

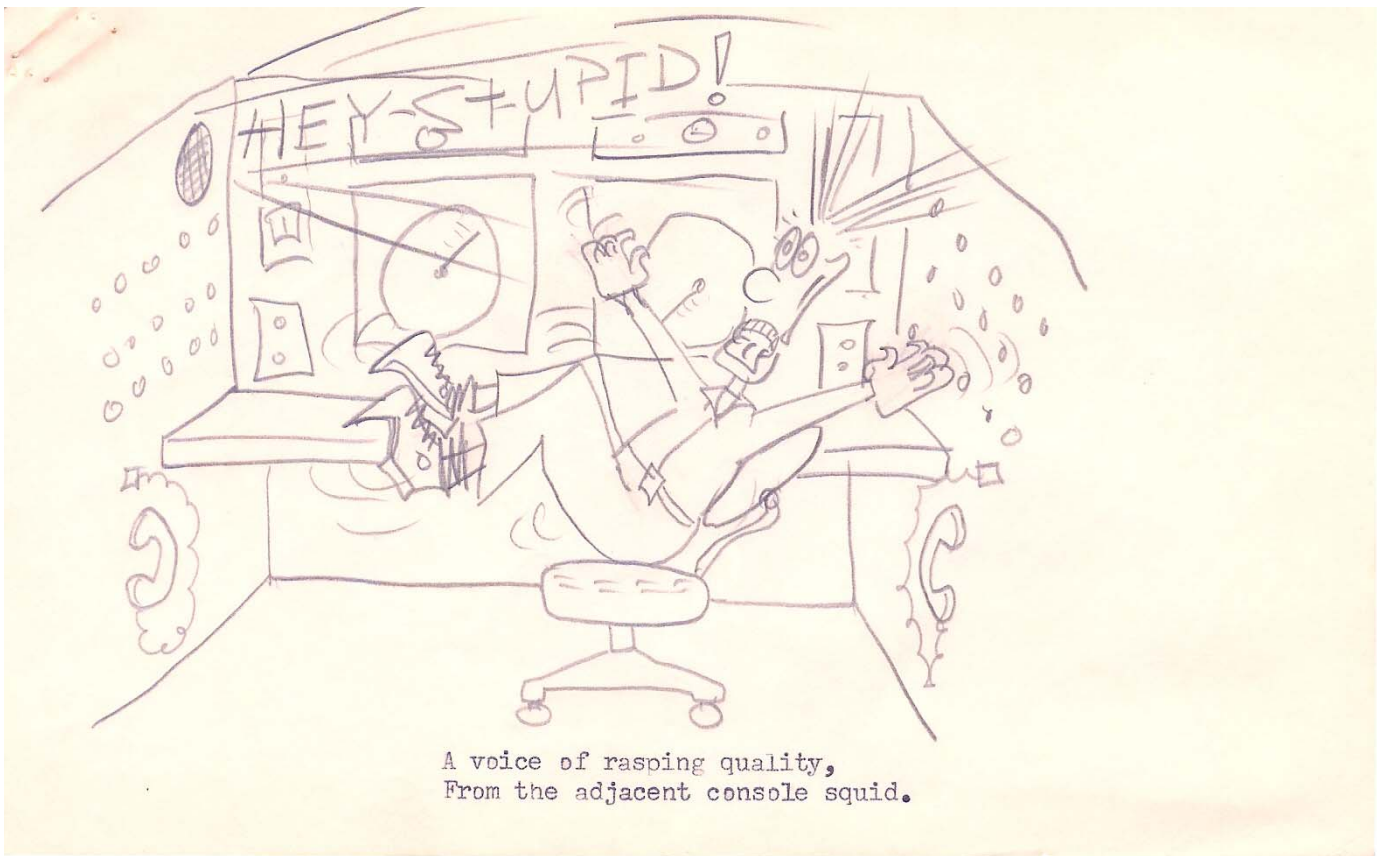
ODE TO A RADICIAN ON CONSOLE WATCH

OR

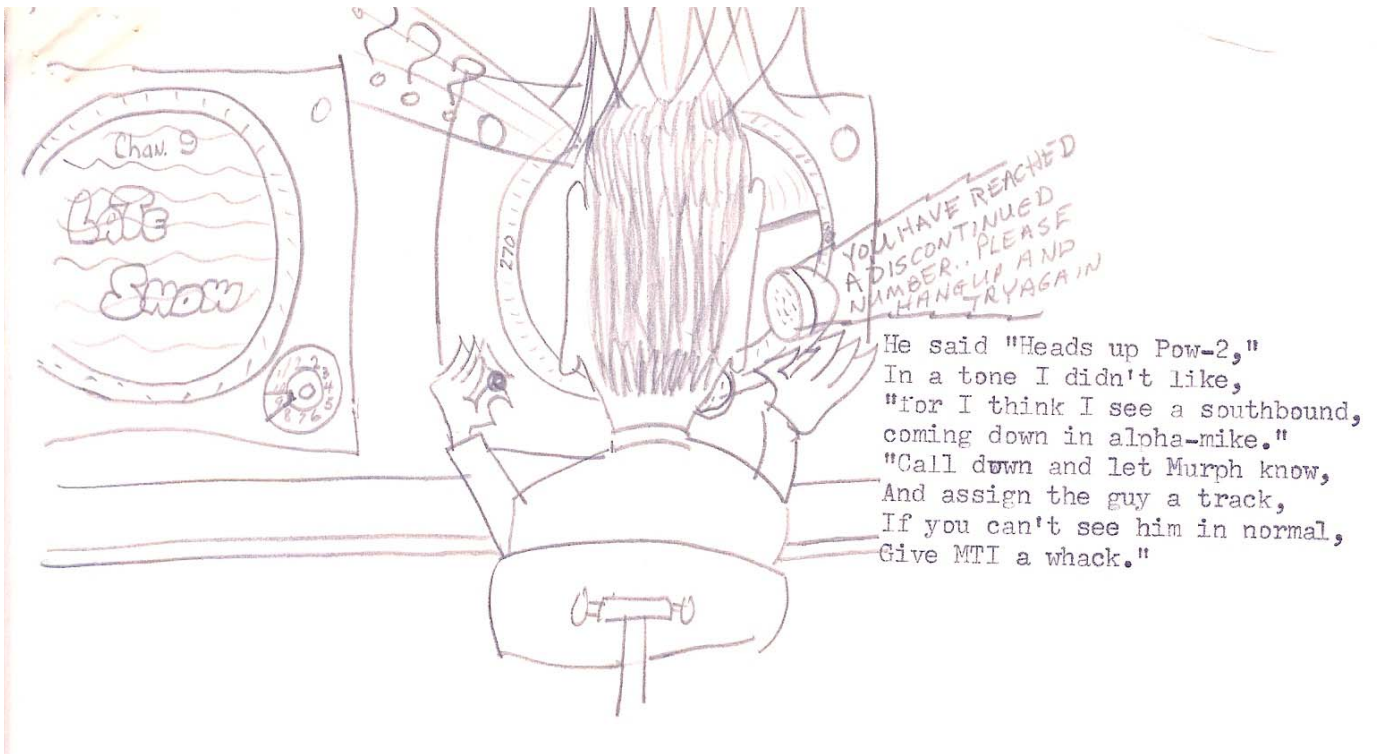
(THAT POOR MUTHA)



The other night on console watch,
Perceive, I thought I did,



A voice of rasping quality,
From the adjacent console squid.



He said "Heads up Pow-2,"
In a tone I didn't like,
"for I think I see a southbound,
coming down in alpha-mike."
"Call down and let Murph know,
And assign the guy a track,
If you can't see him in normal,
Give MTI a whack."

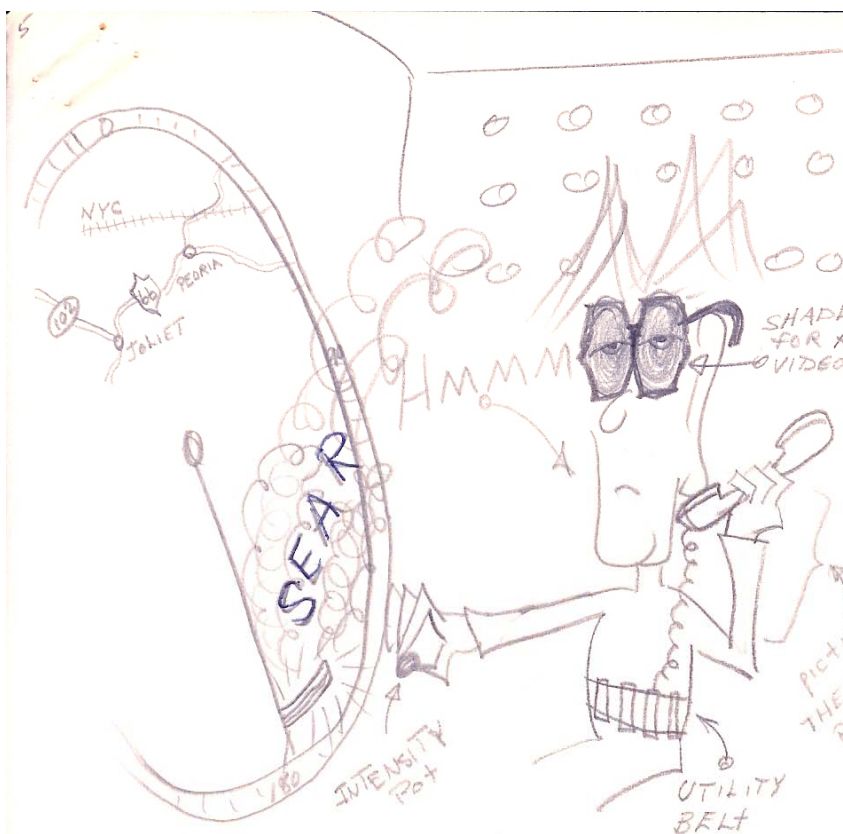


EYES OF AMAZINGLY HORRIBLE CONDITION.

I took my feet from off the desk,
 And sat up in my seat,
 I'd been drinking hard the previous
 night,
 Boy, did I feel beat.

So as I grabbed my handset,
 To phone this bogey in,
 I realized this night,
 Would be one I wouldn't win.

Nights like this they come along,
 Every week or two,
 Where-in you can't do nothing right,
 No matter what you do.



But even as I pressed the knob,
 To signal Murphys Dope,
 I observed a mighty SIF paint,
 On the bottom of my scope.

"Thats Lark 63", said MurphysDope
 "flight level, twenty grand."
 He also passed a routing,
 Which I couldn't understand.

He also wanted tells,
 Starting at time of two-eight,
 Then he called and chewed me out,
 Cause my initial tell was late.



Meanwhile, I learned the bogey,
 Had been ID'ed as Japan Air,
 And when Flaxman passed him
 off on me,
 I really didn't care.

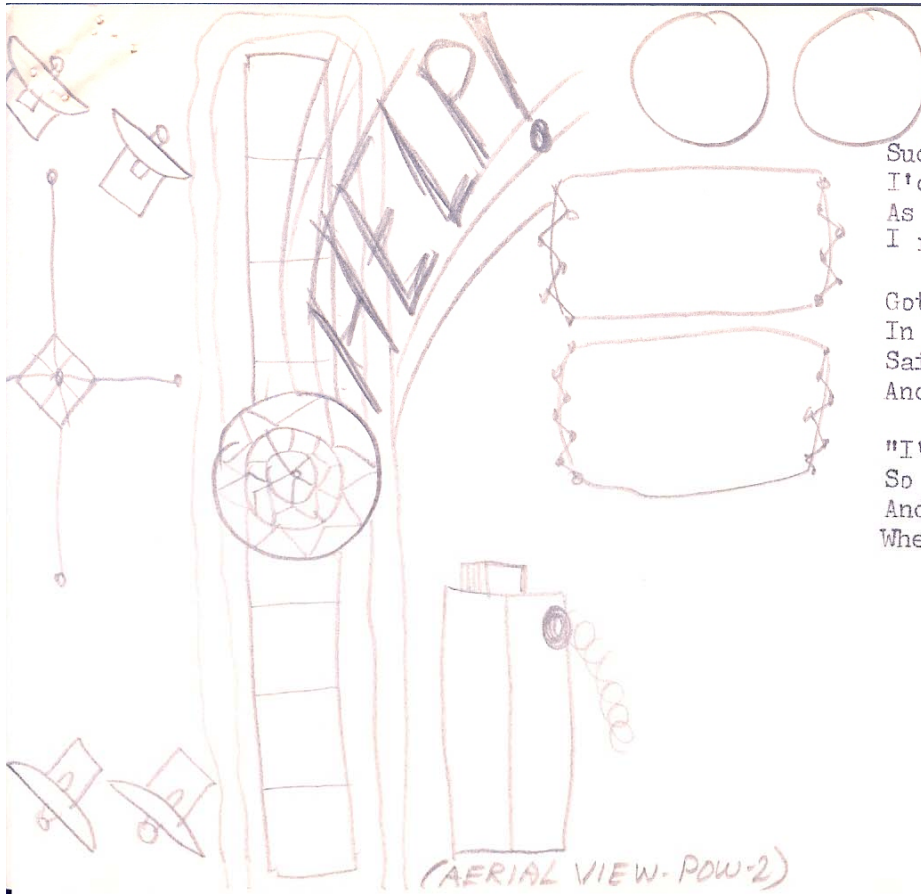
But now the Nip is calling me,
 With progress to relay,
 And he mouthed his words
 peculiarly,
 In a strange-type foreign way.

"Eight zero zero seven,
 Is at six-nine, one-five-oh,
 And now I need a center freq,
 So I know which route to go."



Well, I got this poop all passed to him,
 And was about to settle back,
 When Murph called up with info,
 On a brand new northbound track.

Simultaneous with this call,
 I also heard from One,
 "My console's dead so take my tracks...
 ...I hope you're having fun."



Suddenly I realized,
 I'd missed a tell on Lark,
 As I tried to dial the info in,
 I received a Noah's Ark.

Got a call from POW just now,
 In a lazy western drawl,
 Said, "Wein just left from Umiat,
 And is moving at a crawl."

"I'd like his progress," he went on,
 So get it if you will,
 And also let me know,
 When he's landing at Coleville.



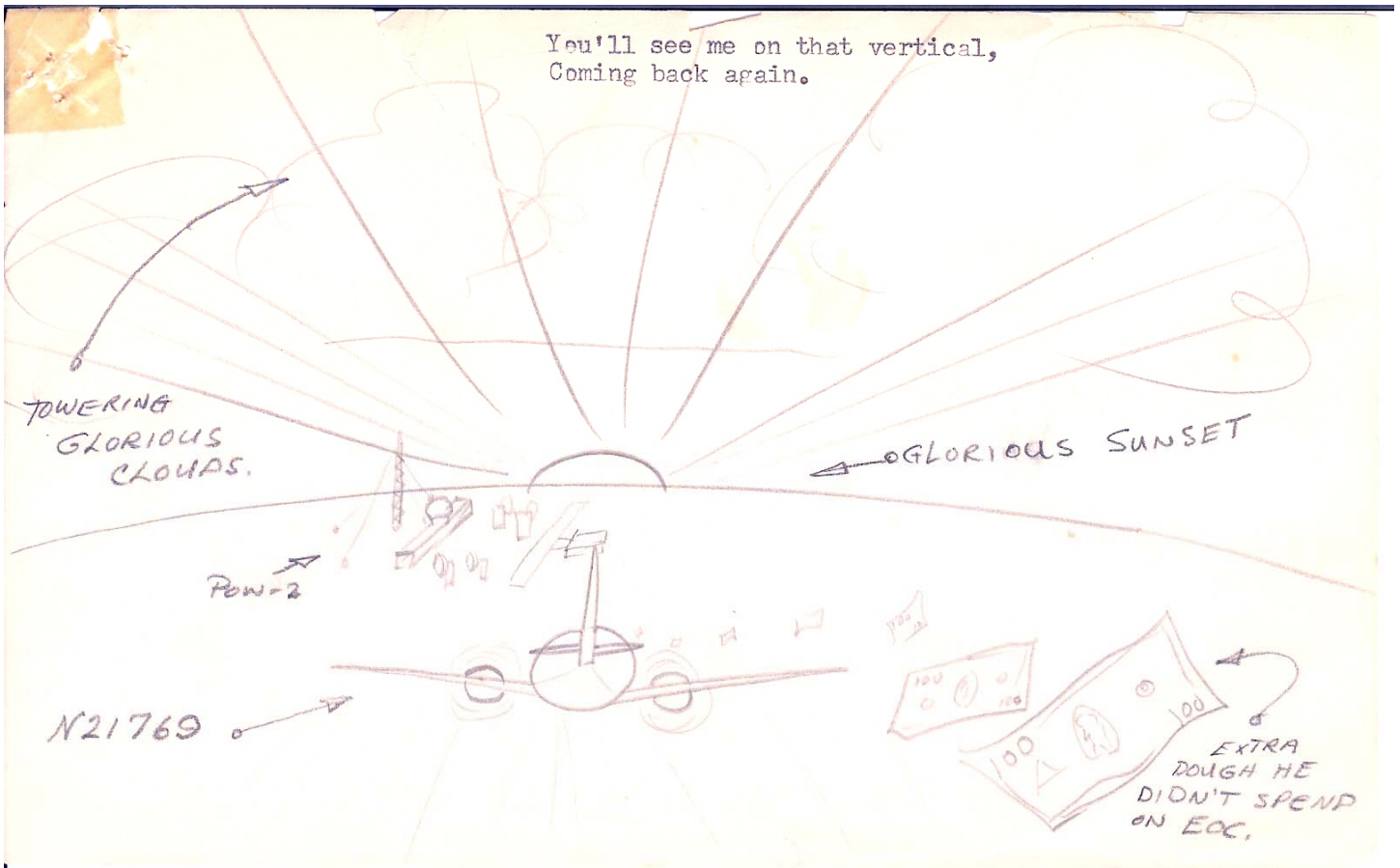
While I was filling in my log,
 With all the Pertinant stuff,
 My brow was dripping sweat,
 Cause it was getting mighty rough.

Then my PBX it rang,
 Which I answered with a wheeze,
 To hear a squeaky voice request,
 My "f_____ weather please."



I'll tell you buddy, about that time,
I'd had it up to here,
My hands were shaking violently,
My face a twisted sneer.

But just like every DewLine fool,
After EOC, my friend,



Ode to a Radician on Console Watch

Or

(That Poor Mutha!)

By Clive Beckmann, c. 1965

The story behind the cartoon:

Back in 1965, I was a brand new radician, recently graduated from the Dewline Domestic Training Center in Streator, Illinois. Upon arrival in the Alaska Sector in October of that year, I was assigned to auxiliary site Pow-2 (geographical name, Oliktok).

I quickly adapted to the new job, thanks to the excellent technical training I'd received at Streator... adapted, that is, to everything but the operations part of the job. Like most of my contemporaries, I had a solid background in electronics and, consequently, handling the maintenance duties came easy. But it took several months before I began to feel comfortable with sitting the console watch. As a new guy, it seemed to me that a console shift consisted of long periods of boredom (during which very little happened), interspersed with short periods of sheer terror and panic (during which everything that could possibly happen, did happen). At Streator, it had been stressed that while on console watch you had to be very meticulous about handling all events with 100% accuracy, including writing everything that transpired, verbatim into the console log. I believe that this had been stressed to the point that most new radicians were very nervous about making mistakes while sitting console. The night shifts were much easier to handle than the day shifts because nearly everyone else in the world was asleep at night. During day, everyone in the world seemed to be calling the poor guy on console watch! But like any other job, as experience increased, it became ever more simple to handle, even to the point of becoming slightly jaded about it all.

One night after having been on board for three or four months, I was on console watch and began doodling with little hand-drawn scenes that depicted events that had transpired during past shifts. The result was the mini-comic book presented here. Since 1965 was back in the days when copiers were in their infancy, I sent the little book to all sites in the Alaska Sector for all to enjoy. It was amazing that it eventually returned to me intact. After that, it went into a box and remained packed away for nearly 40 years until I finally discovered it just recently! I immediately thought of Larry Wilson's Dewline website and the possibility of posting it there for all to see and reminisce over.

A few words of explanation for some of the wording... after all, it's been 40 years and some of you may not understand the intent when these words were written:

- "... coming down in alpha-mike." Refers to a location on the georef grid overlaying the radar scope.

- "Murph" and "Murphys Dope" refers to Murphy Dome, the NCC to which Alaska Sector reported.

- "Noah's Ark" was what they called Giant Step SAC traffic back in '65.

- "Wein" is Wein Air Alaska Airlines.

- The "squeaky voice" referred to belonged to a petite little Eskimo girl who worked at Wein Airlines in Barrow village. She would frequently call the Dew sites to get aviation weather for the pilots. She had a very high-pitched voice. Radicians liked to get calls from her because in those days there were no women at the Dew sites and it was a real rush being able to talk to a female! So, radicians being radicians, a little game was invented whereby a guy would call another site on the phone and disguise his voice (very easy to do) as he requested, "May I have your f___ing weather please?" It was really funny to hear the pregnant pause on the other end of the line as the poor victim of the practical joke tried to figure out if he'd heard correctly!! Any excuse to have fun!!!

- "EOC", or "End of Contract", is what they used to call your 1-year leave. Also known as "EOYL".