

Because He Was **Alert,**



AOAN Richard A. DelVecchio, a member of the NAS Oceana-based VF-103 Jolly Rogers, pauses aboard USS *George Washington*'s flight deck. Quick thinking on his part after discovering a shipmate had fallen overboard saved the crew member's life.

a Shipmate Is **Alive**

During recent operations in rough seas in the Gulf of Oman, Airman Richard A. DelVecchio was pausing between flight ops aboard USS *George Washington* (CVN 73) when something in the water off the ship's starboard side caught his eye. It took a split second for the aviation ordnanceman to realize he was looking at a shipmate who had fallen overboard.

Adding to AOAN DelVecchio's incredulity was not just the fact that a shipmate was in the water,

but also that he was not wearing personal protective equipment or a flotation device.

AOAN DelVecchio quickly located the nearest available life ring and threw it to his shipmate in the water. He then notified his leading chief and got man-overboard recovery procedures started. The ship immediately held an all-hands muster to determine who had fallen overboard. While the muster was being taken, an earnest search-and-rescue effort began. An Italian navy helicopter operating



Navy photo by PHAN Tina Lamb

in the area with coalition forces as part of Operation Enduring Freedom quickly rescued the Sailor.

Airman DelVecchio's quick-thinking and decisive action saved his shipmate's life. From the initial man-overboard announcement to recovery, the young Sailor was in the water only 10 minutes.

AOAN DelVecchio said, "I really didn't think about what I actually was doing. Instinct just took over. I really was scared for my shipmate." He added, "I'm new to the Navy, but it already is ingrained in me just how dangerous the flight deck can be. You always have to watch out for yourself and others up there."

This near-tragedy emphasizes why you must wear PPE when it's required—whether on the flight deck or somewhere else. Says AOAN DelVecchio, "My squadron makes it a point to ensure all personnel are aware of the dangers on the flight deck. I wouldn't think of being up there without my float coat."

A momentary lapse in situational awareness or not wearing proper PPE could cause something like this to happen at anytime to anyone. And there might not be an observant, quick-acting shipmate nearby to initiate rescue, so the consequences could be fatal. ☹️

Don't Sleep on a Chock!

In an unusual incident, a young Sailor on break from mess-deck duties went to his ship's fo'c'sle at 0900 and lay down on a roller chock. He then fell asleep or passed out and slid overboard. The mishap victim does not remember how he entered the water. He didn't yell for help until the ship was a ship's length away.

He was reported missing at 1115 when he failed to return for duty. Six minutes after this report, the ship reversed course to search for the crew member while simultaneously sending appropriate message traffic and initiating compartment-by-compartment searches. Numerous merchant vessels, two aircraft, a U.S. Coast Guard vessel, and a foreign naval ship assisted with the search, which ultimately lasted longer than 10 hours.

Fortunately, the Sailor was recovered at 2210, suffering only from a sunburn, dehydration, and being cold. ☹️