chief, Harry Marks, BM1c, on the red-hottest day in July, lecturing a group of "old salts" on the whys and wherefores of just why they had to have every woolen underwear in the old seabag in order to pass inspection preceding transfer to California and thence to steaming New Guinea. "But, Boats," came the protest, "Dis stuff for the Pacific? Are you nuts?" "It's regulations," says Harry. "Sounds like 'chicken' to me," says Guns in the rear rank. But argue as they might, no long underwear meant no liberty — so it was long underwear, by hook or crook.

Then there was the "great circle" angle in the seabag field. It worked this way: If you had no full seabag you could not go ashore on liberty. Neither could you be transferred. Here's where the fun began. Upon the arrival of new men, the Quartermaster, after checking in each man, would order them to muster with "Red" Hoffman, BM1c, or "Chuck" Aragon, BM1c, or Dick Judge, Cox. Then came the eternal question and answer game: "Where's your gear?" . . . "I left it on the ship at Bikini. Haven't seen it in four months. They said they'd send it." . . . "You have to have a full seabag—buy one." . . . "I haven't got the money." . . . "Well, then, we'll check it against your pay account!"

But what good would that do? Jimmy hadn't seen a thin dime for the past six months — all his pay was being checked to pay off those two fines he had outstanding

because of his last two "Summaries". So there's Jimmy with no clothes, no liberty, no transfer (maybe he wants it that way) and in everybody's hair generally.

Let us explore another function of the seabag — that of procuring liberty and freedom from the "Rock" when all other plans, artifices and schemes had failed. "Get wise, fellows! Don't report in with your seabag, because if you do, you'll have to stay aboard that night inasmuch as the liberty lists have already been prepared. Leave your seabag on the other side, report in, see the fourth assistant junior O.D. and he'll give you permission to go over and get it. It's no trouble at all, and he won't mind if you get him out of his sack at 0400 for an extension of your liberty until 0800 (or even 0900)." However, the proponents of this scheme were usually duly crushed by the appearance of some benevolent "P.D." who was just too pleased to go over and get the seabags and bring them back on a truck. But every problem has a solution and this one was countered by leaving the seabag in some inaccessible place where only the owner could obtain it.

Last, but not least, was the inevitable seabag inspection on the north seawall. Of course, we usually had rain and at the opportune moment—after all seabags were opened and all gear had been neatly placed in formal arrangement. Furthermore, it always seemed that everyone had to endure this inspection immediately following previous inspections on his last ship or station, so that his uniforms were practically threadbare from being removed from and replaced in his seabag — to say nothing of his physical well being and disposition. Anyone who has carried one of these backbreakers during July or August knows what I mean. And then to have to open it up again! Brother, that's strictly for the birds!

But, seabags notwithstanding, we all lived through it and, I assume, are none the worse for our experiences. Would anyone suggest a wardrobe trunk as the solution?