

Olden Times Upon the USS TULLIBEE - SSN597

By Pete Savage '63



USS TULLIBEE - SSN597 was in dry dock at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard for refueling and retrofits under the SUBSAFE Program established after the loss of THRESHER. It was a very long dry dock period.

Jerry Jordan was the Supply Officer. I was the Communications Officer. We were both nuc trained and stood watch in-hull during refueling. Jerry got "emergency orders" one day to report to a sub in Hawaii, and I relieved him as Supply Officer. Jerry was a very conscientious guy with an exceptionally well organized five drawer file cabinet filled with detailed documents of every aspect of the Supply Department. But more about that later...

Because Jerry left TULLIBEE immediately, there was no time for a handover of the Supply Department. Thankfully, Jerry had a very competent Supply Petty Officer reporting to him named Troxell.

Shortly after Jerry left, Troxell asked me if he could order a few Igloo Coolers that would be placed in hull and at the gangways to keep drinks for the crew who were on watch at the gangways and in hull. He said he'd like to order five! I signed the requisition.

Now remember, this was back in the OLDEN days, before computers and tablets and smart phones. When something was ordered, Troxell would fill out an IBM card requisition by hand, and take it to the Shipyard Supply Department, which would then order the requisitioned material.

When Troxell filled out the requisition for the Igloo Coolers, he wrote "5" in the "quantity" field.

A few days went by and 3 or 4 Igloo Coolers were delivered to the barge where our offices and bunking spaces were. A few days later several more Igloo Coolers showed up. We were busy with the overhaul and refueling and didn't pay much attention. A few days later I received a call from the Shipyard Supply Department saying they had a freight car of material for TULLIBEE. I asked them to send it down to the siding alongside the dry dock as it certainly was overhaul material.

When we opened the door of the freight car we found IGLOO COOLERS!!!! An entire railroad freight car filled with IGLOO COOLERS!

How did that happen?

Troxell wrote "5" in the "quantity" block of the IBM card requisition. His "5" was dutifully keypunched by the Shipyard Supply Department in the left hand digit of the "quantity" block. The computer then filled in the remaining four digits of the "quantity" block with zeroes, thereby entering a requisition for 50,000 Igloo Coolers for USS TULLIBEE!!!

As we unraveled what happened, we learned the "computer" had issued shipping orders for Igloo Coolers to TULLIBEE from all over the United States. And because the Federal Supply System didn't have 50,000 coolers on hand in warehouses, the "computer" had issued a contract to Igloo to produce more coolers!

Now... about that five drawer file cabinet filled with meticulous files!

Running both Communications and Supply, and standing Engine Room watches didn't leave me much time to go through those five drawers.

We had an annual Supply Inspection conducted by SUBLANT and didn't need anything in those five drawers. Because Jerry Jordan and Troxell had done such a great job of organizing and running the Supply department on board, we finished the inspection with flying colors!

When we moved back on board TULLIBEE, there was no room for the five drawers of files. Reasoning that we got high marks on the inspection without ever touching those files, Troxell and I dumped them all!