



## The Mighty Midgets

**T**HE MINESWEEPING BOATS OF MINRON 10 in the Atlantic Fleet Mine Force are manned by some of the top enlisted men in the Navy. The men have to be outstanding in their field. Their job is just as complex, just as exacting, as demanding of seamanship and leadership as any seagoing job in the Navy. It's up to the midget sweepers to take the lead in sweeping a path through mined waters so that the Fleet can follow a safe channel to its objective.

There are three classes of mine-

sweepers now in Fleet service—the Ocean Minesweeper (MSO), Coastal Minesweeper (MSC) and the 57-foot wooden-hull Minesweeping Boats (MSBs). All three types are capable of sweeping or activating most of the known types of mines. This means that the MSB must have the same capabilities as the larger type sweeper but adapted to its own smaller scale.

The primary mission of the MSB is the shallow-water sweep—harbor, inland channel and assault areas.

MSBs OF MINRON 10 move out to take up their designated positions to conduct routine minesweeping exercises somewhere off the Atlantic Coast.



**T**HE CAPTAIN of a million-dollar MSB (it costs less than many airplanes) is a carefully selected Chief Petty Officer. His second in command is a boatswain's mate. The remainder of the crew: one electrician's mate, an engineman, and three seamen. About all the skipper and crew have to do is study the requirements of a pending operation, carry on the training necessary to assure successful completion, get their boat underway, form up with the division, stream sweep gear, drop dan buoys to mark the clear channel, mark it on the chart, and recover the sweep gear after a successful sweep.

That brief summary takes only a few words to state. But each section of it requires many hours of hard work and calls upon the individual ingenuity, initiative and capability of every member of the crew.

Take, for example, the case of one of these crew members—Parry Cook, EM2, aboard MSB-29. Parry's hat-rack (if he had one) would need five hooks—his is a five-hat job.

Since he's an *electrician's mate*, the boat's electrical plant is his main concern. But Cook also minds the navigating log as a *quartermaster*, the flag hoists as a *signalman*, the radar apparatus as a *radarman*, and the communications as a *radioman*.

Asked how long it took him to learn all these jobs, he modestly replied: "Different men adapt in different ways. Some learn routines faster than others. But the average time is about two months."

**T**HE BOATS normally operate at a Mine Sub-Division level. The MSB Squadron of the Atlantic Fleet Mine Force is divided into two divisions and each division into sections or sub-divisions. Mine Sub-Division Commanders are selected from the most outstanding Chief Boatswain's Mates and Chief Quartermasters in the squadron.

These billets, incidentally, have been recommended as an E-9 by the Squadron Commander because of the heavy responsibility and trust placed on the "Section Chief."

To appreciate this responsibility and trust, you should be familiar with the requirements of the position and nature of MSBs themselves. The Section Chiefs perform all the administrative and training functions of a Division Commander. They function directly under the Squadron Operations Officer and the Logistics Officer.

In port, Section Chiefs schedule training exercises, plan operations, and participate in the training programs. Each Section Chief plans the operations or employment of his boats, scheduling each phase of boat activity from tender availabilities to underway competitive exercises. He is responsible for the level of training of each of the boat crews as well as material condition of the boats.

At sea, Sub-Division Commanders take charge of their divisions as Officer in Tactical Command underway, to conduct minesweeping exercises. During competitive exercises and operational readiness inspections they assist the observing or inspecting officer. This broad picture of the administrative and organizational aspects of the Sub-Division Commander's billet is only a part of the whole because the training of the Section Chief begins when he is assigned as Chief Petty Officer-in-Charge of an MSB.

**T**HE IMPORTANCE of extensive training is fully recognized and positively dealt with at the command level of the Squadron. Training goes on any time the boat is underway. In addition, a daily period of intensive instruction is set aside to cover specific areas in the functioning of the MSB.

The entire crew gets experience in all phases of the boat operation—communications, navigation, engineering and watch-standing.

Each man is qualified to light off the engines and get the boat under-

way. Each must be well-qualified in his rating group, and the majority acquire professional experience usually considered beyond the scope of normal duties.

To utilize this plant and crew effectively, the CPO in charge must have a comprehensive knowledge of operational tactics, voice and visual communications, Rules of the Road, shiphandling, navigation, utilization of electronics, shipboard engineering, and the theories and methods of effective mine countermeasures against all types of mines—moored, pressure, magnetic and acoustic. But to have this knowledge is not enough. He must also have the ability to apply it.

In Mine Squadron Ten, the challenge of command is extended to the enlisted petty officer. The challenge, of course, is to become commander of his own boat. Only through superior performance of duty can he become one of MinRon 10 Section Chiefs—the Navy's most junior Division Commanders.



**ALL SQUARED AWAY** — Inspections are part of routine for MSB skippers.



**OVER THE SIDE** — J. M. Herrin, BMC, former skipper of MSB-28, receives a farewell salute from his fellow chiefs during his retirement ceremony.