

USS Somers Grounding (Pearl Harbor)



I was just going over some old pictures my wife had put away many years ago and came across this picture. I thought I had lost it. Glad I didn't.

Immediately after CDR Harry J. Hanson took command of Somers relieving CDR Papst we were in Pearl Harbor and, if I remember right, just out of drydock (Only a day or two). We were ordered to stand by to on load munitions off of Ford Island. Unknown to CDR Hanson (and anyone else on board) the position we were ordered to take and the time we were ordered to do so was completely out of order. First, there was the matter of the sandbar which was in very close proximity. Second at the time we were ordered to be at that location the tide was shifting, making it impossible to hold station.

USS Somers Grounding (Pearl Harbor)

Any way, we ran aground. I remember being in the forward engine room when it happened. As E Div. LPO I was in charge of all my spaces so I immediately climbed the ladder to the main deck and started aft. As I went I started running into my electricians and I sent each to a number of our spaces which were subject to flooding. I was making my way to after-steering to check that space myself. When I arrived both chief Fairbanks and Fred Diech were already there. I gave my report on what I had done and they informed me that as best anyone could tell we had not hold the ship. In a very short period of time I started getting reports from the men I had sent to check spaces that all was well.

We (Somers) immediately went back to the pier and divers were put over the side. They confirmed the damage to the screw. I think this picture was taken the next day. It is obvious, we bent the screw (just a little). I took this picture on the sly because I had an idea it was considered to be in the "Secret" department. This was confirmed when an officer (I don't remember who) questioned me about it and told me this picture was classified. I told him that I carried a Top Secret and I thought it would be alright. Ok, I know, I was desperate for any dumb excuse I could find. Anyway, he didn't confiscate the camera and I'm glad he didn't. I was planning to make a bunch of copies and give them to the guys but I never seemed to find the time.

So now the whole crew who wish to have a copy can just download it.

Maybe some of the others can add to this story and or make corrections. My memory isn't so good these days so chances are I am not correct in all my details.

Walt Parham

A few other memories have come around now that the picture jogged my memory. If I remember right we had a heck of a time getting off that sandbar, I think it took four tugs to get us off and quite a bit of time.