

The night I almost sank the LCVP:

We were anchored pretty far out from fleet landing in Athens Greece. We were using one of the LCVP's as a liberty launch. The run from ship to shore took about ninety minutes. As engineer of the boat, it was my job to watch gauges and listen to the diesel engine to make sure it was operating properly. Keeping a check on the bilge pump to make sure the boat didn't sink was also part of my duty. Checking the bilges amounted to pulling a deck plate and shining a flash light to see if they were dry. Oh yeah and making sure no drunk sailors fell over board.

It was midnight and our last run. I checked the bilges they were dry. The dregs of Cinderella liberty began to come on board. You could smell the booze mixed in with aqua velva as they stepped up on the stern sheet and tumbled into the well deck. There is no type of seating on this craft so you either stand or sit on the deck. Sitting on the deck is hell on white uniforms so most the whole lot stood leaning on each other for balance. There was about twenty five men in all.

The lights of our ship came into view and our coxswain made a wide sweeping turn to port to bring our starboard alongside the hanging gangway. The boat rolled way over to starboard and came back very slow to even keel. I heard shouts from the well deck "hey we're getting wet down here" I shined the light down there was about a foot of water in the well deck, not good, that meant there was about three feet in the boat. We limped next to the ship and the now completely sober group of soggy seaman shoes squeaking began to disembark and scramble up the gangway.

I yelled up to the officer of the deck that we were taking on water and would he please drop the boat davit. Once we got the boat hooked up we discovered that the boat was so heavy that the hoist would no lift it. We had to get a P-250 (portable pump) to pump enough water off to hoist it out of the water.

From the time that the flooding was discovered the only things on my mind was getting my shipmates to safety and that I would get a Court Marshall out of this. Oh well such is the life of a sailor your St. Thomas one day and dumb ass tommy the next.

It was discovered that a plug had vibrated out of the pump and instead of pumping water out it was pumping it in. Who ever did maintenance on the pump had failed to use lock tight on the threaded plug. Not knowing who had performed PM, in true military tradition all three men who worked on that boat were placed on restriction. No liberty for two weeks. We stared replenishment at sea the next day, so would be at sea for three weeks anyway so go figure.