

'Snipes' endure hell in bilges, voids, And in four super-hot firerooms

snipe (snip), n. 1. a wading bird living chiefly in marshes and having a long, flexible bill. 2. a man in the U.S. Navy who works in the engineering rate group, especially non-petty officer; chiefly recognizable by his chimney-sweep appearance caused by long hours of work in the ship's bilges and voids. (with apologies to Mr. Webster).

On Bennington, most of these "snipes" can be found in the Boiler Division. In part, "B" Division snipes are responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of their assigned bilges and voids. Voids are empty, uninhabited, odd-shaped spaces within the ship. Bilges are those spaces around machinery or boilers which collect oil and water drippings, and most anything else capable of falling through the catwalk gratings. Some bilge spaces are so cramped by pipes, cables and steel struts that it is nearly impossible to squeeze someone inside to scrape off the old paint and rust and re-finish the bare metal.



SI Jimmy L. Watson, Fifth Division, descends into 60-foot deep void to begin cleanup operations.



FA Jerry W. Seal climbs half way out of a bilge in Fireroom Jumper Two to take a smoke break.



FA Ronald L. Jeth emerges from a ninth-level void. He works in Fireroom Number Three.