

# The Trauma of Jingle Bells



Santa Claus Hat

This is a story about being permanently traumatized by the Christmas song “Jingle Bells.” Actually, it wasn’t so much the song itself, but the events surrounding the playing of “Jingle Bells.” Fair warning; this “Jingle Bells” Christmas story involves topless women and beer but is otherwise considered Family Safe, unless you don’t want your kids to grow up to become sailors.

Christmas of 1995 I was on board the Aegis Cruiser *Port Royal* (CG 73), on deployment in the western Pacific. This was my last deployment, in fact I already had my retirement papers approved and scheduled to transfer off in a couple of more months. The ship pulled into Hong Kong, then still a British colony, for Christmas liberty. As luck would have it, my in-port duty rotation left me free on Christmas eve, so with my buddy Joe we headed over to the mainland district of Kowloon to explore.

This was my first time in Hong Kong, but Joe had been there before and knew the good places to hang out. After a few hours of gratuitously playing tourist, we headed over to the “Red Light District,” famed for its topless bars and other sailor hang outs.

I quickly learned that “topless bars” in Hong Kong meant something very different from the US. Here in the US “topless

bars" involve mostly youngish women dancing on a stage in various stages of undress in front of men drinking alcoholic beverages. Apart from the alcohol, women help separate men from their money by allowing the men to slip dollar bills into the minimal G-strings panties the women wear. Dance music normally comes from a jukebox, paid for by the men, which is another way for the bar to separate men from their money.

Or so I've been told.

This is not how topless bars in Hong Kong worked back in 1995. The topless bars were typically run by elderly women referred to as "Mama-San," allegedly a respectful title for women who ran topless bars and other dubious types of establishments. The other members of the bar staff were young women wearing form-fitting shorts and tops that displayed their mostly ample figures. Mama-San would serve drinks from behind the bar while the young women would sort of "prance" on a small stage behind the bar, fully dressed, to music coming from unknown sources within the bar.

The only person who ever took off their shirts were the Mama-sans.

Now, as a certified old person I respect that there are older women who look awesome without their clothes. However, the Mama-Sans I met in 1995 Hong Kong were not among them. The Mama-Sans would only take off their shirts if there were customers in the bar, and when the bar was empty would get dressed until the next customers ventured in; possibly as a means of sparing their skin from excessive public exposure.

As this was Christmas eve, and Joe and I were starting the bar circuit early, we wandered into these topless bars as the only customers. As the bar's Mama-San saw us walking in she would quickly strip off her shirt and the young women would hop on the stage. Music would magically start playing, and the women

would start to prance. We'd order beers and sip them while topless Mama-San leaned up against the bar and chatted with us in Chinese-flavored English. The music would play continuously and young women were obviously in good shape, as they could continue to prance on their stage for as long as we were in the bar.

At first the music tended towards Chinese versions of then-current US pop music, which wasn't bad. But as the afternoon worn on, the bar music changed to "Christmas" music, chief among them being "Jingle Bells" sung by women in Chinese-flavored English. The repertoire of Chinese-Christmas music was apparently quite limited as "Jingle Bells" played about every third choice, and I honestly don't remember the other songs.

By late evening, apparently in honor of rapidly approaching midnight hour, all the bars started playing "Jingle Bells" on continuous-loop and the bar women all donned red and white Santa Claus hats.

By midnight we had hit probably a dozen different topless bars, having a beer or two in each one along with bar snacks composed of Chinese mystery foods. In each bar the scene was the same. I began to feel as if I was in a scene from the movie "[Ground Hog Day](#)." While walking between bars we could hear "Jingle Bells" blaring from the establishments. The world was shifting around me and my mind started going numb.

At some point that night the excess beer, elderly topless Chinese women wearing Santa Claus hats, young fully dressed Chinese women wearing Santa Claus hats, and Jingle Bells sung in Chinese-flavored English playing on continuous loop overloaded me and the space-time continuum converged with alternate parallel universes and permanently etched my psychic.

To this day, I cannot listen to Jingle Bells without reliving

a Hong Kong topless bar Christmas extravaganza.

*Updated: December 29, 2016*

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# How To Simulate Life In The Navy



Sailor Monkey

It's a cool windy day here in the Charest Household (Virginia Edition), and Winnie has to work anyway. Meaning, I have a lot of free time on my hands.

In rummaging through boxes of old files last week, in preparation for the annual pain-inflicting event known as preparing income taxes, I came across this old paper. It is a description of life in the navy, written for those landlubbers and other folks who had the good sense to stay far away from anything resembling navy life.

So here it is, published for the first time ever on this website. A true description of what life was like in the Navy, circa 1980.

- 1. Buy a dumpster, paint it gray and live in it for 6 months*

straight.

2. Run all of the piping and wires inside your house on the outside of the walls.

3. Pump 10 inches of nasty, crappy water into your basement, then pump it out, clean up, and paint the basement deck gray.

4. Every couple of weeks, dress up in your best clothes and go the scummiest part of town, find the most run down, trashy bar you can, pay \$10 per beer until you're hammered, then walk home in the freezing cold.

5. Perform a weekly disassembly and inspection of your lawn mower.

6. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays turn your water temperature up to 200 degrees, then on Tuesday and Thursday turn it down to 10 degrees. On Saturdays and Sundays declare to your entire family that they used too much water during the week so all showering is secured.

7. Raise your bed to within 6 inches of the ceiling.

8. Have your next-door neighbor come over each day at 5am, and blow a whistle so loud that Helen Keller could hear it and shout "Reveille, Reveille, all hands heave out and trice up."

9. Have your mother-in-law write down everything she's going to do the following day, then have her make you stand in the back yard at 6am and read it to you.

10. Eat the raunchiest Mexican food you can find for three days straight then lock yourself out of the bathroom for 12 hours and hang a sign on the door that reads "Secured - contact 0A division at X-3053."

11. Submit a request form to your father-in-law, asking if it's ok for you to leave your house before 3pm.

12. Invite 200 of your not-so-closest friends to come over, and then board up all the windows and doors to your house for 6 months. After the 6 months is up, take down the boards, wave at your friends and family through the front window of your home...you can't leave until the next day. You have duty.

13. Shower with above-mentioned friends.

14. Make your family qualify to operate all the appliances in your home. (i.e. Dishwasher operator, blender technician, etc.)

15. Walk around your car for 4 hours checking the tire pressure every 15 minutes.

16. Sit in your car and let it run for 4 hours before going anywhere. This is to ensure your engine is properly "lighted off."

17. Empty all the garbage bins in your house, and sweep your driveway 3 times a day, whether they need it or not. ("Now sweepers, start your brooms, clean sweep down fore and aft, empty all shit cans over the fantail.")

18. Repaint your entire house once a month.

19. Cook all of your food blindfolded, groping for any spice and seasoning you can get your hands on.

20. Use eighteen scoops of budget coffee grounds per pot, and allow each pot to sit 5 hours before drinking.

21. Have your neighbor collect all your mail for a month, read your magazines, and randomly lose every 5th item.

22. Spend \$20,000 on a satellite system for your TV, but only watch CNN and the Weather Channel.

23. Avoid watching TV with the exception of movies, which are played in the middle of the night. Have the family vote on

*which movie to watch and then show a different one.*

*24. Have your 5-year old cousin give you a haircut with goat shears.*

*25. Sew back pockets to the front of your pants.*

*26. Spend 2 weeks in the red-light districts of Europe, and call it "world travel."*

*27. Attempt to spend 5 years working at McDonald's, and NOT get promoted.*

*28. Ensure that any promotions you do get are from stepping on the dead bodies of your co-workers.*

*29. Needle gun the aluminum siding on your house after your neighbors have gone to bed.*

*30. When your children are in bed, run into their room with a megaphone, and shout at the top of your lungs that your home is under attack, and order them to man their battle stations. ("General quarters, general quarters, all hands man your battle stations")*

*31. Make your family menu a week ahead of time and do so without checking the pantry and refrigerator.*

*32. Post a menu on the refrigerator door informing your family that you are having steak for dinner. Then make them wait in line for at least an hour, when they finally get to the kitchen, tell them that you are out of steak, but you have dried ham or hot dogs. Repeat daily until they don't pay attention to the menu any more so they just ask for hot dogs.*

*33. When baking a cake, prop up one side of the pan while it is in the oven. Spread icing on real thick to level it off.*

*34. In the middle of January, place a podium at the end of your driveway. Have you family stand watches at the podium,*

*rotating at 4-hour intervals.*

*35. Lock yourself and your family in your house for 6 weeks. Then tell them that at the end of the 6th week you're going to take them to Disneyland for "weekend liberty." When the end of the 6th week rolls around, inform them that Disneyland has been canceled due to the fact that they need to get ready for Engineering certification, and that it will be another week before they can leave the house.*

*36. In your grim, gray dumpster (refer to #1), with 200 of your not-so closest friends (cite para. 12) regardless of gender, suffer through PMS!*

*37. Sleep on the shelf in your closet. Replace the closet door with a curtain. Have you wife whip open the curtain about 3 hours after you go to sleep. She should then shine a flashlight in your eyes and mumble "Sorry, wrong rack."*

*38. Renovate your bathroom. Build a wall across the middle of your bathtub, move the showerhead to chest level. When you take showers, make sure you shut off the water while you soap down.*

*39. When there is a thunderstorm in your area, find a wobbly rocking chair and rock as hard as you can until you become nauseous. Have a supply of stale crackers in your shirt pocket.*

*40. Put lube oil in your humidifier and set it on high.*

*41. For ex-engineering types: leave the lawn mower running in your living room eight hours a day.*

*42. Have the paperboy give you a haircut.*

*43. Once a week, blow compressed air up your chimney, making sure the wind carries the soot onto your neighbors' house. Ignore his complaints.*



44. Every other month buy green or red marine primer and put it in a paint sprayer. Spray it over the roof of your house onto your neighbor's car. Ignore his complaints.

45. Lock wire the lug nuts on your car.

46. Buy a trash compactor, but use it only once a week. Store the garbage on the other side of your bathtub.

47. Get up every night around midnight and have a peanut butter and jelly sandwich on stale bread.

48. Set your alarm clock to go off at random during the night, jump up and get dressed as fast as you can making sure you button up the top button on your shirt, stuff your pants into your socks. Run out into the backyard and uncoil the garden hose.

49. Once a month, take every major appliance apart and put them back together again.

50. Install a fluorescent lamp under the coffee table and then get under it and read books.

51. Raise the thresholds and lower the top sills of your front and back doors so that you either trip or bang your head every time you pass through one of them.

52. Every so often, throw the cat in the pool and shout, "Man overboard, starboard side!" Then run into the house and sweep all the pots and dishes off the counter. Yell at the wife and kids for not having the kitchen "stowed for sea."

53. Put on the headphones from your stereo set, but don't plug them in. Hang a paper cup around your neck with string. Go stand in front of your stove. Say, to no one in particular, "Stove manned and ready!" Stand there for three or four hours. Then say, again to no one in particular, "Stove secured!" Roll up your headphones and paper cup and place them in a box.

Based on the Navy's most cherished slogan "**200 Years of Tradition, Unmarked By Progress,**" I don't think life in the navy is any different now then it was back when I was plying the ocean's blue...

For the record – I did not write this. I don't know who did; its just one of the many anonymously written papers I've collected over the years.

Enjoy!