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The Big White Golf Ball

By Ieuan Dolby

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I remember well the first ship that I joined that had a Satellite Phone on it. I joined as Chief Engineer on this tiny little Research Vessel on a tiny little river in Papua New Guinea and I never saw the ship when I arrived at the wharf, all I could see was this massive white Golf Ball perched high on the top deck. Looked as if it was pushing what little there was of the ship down into the water. I remained in awe of that UFO for the first half of the trip and for the remainder I wished that I could afford the six-pounds per minute that it cost to use!

Yeah, satellites and all that went with them sneaked up on all ship's staff without notice or prior warning. Once upon a time we could leave port and not be heard from, left to our own devices until the next port but now we are being constantly monitored and required to send daily reports through to the company. No longer is it "have a safe trip and see you when you get there", now it is "we'll be watching you". Ah, long gone have those days when we where a team all alone on the high seas!

Engineers never really became involved with the Sat phones for many years. One day sunbathing on the Monkey Island and the next a UFO had landed on your favorite spot. And the funny thing was that nobody ever really talked about it at all. If it had been a new generator or a new ballast pump then everybody would have been discussing it for months before and after. "At last we are getting a new one", the Chief would say and the Captain would respond with "no more blackouts then eh"? Faxes and telexes would fly around and all would be posted for all to see, even the cook would become enthused due to the excitement surrounding him. "A new ballast pump eh?" the cook would say at dinner, "yep, 300m3/hour" the third would reply enthusiastically. The cook would then typically respond with "good, great, no more blackouts then, eh?" having totally crossed his wires. But the satellite remained a silent misnomer that was unheard of one day and then the next installed and running. I am never sure why this was as the whole idea and set-up far exceeds that of new machinery or anything else but there we have it. I would hazard a guess for the secrecy and lack of conversation regarding this advent - that of fear of such tremendous change. So new and so large an alteration in the way of life at sea, but this is only a guess.

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And the Captains? Well, they all changed. Most became serious recluses (more so than before) and watched these phones day in day out, warding off Engineers and others alike from getting close. Padlocks and intricate codes were used to prevent usage other than by themselves, and those that could installed the phone in their cabins. It was a stressful time and lasted nearly ten years. Ten years of complete disintegration of any normalcy between Engineers and Captains and ten years of Engineers having to beg, borrow or steal to even get close to the Black Handset. I suppose it was such an advanced and sudden change that it took a while to get used to and become accepted as an everyday piece of equipment - just another one that may break down or require maintenance.

Of course over time everything got cheaper, the white golf balls became smaller and have all but disappeared. Handsets reduced in size from large and awkward monstrosities to those resembling typical household phones (except for the padlock that the Captains could never actually dispense with) and Engineers suddenly became necessary in the operation of the associated software. Why do I say

that? Well, let me digress for a moment. When Engineers and Deck Officers step ashore in an unknown and distant port it rapidly becomes apparent that the Engineers are far more able to navigate their way back to the vessel. The same becomes clear when computers are involved. There is the Captain with a nice little sat phone and software through which he can do his departure checks, send daily reports, order stores, check his private email and on more advanced systems check the latest stock prices. But he has an ongoing problem as every time he presses "send" nothing happens, or he has lost his latest daily report to some unknown "chip with legs" inside the white box that hums.

Oh deary me! Scratching of the head ensues and attempts at throwing the computer or phone over the side are resisted. It is then that an Engineer happens to be passing by and that he notices that the Captain is suffering from high blood pressure. Then a couple of mouse clicks later the whole problem is solved, the missing file relocated or the email winging its way upwards or across the blue ocean. Yes, I have found that the majority of Engineers have an easier grasp or ability to understand computers and the software involved than have the Navigators. Not sure why and I am not going to get into this subject but believe me it is fact!

Satellite phones also changed the way of communication with the outside world. Before all communication from and to the ship went via the Captain. Every piece of writing could be censored or displayed at the Masters discretion but nowadays Chief Engineers, Mates and even Second Engineers are sending their own stores orders and emails to Head Office. Engineers talk directly to Superintendents about their mechanical problems, mates read incoming emails when alone on watch and all can be done without others being able to oversee or hear what is being said. The satellite phone has brought to the ship a sense of industry ashore, the ability to communicate and talk easily when and where you want without having to wait for a week or two or without having to use an intermediary to pass the messages along.

Nowadays a ship without some form of email/sat communication is improbable and all at sea are fully familiar with the system and expect to be able to use it when and where they want. All part of being at sea in the Modern day Merchant Navy one could say! Emails and mobile phones have become a part of life everywhere so why should seafarers be any different? Now with such systems being commonplace calls are cheaper and affordable. Emails can be written whenever the computer is free

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and sent at minimal cost, this cost often being carried by the company as pennies rather than pounds are involved.

Imagine the future, instant diagnosis of engine problems, expert advice at hand for the engineers. The Engineers have a serious problem and have broken down in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. They are scratching their heads as to what has gone wrong and the only people that can help them are 2000miles away in an Office unaware as to the drifting vessels plight. Today we can call these experts up and describe the problem and thus gain invaluable insight into what may be wrong or what they can possibly do to rectify the problem. The future gives them this: A mobile phone to take down to the work site, a video camera to send instant pictures of area and problems to Head Office, a recording of full conversation to replay later (for insurance and blame), instant download of possible solution or temporary repair of the problem and immediate advice from the expert ashore who can see exactly what is going on.

Yep, that is the future that we will look towards, a few years down the line we have gone from haphazard and unstable radio communication to instant and clear access anywhere anytime!

What will the next fifteen years bring? Whatever it may be just make sure that you have an Engineer at hand.

Ieuan Dolby
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. As a Chief Engineer in the Merchant Navy

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Learning How To Play Golf

By Jena Luthovski

The game of golf is played on a golf course, which is basically a large grassy landscape, consisting of lakes, trees, and small hilly mounds and is part of the way the game is played. A typical golf course has either nine–holes or eighteen holes.

To play the game, a player would require golfing equipment such as playing clubs, shoes, tees, balls and a golf bag to store these items. The club is used to hit the golf ball into successive holes located on the golf course.

Before a player hits the ball, he/she must stand with their feet apart and knees slightly bent. Holding

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the club firmly with both hands (placed one on top of the other), the player turn his/her body at the waist along with the hip and back, thereby swinging the golf ball back and then forward. At the forward motion the ball is hit with force and the player's club is seen to continue to swing out. A low shot or a putt cover will cover short distances and is used when the golf ball is quite close to the hole. In the case of a long shot, the ball moves very high in the air and travels a great distance before falling to the ground.

The game begins with the player placing a tee into the ground of the teeing area. A golf ball is placed on top of the tee and the player uses his or her club to swing and hit the ball. The objective here is to get the ball into the first hole on the golf course. After the first player's shot, other players follow, with each attempting to put the ball into each hole around the golf course.

As players progress through the game, they have to confront difficulties called "Hazards". Water bodies such as small lakes, trees, shrubs, rough and sand-filled traps are all hazards, that the player has to get around, is the process of hitting a small white golf ball into a sunken hole in the golf course. In a situation where the golf ball lands into a hazard, the player should not touch the ground or water before playing the ball, even for a practice swing. If the player chooses not to play their golf ball in a hazard, the ball can be moved to the place from where it was originally shot, but a penalty stroke is added to the total score. Of course, with time and practice, many a player is known to become skilled and adept at the game.

A ball is considered to be lost when it cannot be found within five minute of the shot. If the ball was hit by the player into an area that's out of bounds or is lost, a penalty stroke is added to the player's score and the player has to replay his/her last shot.

In golf, scores are maintained by tracking the number of times taken by a player to hit a ball into every hole of the golf course. The player with the lowest number of hits wins the game.

Jena Luthowski writes about

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<http://www.golfgearonsale.com/Coupons/Austad's%20Golf.html> and



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