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Dear Paul,

The vignette, I Knew Your Father, in the last Antarctican Society Newsletter reminded me of an encounter, which I had with Captain Hedblom during Deep Freeze III.

I was the M.O. on the USS ATKA (AGB 3). On 1 December 1957, while frozen in the pack in Kainan Bay, we had an HUL Helicopter crash on our flight deck. The pilot was uninjured, but a Chaplain and a Commander (passengers) were caught in the ensuing explosion. They were miraculously extricated from the flaming craft by some very heroic personnel. The Commander's hands and face only were burned, and it was possible to manage him in the "Admiral's quarters". The Chaplain's burns were more extensive, and he was quite sick as a result. We had to keep him in the sick bay on intensive burn care regimen (morphine, IV fluids, catheters, etc.). He eventually stabilized and was with us for six days until the weather lifted and Little America could accept him for transfer to McMurdo and hence to Christchurch and Hawaii.

On the third day after the accident, Captain Hedblom "stormed aboard" (my words in my journal) and upset me by demanding that all my carefully applied sterile Vaseline gauze dressings be removed from the Chaplain and replaced by a 50-50 mixture of petrolatum and cod liver oil. I was aghast at such unorthodox and unreported treatment but had no choice but to comply. I was only 28 years old and barely out of medical school. Captain Hedblom was an experienced senior medical officer. I had much to learn.

When Captain Hedblom left the ship (satisfied, no doubt, that I was not going to allow my patient to die), the Chaplain, sick as he was, grinned at me and said, "I'm glad there aren't any cats around".

Three days later I accompanied the Chaplain to Little America where an experienced, older, and very fine station M.O. (Dr. Slagle) – a retired general surgeon – examined the burns. To my relief I could see that the majority were deep second degree with only a few areas of third degree. I was frankly amazed and a little bit in awe of Captain Hedblom and his concoction. I remember him as a large imposing, blustery person for whom there could be no compromise. I still to this day wonder if my own method of treatment (as taught to me in my year of internship) would have had the same happy result as the Captain's.

The Chaplain, by the way, I heard had survived but not after some serious complications and multiple grafting procedures. This was only conveyed to me by word of mouth. We were always sea and obtaining information in those days was difficult.

In the winter of 1958 I was discharged from active duty in Newport, RI. The final routine in this procedure was to report to the station's senior Chaplain. Imagine the surprise for both of us when I walked into his office. It was a fine reunion. I was tempted to ask him (jokingly, of course) how long he smelled like a fish, but thought better of it. Captain Hedblom was the hero, and that evening at dinner with the Chaplain, I drank a small very private toast to the Captain.

I hope that this finds you well. You have probably forgotten me, but I do believe that we met during Deep Freeze II on the USS Curtiss (AV 4). Larry Gould was one of my patients on that voyage. He was a wonderful human being. I never forgot him.

I always enjoy the Newsletter and know how involved you have been (and still are) with the Society.

With warm regards,

