

Memories of Robert I. Dennis, as he wrote them:

Life on the U.S.L.H. Tender (SHRUB)

Here is a list of crew members as I remember them.

Captain - Mr. Slamp also Mr. Roy Burg
1st Mate - Mr. Edward Sanford
Chief Engineer - Mr. Willard Hilton
2nd Assist Eng. - Mr. James Dixon
Quartermaster - Freeman Crosby
Oiler - Mr. Huggard
Fireman - George Lopes, Antone Gomes, and one other.
Seaman - Rudy Arruda, Minander, Mike, Van Hoff, and myself.
Cook - Arthur - (good cook)
Mess boy - Jackie

There were always half the crew on board, The Seaman had ever other week end off, the fireman had every third week end off, the officers were on a different schedule.

The Shrub was about 125 ft. long and 28 ft. beam, with two coal fired boilers. She carried 150lb of saturated steam. The main engine was a compound 2 cylinders, and oiled. The fire room and engine in the same compartment. Forward of the boiler was the winch room and the crews quarters were forward of that.

In the winter months we maintained the vessel in between other duties. Good weather work outside, bad weather inside. When lights were reported out we proceeded to that light and put it in operating order. Ice made a lot of extra work. In 38 and 39 the bay was frozen as far south as Dyer Island. Most of the buoys were over run by ice, causing them to put out. Hank and myself had the job of jumping from ship to the buoy which was ice covered. We would hang on the best we could until the ship backed away, then it was to open the lantern bale out the water dry out the light and relight it. These lights operated on Acetylene. After the buoy was lite we waited for the ship to come and pick us up not

always that easy. The buoy was not as steady as the ship to jump from. As long as we had ice this would continue all day breaking ice, relighting buoys.

The CG Cutter (Algonquion) came to help us keep the channels open.

One morning the Mate said to me I want you to make a new cover for the life boat. I was given a bolt of canvas, needles, and sewing palm, (right handed) I am left handed.

Well I never made a boat cover before and never sewed by hand before. The sewing palm was right handed and I am left handed. So I had to teach myself to sew right handed.

First of all how do I measure the material and I run the material fore and aft or thartship. I went back to the ship to take a look at the old one. Now with some measurements and a small drawing I started on my project.

I laid out the whole thing in the loft so far so good. Learning to sew right handed took awhile but I made it. A week we had a new boat cover on the lifeboat.

In the fall was time for coaling and delivering supplies. The lighthouse tenders would deliver to various lighthouses their yearly supply of (SOFT COAL) it was the dirtiest, wettest, coldest duty that the crew on a tender had.

Let me describe about how we coaled the last lighthouse in 1939. This light was Rose Island in Narr. Bay

We left Bristol Depot for Staples Coal Co. in Fall River to load on deck 10 to 12 ton of soft coal. (Loose).

Anyone who has not handled this material has not missed a thing. This material is dusty, lumpy, powdery, all at the same time.

While proceeding down Narr. Bay to Rose Island the crew (this called for all hands) would bas as much as we could. Each bag weighed about 75 lb. These were canvas so they could be used over again. Astern of the Tender we towed a 28 ft motor work boat and one 28 ft work boat.

On arrival at the Light the motor work boat and other would come along side of the Tender to be loaded with bags of coal both would be loaded until there was 6 inches freeboard. At that time the work boats would proceed to the beach and be run up on the beach. Two men would stay in the boats, the other five jumped overboard up to their waist in water. (Salt Water Cold).

As the men backed up to the boat you would have a bag of coal put on your back and you started for the lighthouse up the bank across the lawn, down cellar to the coal bin where you dumped your bag and went back for another one.

This routine continues until the boats are unloaded then return to the tender for another load, this is an all day affair so you are cold and wet all day. Now that is just one lighthouse. Rose Island was one of the easy ones.

The next day we would spend at the Depot if all possible. The Capts of the tenders were considerate of their crews. Lighthouses like Sakonnet, Whale Rock, Minots were more difficult to coal because of the weather. You would work out of the work boat and it depended on the weather how much you could deliver at one time. Very early in the morning was the best time. This meant that we were up at 2AM.

We had good ships cooks as we ate very well. The day started at 6:00 AM. Breakfast at 7:00 AM Turn To at 8:00 AM, Dinner at 12:00 Noon, Supper at 17:30PM

The Mate would have the days work all planned. If it was to change some buoys, say 1st class buoys and cans usually we put or 8 on deck along with chain and shackles and sinkers. This would be one days work. With this we knew to expect a 1300 call up to get underway for the area we were to work in that day, usually we were at the first buoy right after chow.

Each man in the deck force has a specific job. Rudy painted the numbers on the buoys just before they went over the side. Two other men handled the port and stbd tackles which controlled the swinging of the boom.

My position was to handle the Slip Line, this line was about 3 inches in diameter and 3 fathom long with an eye spliced in one end. All our lines were 4 strand manila.



The slip line was used to hang the sinker over the side while the flaked on deck ready to run when the sinker was dropped. The chain was shackled to the sinker with a (Hot Key) meaning that it was heated and twisted when installed.

This line has an eye splice in it placed on the set of bitts at the forward end of the buoy port. The bitter end running through the sinked bale and back to the bitts and secured. Now with all chain flaked out and shackled to the buoy and sinked, the buoy was hung out board by the main boom.

When the Capt, put the ship in the position, he would toot the whistle and I would release the slip line away would go the sinker and chain, then the buoy was lowered into the water, and the main hook would be released.

There was another slip line at a place about 2 fathoms form the buoy in the chain, this was secured to a large cleat at the after side of the buoy port as a preventer to keep the buoy from whipping around when the chain went overboard.

With the buoy set there was room on deck for the one that was replaced.

The working gear consisted of a 23 ton main boom, a whip (this is a large hook on a steel cable) this is used to haul chain on board, also used to break out a sinker as they would be well buried after a year in the mud. The steam winch operated on 150 lbs. S.S.

The sinker and chain if needed was installed with the sinker place on the slip line and hung overboard ready for lowering when the next buoy was ready. During this time the deck was covered with marine growth from the buoy just put on deck. The major parties sweep overboard while this is being done the tender was steaming to the next location

The Capt. Had a file on every buoy, on 3 by 5 cards. Each card read a s follows:

Name, locations, lat & long. number, depth of water, usually on back of each card were several bearing which taken as close as possible to 90 degrees for a fix replacing the buoy. Spar buoys were being less, a Spar buoy is a large wooded pole 12 to 18 ft long with a bale attached to the large end.

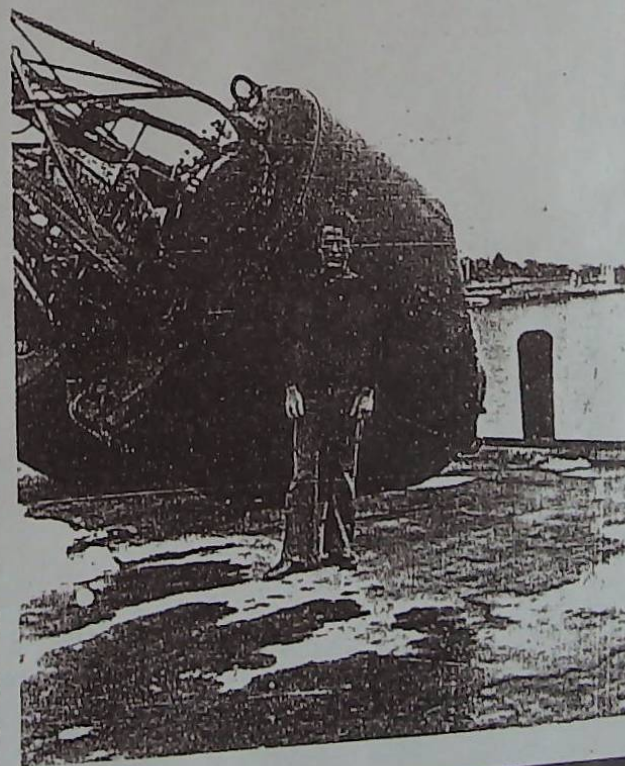
The bale was shackled to the sinker. No chain was used. Raising a spar buoy was hard tedious work as they were raised by hand with a tackle, from the work boat.

The stern of the work boat was place against the spar and a stopper knot was slid down the buoy as far as possible.

How to retrieve a buoy. First, the main tackle is hooked on, as the buoy is raised two members of the crew with long handled scrapers would scrap as much marine growth as possible. This was dirty and wet work as you worked under the buoy as it was raised on deck height and swinging so the whip could be hooked on to the chain. Then the chain was disconnected from the buoy. A small line was past through the bale so that several men could haul the buoy to its place on deck.

As the chain was hoisted on board with the whip, a small line would be passed through the chain and secured to the cleat on the after side of the buoy port, and hold the chain until another bite could be made.

In retrieving a spar buoy, the stopper on the buoy is connected to a 3 fold tackle then to a towing bit in the bow of the work boat. Then with mainly strength and stupidity we hauled until the buoy was clear of the bottom and then towed it to the tender



Delivered to the
Lighthouse by
Richard Ko on 7/11/09
Kozlara

Mr Robert Dennis
built all the lighthouses
in the cabinet to the
left of the fire place

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