Ropeyarn Sunday “Sea Stories” and Open Trackbacks

Description

This post is placed to help showcase the writings (or rantings) of other bloggers. Please trackback your work!

When I first met him, he was GSE1(SW) Denny Rohr, the leading Gas Turbine (Electrical) petty officer for the Engineering Department of the USS CONOLLY (DD-979). When I arrived aboard in Sept 83, he had been on the ship for several years. During my tenure as Engineer Officer, he passed the test and was selected for and promoted to the rating of GSEC.

Denny was a methodical person and taught me this: “There are no gremlins. If you ever admit that there are gremlins, then you will have them.” However twisted that sounds, his point was nothing was an accident and everything could be explained, even the most transient event observed in the complexities of the gas turbine powered engineering plant. He was right.

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When a problem appeared, the first stop for Denny were his several 3.5? binders know as “Denny’s Brain Books.” His methodology was to record the symptoms and corrective actions for every significant problem/casualty. BY the time I arrived aboard, Denny had amassed quite a collection of solutions, so “issues” were routinely handled in minutes, or hours, not days, as I had been used to in my other shipboard tours. One day, though, a real thinking problem came along.

It was after the complex overhaul in Bath Iron Work from February to November 84. Enroute GTMO for refresher training, the Propulsion Auxillary Control Console (PACC) operator would be scanning his board and note that the clutch/brake for an offline engine in the after engineroom would be on, not a normal condition while we were steaming. Usually, with the shaft not powered, it was still “windmilling” as the other shaft had power. The PACC Operator would report this to the Engineering Officer of the Watch (EOOW), who usually scratched his head, because he hadn’t ordered it. A call would go to the on watch team in Main Engineroom #2 (MER2), asking if they had applied the brake. In fact, while the PACC in the Center Control Station (CCS) had control, the controls of the Propulsion Local Control Console (PLCC)s in the MERs were disabled, so, short of the watch below taking control back via a deliberate action at the PLCC, they could push all the buttons they wanted and nothing would happen.

So…the mystery of the self operating clutch brake began as described above…

The Main Propulsion Assistant, GSCS(SW) “JC” Weigman and GSMC(SW) Graham, along with GSEC(SW) Rohr, put their heads together. Since it displayed itself as a signal problem, Denny had the lead, so he looked through his books and came up with nada.

Into the troubleshooting guides he and GSE2 Walter Hook went. They worked with GSM2 Shipley, the MER2 Supervisor, and a few other GSMs. They pulled cards and ran diagnostics between running casualty control drills enroute and also in GTMO. The problem was an annoyance more than anything, and only happened when the outboard engine was offline. Some isolation had occurred.

This drug on for weeks, with many of the engineering department participating in discussions on what could case this. The “E Division” the electricians and interior communications petty officers looked over the details, as I recall.

Finally, after looking over just about every component of the PACC and the MER2 PLCC physically, electrically and electronically, all of the work being performed between the other major exercises and drills, Denny and Walter began hand over handing the cable runs between the PACC and the PLCC.

This is where they found the problem. On a 72 conductor cable, at the watertight bulkhead penetration between MER2 and Auxillary #2 (AUX2), they found a rectangular cut that penetrated the insulation of the cable. During overhaul, a new cable had been run from AUX2 to MER2, and the rubber blocks that make the bulkhead penetration watertight has to be squeezed back in place. some impatient BIW worker obviously used a flathead screw driver to convince at least one block to get in there, and he stabbed a hole in the cable in question.

Armed with this knowledge, Denny and Walt then unplugged the two cable ends and set up a signal generator to troubleshoot the problem. what they found was the cut had severed two internal wires, and pushed them into a thrid, which also had to have had it’s insulation damaged. The net result was when a signal went down the uncut, but damaged wire, it also then was sent down the two others. It turned out the first control signal was identical in voltage as the singal that would have been sent to command the clutch/brake on. Now it all made sense. There were two spare wires in the cable, so they moved the end connectors for the damaged ones to the free wires. Problem solved!

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This process took three weeks, but it was a great lesson in understanding there are no gremlins….

Bonus: If you’re a GSE, I found a bulletin board here about GSE community issues and a “Plank Owner’s” site for GSs…

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