

DOMAIN OF NEPTUNUS REX ENTERED BY COLORADO

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the air is again polluted with the poisonous breath of chlorotic landlubbers."

And so with a threatening gesture that boded ill for the now quaking pollywogs, he disappeared over the side with the parting salvo, "You will hear from His Majesty and myself on the morrow!"

Now indeed was there uneasiness, anxiety, and agitation aboard the hitherto peaceful COLORADO. In vain did our distinguished civilian guests appeal to the Executive Officer, Comdr. D. B. Beary, to do something about the situation, for was he not under indictment himself? He was for truth! In further vain did pollywogs seek out shipmates for advice and protection. Pitiful appeals were met with smug grins and haruspical shakes of the head. In final vain did the pollywogs have ultimate recourse to the chaplain for guidance and direction ... he was engrossed in preparing a convincing story for his own defense!

It has been said that the awaiting anticipation of an evil is infinitely worse than its actual materialization. If so, then more than 500 pollywogs died a thousand deaths that night. Here and there faint whispers of mutiny floated thru the air but the idea was quickly abandoned when it was discovered that guards had already been stationed aboard to handle any attempted movement along those lines. There was nothing to do therefore but to resignedly await the dreaded morrow and throw oneself on the clemency of the court.

The sun came up in its usual blistery fashion on the morning of the eighth and to the joyous relief of the condemned a reprieve was granted. In deference to the urgency and seriousness of the mission which brought the COLORADO into his domain (that of searching for the lost Earhart plane) Neptune Rex withheld his penal hand until the following day. Would now that court had been held on the appointed day instead of a day later! The vindictiveness of His Majesty rose in proportion to each hour of delay and broke forth on the morning of 9 July with all the fury of a tropical tempest. Judgments were hastily decreed and swiftly executed. There was no appeal to a higher court... the Royal Court WAS, IS, and will ALWAYS REMAIN, the highest court of the seas.

Impartially each one was made to run the gauntlet, and if you think Olympic track teams hold a corner on speed and

endurance for the hundred yard dash, your belief would have undergone immediate revision upon seeing the gauntlet sprinters on this occasion. With heads thrown back, chests extended, arms flying, legs pumping like well-oiled pistons, anyone of the five hundred would have been a worthy match for the best of Ben Hur's stables.

But, as the old Romans were wont to say, "Cui bono, cui bono?" which translated into Navy parlance means, "Aw, what's the use!" The end of the line was but the beginning of the real satanical harassment. With fiendish delight the royal undertaker went about the business of selecting his victims for the coffin; with diabolical precision villainous executioners pounced upon defenseless victims and slapped them in the murderous stocks. On the operating table the royal doctor and his staff of Viking internes tonsillectomized with despatch a quota of struggling gasping patients, while the practice of the royal dentist that day would cause any veterinary to sigh with envy. Nor was it a dull day for the barbers who kept two chairs occupied constantly from morning until noon. To the credit of the royal barbers, however, it must be said that they expended every effort to obtain the best grade of fuel oil available to apply as a shaving cream. Not of them can it be said that they spared the engineering score to spoil their customers.

Witnessing all this as we stood miserably and dazedly in line awaiting our summons added materially to the high standard of morale affected by pollywogs on all sides. We felt sure it was humanly impossible for any of us to survive long enough to reach the barber chair. But, ah me and alackaday, the resistance of the human body to physical punishment is amazing and just as we were sure the last spark of life was winging its way heavenward (or otherwise), sensitivity was restored by a plunge into invigorating salt water ... and the struggle for existence began all over again ... up, under, up, under, yell "shellback", under, up, gasp, gasp, yell "shellback", under again, up again, "Give him the works", under, merciful drowning, up on top again, "heave him over the side", glorious sensation of sliding peacefully to a haven of rest and security.

"It's all over," comforts the subconscious, "you're a shellback now." And then to the prodding of electrically

PLANE SEARCH HALTS CRUISE

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the fliers, in all probability, crashed in the open sea. Knowledge that Mrs. Putnam failed to reach Howland or nearby inhabited Baker Island, and was not in the desolate Phoenix group, left only the Gilbert Islands, still farther to the south, as the only remaining land in the region.

Remoteness of the Gilberts meant that discovery of the lost fliers there could be little less than a miracle.

The COLORADO not only scouted a vast area herself, but also directed operations of the Coast Guard Cutter Itasca and the Navy aircraft tender Swan pending arrival of Destroyer Squadron Two.

The most dramatic moment of the search, after the opening hours had elapsed, was afforded by the flight of the COLORADO's three planes over lonely Hull Island in the Phoenix group.

Hull is the only inhabited island of the group. Some 200 natives, wearing nothing but loin cloths, ran shouting from their grass huts when the Vought Corsairs flew low overhead, seemingly appearing out of nowhere.

Lt. J. O. Lambrecht, senior aviator, brought his plane to a landing in the Hull lagoon, and heard from the British resident manager who was paddled in an outrigger canoe by the natives to the plane that no one on the island knew that a world flight had been started, let alone that a search was in progress.

Aviators who took part in the search, in addition to Lieut. Lambrecht, were Lieuts. (jg) L. O. Fox and W. B. Short, and Aviation Cadets J. A. Wilson, W. Jordan and R. A. Leake.

charged prongs you are on your startled feet again with a third lease on life. What is that stretching out before your misty eyes? Surely...no, it can't be...not another gauntlet! But it is ... as your stinging flesh will testify for the next twenty-four hours. Well, so be it! Up and thru it for it marks the end of your trail as a pollywog and the beginning of a new life as a SHELLBACK!

And so, as the COLORADO sails serenely back to the mainland after an extended ROTC cruise, there is song, high elation from stem to stern for the ship is now on Neptune's priority list as ONE HUNDRED PERCENT SHELLBACK!

— A. F. H.

NOTE: (Colorado crossed the Equator at Longitude 174° West).