



BTJ Donald L. Hall is shown in an eighth-level void, unbolting a hatch.



PA Louis A. Lester under a boiler using compressed air to clean air casing.

Located in one tiny bilge space in Boiler Room Number Two, five decks below Disbursing was PA Jerry W. Seal. Armed with a scraping tool and droplight, he was making steady progress in removing what had accumulated there since it had last been cleaned about a year ago.

One level further down from Seal's place of work was BTJ Donald L. Hall. He was sandwiched between the eighth and ninth

decks in an expansive but low-clearance void. The space is about two feet high and is used to gain access to the giant fuel and water tanks below. Hall was unbolting covers which led down to another similar void whose deck makes up the tank tops. His only illumination was a pair of battle lanterns. Movement in spaces such as these involved keeping one's head low and wading like a contortionist to writh through the porthole-size openings in the steel beams.

Up one level from Hall's void was PA Louis E. Lester in the air casing under number four boiler. Air hose in hand, Lester was blowing the murky sludge on the casing deck to a remote corner so he could begin chipping off the rust and old paint. The air casings are spaces which completely surround each of the fireboxes in Benn's eight big boilers. Air, hot but considerably cooler than the firebox itself, circulates around the box and carries away some of the heat to keep the adjacent fireroom just a little cooler. The boilers have been shut down since mid-November when Benn began its overhaul period, so no hazard is posed to the men working in and around them. Once Lester has removed all the old paint and rust, a new coat of heat-resistant aluminum paint will be laid on.

Veteran snipe FN William D. Bartholomew pointed out the temperatures under the fireroom air vents easily reach 90 degrees when the ship is steaming on station in the Tonkin Gulf. A mere foot away, out of the direct air blast, temperatures can and do soar to 150 degrees. "I've seen it as hot as 165 in here," noted BTJ Jon M. Billeci.

Hard work is commonplace in "B" Division. So it should come as no surprise to anyone why these people are frequently seen around the ship wearing oil-soaked dungarees and sooty faces. These guys do the job the best way they know how, under conditions not far removed from the "real" hell, especially when underway.