

It was a Hot and Humid evening, Malta Mid September 1968 with a chance of rain, Something rare for Malta and here I was once again on Shore Patrol.

We were running port and starboard watches so I was up all night on Shore Patrol and not getting back to the ship until after Mid Rats had already secured. If you were lucky you may had the opportunity to get something at Early chow, if it was ready before we had to report to the quarterdeck and fleet landing by 1545 hrs. This made for long and hungry night.

This Evening we had noted four (4) LST's /LSD's in the harbor with a bunch of Marines aboard. They were just returning from operations in Turkey and the scuttlebutt was that they had returned from Nam and were promised state side duty, but were dispatched to the Med after 2 months of duty stateside, just barely covering their R & R and leave. To say they were upset is an understatement. I got this from the Marine I was buddies up with for Shore Patrol, (Jenkins) that evening. We had normally been assigned to the GUT which is 3 blocks of Bars and related businesses 2 short blocks off the main drag or promenade. Called Kings-Way at the time. This evening we were assigned the Palace and Bus terminal which was at the head of Kings Way.

In the evening the local Maltese came into town by Bus to meet friends and attend some of the nice open cafes and pubs that were along the promenade of Kings-Way. Sailors and Marines were not welcome here, plus you found none of the Maltese would talk to you. (See page 5 top left photo for one of the sidewalk Café).

The GUT being only a short block or two away from the promenade that was a popular hang out for mostly Sailors and Marines of all Nations. The only other place to get a cheap drink was RAF Base $\frac{3}{4}$ the way across the island by Bus.

NOW THE REST OF THE STORY.....The problem started earlier that day aboard a cargo vessel of the Moss Hutchinson line, the Karnak. She was a small Merchant Marine just over 6000 tons British registered and based in [Liverpool UK](#).



The Karnak..

The Karnak was due to leave early the following day and a young Merchant Marine Mr. Terry Shepherd who had been aboard for over two years pleaded with the First Mate to grant him shore leave. This was not normal procedure when a ship is preparing to leave the next day. Terry told the first mate he wanted to buy a belt for his brother and knew a leather shop.

The Leave was granted and Terry went on the Beach and purchased a very fine leather belt in one of the local shops in Valetta just off of Kings-Way, but being only 17 and not wanting to go back to the ship just yet he went for a drink in a local pub that was near the leather shop. The Leather Shop was about 100 yards from the Gut. While over at the Main Street Pub Terry was approached by a local Maltese young man who heard by his accent Terry was English and from his dress a Merchant Marine Sailor. The young man asked Terry what he thought of Malta. Terry told him it was a nice island.

The Conversation continued with the Maltese praising Malta so much it got boring as it was the normal political stuff one heard at this time. When he came to the part where he said Malta would be much richer without the British. Terry asked how? His reply was that the British had stolen Malta's wealth. Terry said that he did not realize just how wealthy Britain was when a city like Birmingham (UK.) had a greater income than all of Malta. With that he punched Terry knocking him to the ground and jumped on him and started punching him in the face. Terry managed to turn him and gave him one punch when the fight was broken up by two huge Shore Patrols "SP's" who had heard the commotion and came into the pub. This was not their normal patrol area, but as there were a lot of US Marines on the Beach they were covering a larger area that night. This had been fortunate for Terry. The SP understood that they had no real authority over two Civilians and could only break up the fight.

Terry told them he was heading down to the Gut for a drink, to console his pride. The Maltese youth was busy wiping his lip. Terry was off to the Gut (The Next Block Over) The Shore Patrol told the Maltese to go in the opposite direction.



That is how Terry ended up drinking in that pub in the Gut .

The Riot started in the pub with the big Red Barrel sign outside (The Gut is approximately three blocks long. The Street slopes down hill with the Pub in question in the second block right hand side) The Young Maltese had gathered all his friends and went looking for Terry.

They found him at the Red Barrel. The gang of Maltese tried to get in and attack the Eng-

lish Merchant Marine sailor, but as they went for him they pushed passed a lot of American Marines but in such a way as to disturb their quiet drinking. (Remember these guys were a bit upset and primed for a fight) The Marines saw the plight of the English Merchant Marine and saw him as brother in Arms. As the Maltese approached Terry the Marines went to protect him and this caused the Marines in the front to retaliate for being pushed about. A full scale fight broke out. Terry advised that Knives were used, but I saw no knives that night and nether did any of the Everglades Shore Patrol.

The Maltese were armed with clubs. Terry was ordered by one of the Marines to get the Hell out of there and he left by the back door, but it led only to short alley that led to an exit back on the Gut. Soon as he ran into the Gut he was spotted and chased by some Maltese, but they were detained by more Marines and sailors who fought with the Maltese who were carrying clubs and chasing him.

Let's Not Forget Jenkins and I were still up at the head of the Plaza, unaware of what was going to happen.

As I thought even before Terry's Email to me that the Riot was a product of unhappy Marines mixed in with bunch of Sailors is a perfect recipe for a brawl if I have ever seen one. Jenkins and I immediately figured out what was happening. No Rocket science needed here once Jenkins advised me they had problems both in Turkey and Greece, thus the additional Shore Patrol. The crowd immediately evacuated the street as the fighting and fleeing sailors and some smart Marines got the hell out of there, passed us on the way downhill to the fleet landing, leaving us at the top of the street. We became Siamese twins joined at the back; never moving without the other guarding each others back. We got a large number of guys out of there and found ourself the target of angry crowd throwing rocks.

Let me tell you about Rocks being thrown at night. You generally can see who threw the rock and its general direction but then it rises above the street lights you can not see anything but you know it is on a ballistic trajectory coming at you and have a split second before it hits you. I broke my night stick that night fending off rocks like you would with a Hot fast ball. A night stick is a poor substitute for a bat at best, but you use what you have. (I may note they did not issue us night sticks the next day, you can guess why).

We retreated back up the street just in time to see the last Shore Patrol jeep pass us with 6 sailors in whites, now red with blood and the jeep was beaten to hell with rocks busting the front windshield and headlights.

Once we reached the head of the street and the bus station circle we milled around smartly standing our ground, but we just became good targets for rock snipers.

Damn rocks once they hit the ground would disintegrate, nothing to throw back, unless it hit one of your buddies and then it had blood all over it.

Not really sure where all these rocks came from. Normally the streets are neat and tidy. I believed they were stocked piled by the civilian discontents that were hoping for just this type of incident.





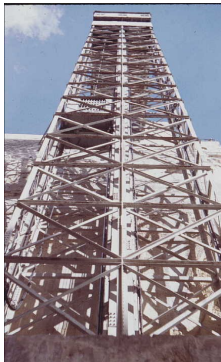
Malta was trying to break free from British influence and become an independent country not a British protectorate. They had large Communist party that was stirring up trouble at the time, I believe the High political pressure contributed to the Local Maltese frustrations and having foreign military in you back yard so to speak did not help.

Finally a British Lorie (Big Duce & Half) stopped in the Traffic circuit and the chief yelled for all of us to get the hell out of there. We did.

As I told the Admiral who interviewed all the shore patrol the next day, I was not running away from the problem but when the chief told us all to get the Hell (F\$%&) out of there I passed a lot of people that were.

I cleared the truck bed in one jump and turned around and helped my fellow shipmates on board with Jenkins at my side.

Terry mean while have gone by back streets to the docks but found himself on the wrong side of the harbor. He was afraid of walking around as hell had broken out behind him. Sitting on the harbor edge he decided to swim to his ship but waited while a Liberty boat dropped off a load of SP's who quickly went to sort out the mess. The Liberty boat Petty officer called to Terry and asked him what he was doing. (The Bum Boats or water Taxes that normally ferried personnel (both Civilian & Military) to and from ships had been suspended because of the Riot that was going on.



The Lift was not a Good escape option for Terry, it would have been staked out, and they would have been waiting for him there.

Terry replied to the Liberty Boat Cookson that he needed to get back to his ship and would swim to his ship and pointed it out. The Liberty boat Petty officer said he would take him as it was only a short way and he would probably drown as it was dark. However, half way across the Liberty boat got called back to a ship to pick up some more SP's. Terry made himself small under the officer's awning and hardly breathed while they were picked up and dropped off at the fleet landing.

The Liberty boat then took him to his ship where he climbed up the pilot's ladder thus escaping the watch on the gangplank. Next day the police wanted to interview the English merchant marine as someone had allegedly been killed and this sailor may have started the whole riot. Being underage the Captain of his ship forbade it. Terry's ship set sail soon after. He never had a chance to thank those Marines and Liberty boat Petty Officer who had saved his life. For it was very very nasty that night.

Later that evening after a wild ride down the hill Jenkins and I were at the fleet landing I never saw Jenkins again but did note out of the 9 shore patrol from our ship myself and one other Everglades sailor was **not** bandaged up (He was on duty in another town). I can contribute this to good luck, quick reflexes and Jenkins watching my back. You could say the buddy system really works.

Terry Shepherd was that Merchant Marine sailor and left the merchant Navy immediately upon his return to the UK.

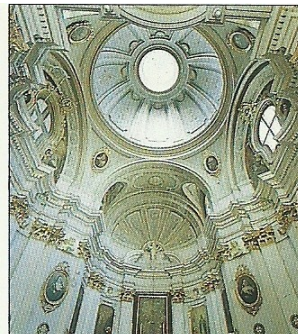
Comment from Terry: When the Maltese youth and a huge contingent of Maltese came looking for me. I do not know why he hit me, - what I said must have some how been a grave insult!

I left the Merchant Navy because of this when our ship arrived back in the UK in January. I do not quite know how but I believe I was responsible for the riot and as my captain informed me someone was killed in this riot. It was a nightmare for me. One other point while in the pub in the Gut just as things were getting nasty with the Maltese coming for me I felt I was about to fight for my life. The American Marine's who were combat trained saw my plight and pushed me to the back door telling me to leave - which I did. In leaving I noticed the whole of Valletta was in violent riot. It was madness.

Comments: Looking back 44 Years one a great perspective angle. Politically Malta did influence the British to Close their Air Base, and remove most of their military. But at what cost \$\$ Even with their Gambling Casinos has not drawn a large tourist trade.

The fact that most of the Med-Cruise ships do not list Malta as one of their ports of call is telling. The Island does offer some very good Historical and Mystical points of interest.

I would love to take the Wife back and show her the Gut (Not a Tourist Point I admit), Little Town of Rabbit, Stone lined Roads, rugged southern coast line and Malta's Stone Hinge. (Adams 3/25/14)



There is a Lot to see and do in Malta, and it has come a long way from Navy Port to Tourist Attraction, Today they have small boats, 49 years ago you has cargo and Military ships Note the Photos Below and the one on the bottom of page 3 page.





Addendum Malta Riot:

by Tom Wehrheim

I was Marine E-2 PFC Tom Wehrheim with 2nd Shore Party Battalion, 2 Marine Division.

I was on the LSD, the Fort Mandan or the Fort Snelling. in my battalion landing team we had an LSD and an LPH, the Boxer I believe. Also LST, AKA and APA on the Gator side. Don't remember how many. Plus some escort. I served on a similar cruise in the Caribbean months prior and now get the ship's names confused.

While my recollections seem very vivid to this day (it was very exciting), they were of a 18 year old marine hustled out of the Gut somewhat inebriated.

As for Valletta. It was an amazing place rich with history from centuries past. I particularly remember stumbling into a cathedral with the most amazing art in the dome. I would go back to visit in a heart beat. They were very warm people. And personally I remember, Moffat, one of the tightest marines I ever met being taken in a three card Monte game on the steps of Straight Street, which wasn't all that straight.

I stumbled onto your story in The Glades. It answered a question nagging me ever since the SP escorted us Marines from the bar in the Gut down the hill to the ship.

I had heard rumors that a Marine attempted to strike a SP paired with a local police. When the SP ducked the blow hit the local. Your story has put the rumor to rest.

I was among those to have rocks thrown at them. We picked some up and returned the volley. I remember being so surprised that the crowd appeared so affluent, dressed as professionals you might see in an office or out to a nice restaurant. And I also vividly remember the smaller (about 5'4" with a full beard) of the two SP charged with herding us, a drunken mix of sailors and marines past the crowd and down the road to the pier. He was heroic getting us past the angry demonstrators. And the poor driver passing us just before we broke down the hill, I felt so bad that his car was pummeled so viciously. Those rocks they threw really riled the crowd.

Our crew awoke to find all liberty was cancelled and we spent the next week bound to the ships before we left port. A powerful storm came through that had some feeling seasick even while sitting at anchor. Years later such a storm interrupted a presidential summit in Valletta and the newscaster talked like it had never happened before. But I knew better

Thanks again for resurrecting some very nice memories.

Anyone Else has a Story to Tell, E-mail Us at AD24History@att.net