

It was my first Mid Watch aboard ship. (From Mid Night till four). I was the engine room messenger watch, which meant hourly, I had to write down readings on everything that moved. I had been on a work detail the night before so I had been without sleep for twenty four hours. I was so glad when I was relieved so I could hit my rack. Mid Watch was allowed to sleep in an extra two hours after reveille. I looked forward to at least four hours sleep.

I had just drifted off when the guy that relieved me shook my rack and said the Chief Engineer wanted me back in the engine room. My feet barley hit the deck plates when CWO Goodson began to chew on my arse. In my haste to exit the engine room I had failed to have fresh coffee for the on coming watch. You would think it was an unpardonable sin, the way he yelled at me. I had to make coffee for this watch and he made me relieve the messenger for the four till eight watch. He yelled "I want two pots of strong coffee when I come on watch".

The next night Mid Watch I was determined to get even. We had the old silex type coffee makers, you know the one, you put fresh coffee grounds in a funnel like contraption and when the water boils the hot water flows up into the grounds then filters down into the pot. I collected the used coffee grounds from the previous watch and put them in a pot on a burner to boil when they cooked down I added fresh grounds and kept cooking. It turned into a thick brown goo.

About thirty minutes before my watch was over I filtered the grounds out of the glue and cut it half and half with water. I put fresh grounds in the silex and proceeded to make coffee the normal way. When Goodson reported for his watch, I met him with a hot cup of coffee, a snappy salute and a smile.

I went to my rack after a shower and waited for my summons back to the engine room. It never came. After quarters that morning Goodson stopped me on my way aft and I thought here it comes. He winked and said "Best damn coffee since Shanghi 47"

Tom Plane