



Hooter Hilites

A Publication of the USS Sea Owl Association

Web Site: <http://www.usseaowl.com>

We still give a hoot!

June 2007 Issue



Shipmates & 1st mates

President's Message

Our Groton Picnic was a screaming success - thanks in large to Ed Welch and his family. Ed was the chief-in-charge, but the on-site cooking (sweating) of our chow was left to his son Ed. I know that I can speak for everyone that was there...the food was great and there was plenty of it. Our sincere Thanks to Ed, Paulette and their family for another great summer picnic.

This year's raffle prize, a 20" LCD television, was won by shipmate Terry Murphy ST 63-65. I called Murf after the drawing; he was surprised that he was the winner. Terry has told me that he plans to use this TV as one of the most "kick butt" computer monitors on his block.



This is Murph with his wife, Karen after receiving the TV.

Our cruise after our reunion in Kings Bay is going to be a great time. We have approx. 20 shipmates, for a total of 57 people signed up for this cruise. There are still cabins available if you want to sail with us. Call 1-800-244-7447, ext # 38225, tell them you are part of the Sea Owl group and you want to sail with us. Those shipmates that want to purchase new shirts for this cruise, contact Ed Welch now. He will not be bringing the Ships' Stores to Kings Bay. Call Ed at (860) 446-9104.

I can not stress enough the importance of registering with the SubVets of WWII for the Kings Bay Memorial Service. You can contact me or the Submarine Museum of St. Marys directly at (912) 882-2782 for a registration form. Registering for the Sea Owl reunion will NOT get you a gate pass for the Kings Bay Submarine Base. You must register with the Submarine Museum for clearance to get on the base. Those registering with SubVets must have the forms in no later than 10 October. When registering with SubVets, make sure to mark their form which reunion group they are attending with. This helps to keep reunion groups together, if possible, on the

SSBN tours. Those retired with a gate pass already on your car will only get you on to the base, it will not register you for the Memorial dinner Friday night or possible SSBN tours. I'm planning on using the SubVets of WWII hospitality room for the Sea Owl hospitality room, in past years this has worked out fine.

In a nut shell:

If you want to cruise with us, call the cruise line.

If you are attending only the Sea Owl reunion, register with John Leers using the form included as an insert to this newsletter.

If you are attending the Sea Owl reunion & the SubVets Memorial service, you must file two different registration forms - one to John Leers for the Sea Owl reunion and the other to:

St. Marys Submarine Museum.
102 St. Marys Street West
Saint Marys, Ga. 31558-4945
(912) 882-ASUB (2782)

If you do not already have the registration form for the SubVets Memorial service and dinner, contact Roy Purtell or John Crouse at the above St. Mary's Museum address.

Tom Gilbert Memorial Endowment Fund:

Shipmates, I have, with the help of USSVI and the USS Drum base of USSVI along with the SubVets of WWII GA/FLA chapter, set up an endowment fund that will fund the Brotherhood Fund of USSVI. I chose this Fund with the approval of Tom's wife Suzy. The Drum Base & SubVets of WWII have already contributed to this fund in excess of \$800.00. Your Sea Owl Association also plans to contribute money collected from your dues, but will not do so until it's voted on during our business meeting in St. Marys during our reunion. Anyone that would like to contribute directly to this fund, can do so. Send a check to USSVI, PO Box 3870, Silverdale, WA 98383-3870. Make checks out to USSVI, with a notation that it's intended for the Tom Gilbert endowment fund. All donations are tax deductible. Once the fund hits \$2,000 or more USSVI will buy a CD dedicated to the Brotherhood Fund.

St. Marys Reunion

(Much of the information below is repeated from the March issue, but it is important to review if you are planning to attend the St. Mary's Reunion.)

October 30th thru November 2nd 2007

Arrive in St. Marys on or near Tuesday October 30th and make yourself comfortable with the area.

Sea Owl rooms are available at the Sleeps Inn, 1321 Hospitality Ave, Kingsland GA. Call (912) 673-7116. Let them know you are with the Sea Owl group. Our room rate is \$55.00 per night (plus tax). Rooms may also be available on the base at the Navy Gateway Inns & Suites which is the former TVQ & BOQ. Call them directly for availability, (912) 573-4871. The Sleeps Inn does not have meeting rooms available for a hospitality room.

Wednesday October 31st

This is still an open day and as of right now there is nothing planned. (It would be a great day for Halloween Party!)

Thursday November 1st

We will gather at the Borrell Creek restaurant for our reunion meeting/dinner. This is planned to begin at 4pm. (Use the enclosed form to send your payment for this event.)

Friday November 2nd

At 10:00 we will muster on the base at the WWII Memorial Pavilion.

11:30 Tour of Trident Training Facility (directly following the service)

18:00 Memorial Dinner at the Clubs of Kings Bay on the base. SSBN tours are dependent on the availability and the status of the boats at the time we are there. They are not guaranteed, thus far boat tours are set up as follows.

1 on Wed, 2 on Thu, 1 on Fri and 2 on Saturday

Saturday November 3rd

Is moving out day, see everyone next year in Manitowoc, Wisconsin For those shipmates taking the cruise departure time from Jacksonville is 16:00

This is important for those attending our St. Marys reunion this year. Anyone who doesn't have subbase access, and wants to attend the memorial dinner or get a chance to tour a SSBN must submit the registration form (available from Roy Purtell) which is provided by John Crouse of the St. Mary's Submarine Museum. There are no exceptions! John sponsors the subvet. The subvet can sponsor his wife, relative, friend or a duty driver. ALL must be a US Citizen, no exceptions. So make sure you send two different registrations, one for attending the SubVets Memorial Service and one for attending the Sea Owl reunion. Anybody with a military ID can enter the subbase and attend the memorial and many locals do. Due to the numbers of those attending (700 to 800) John can't book tours and dinners just for the different reunion groups, but does try to group the reunion groups in smaller groups when going on the boat tours. His number #1 priority is the WWII Subvets and their guests during this week. Cold War Subvets and their guests come next. This is expected as this is their memorial that they created back in the 1980s. John just does the work for them. For SSBN tour all must be able to walk, talk and chew bubble gum for three hours without stopping. Those with physical condition, even in a wheel chair, can go on the Trident Training Facility tour on Friday after the memorial service.

Anybody not registered with John Crouse will NOT be put on the MEMORIAL SUBBASE ACCESS LIST, or the SSBN TOUR ACCESS LIST or attend the memorial dinner Friday night. Those registering with him must have the memorial forms to him no later than 20 October. When registering, make sure to mark the form with the Sea Owl reunion group. For SSBN tours kids must be above 10 years of age. John will have to verify ID of the ALL subvets registering for subbase security to get on either of the two access lists. You must be a SS Qualified and a member of Subvets WWII, USSVI or submit a copy of your DD-214 with their registration form. EACH subvet must complete his own form and pay the memorial registration fee. Each of their guests must also submit their own form and pay the registration fee. Registration fee is \$10 this year, but is subject to change. The fee pays for the memorial expenses and event expenses. The MEMORIAL SUBBASE ACCESS LIST will only be good from 30 Oct - 4 Nov. So don't attempt to enter the subbase unless you have your own military ID. The SSBN

TOUR ACCESS LIST will be submitted prior to your arrival to the tour coordinators.

Major events:

Thursday November 1st

17:00 Local Officials Welcome

Friday November 2nd

10:00 WWII Memorial Service

11:30 Tour of Trident Training Facility (directly following the service)

18:00 Memorial Dinner at the Clubs of Kings Bay

New change as of 21 Nov 2006. The Subbase TVQ is now called 'Navy Gateway Inns & Suites'. This is a whole Navy wide change for all TVQs on all Navy bases. If you don't know what a TVQ is, it's what we use to call the BOQ, where the officers stayed. They have 3 types of rooms here on Kings Bay. Multi Bed Rooms (max 2 per room), Single Occupancy rooms and Suites. Suites are divided into 3 groups, Flag Officer Suites, Mini Suites and Standard Suites. Prices vary from \$17.00 to \$50.00. Early reservations will be accepted sometime next spring. Normally you can only book out a couple of weeks in advance for the Navy Gateway Inns & Suites, unless you are a senior officer then you can book about a month in advance. They change the rules for the WWII Memorial Service during the summer before. The TVQ doesn't have a hospitality room for groups. Phone number for the Navy Gateway Inns & Suites is (912) 573-4871

SSBN tours may or may not happen, and schedule subject to change, which it has in the recent years. Tours are assigned by John Crouse on an individual basis, subvet & his registered guests. Remember his priorities above. He will not assign a whole tour to just one group, as every group would want their own. And everybody can't go on the Friday tour. Those who want the best shot for a tour need to be present for at least two-four days and sign up for all of the tours that they can be available for. After 20 October John will assign tours, since the 20th is the last day to register, and he needs all the requests by then. The Subbase needs a couple of weeks to conduct required security checks, prior to people arriving on the 31st.

From the Editor

If there is an American trait considered by many in the world as unusual or even unique, it is that we are a nation of volunteers. It is something that keeps many of our museums and other organizations alive and well. Your Sea Owl Association is one such organization, but there are thousands across the country. Recently I received a letter from a woman named Fariza in Tajikistan who I had met in May 2006 when she led a group of visitors to the United States as part of one of many international visitor programs that are ongoing around the country. She was writing to express her concern at our loss of the Russian submarine, K-77, and to offer encouragement. Hers was one of many such messages I have received, but this part of her letter touched me most, "You know, when I came back home, I constantly tell everyone how kind and caring American people are, they are so open, welcoming, and attentive. I even wrote an article which I named 'breaking down the stereotypes...' You know why? Because we were always told that American's only do things for themselves and if they can't get anything out of it for themselves they won't make a step... You and others showed us a different America. Thanks to people like you Ken, we saw a different world of America."

These days there is not much that I can do with regard to the K-77 and most of my volunteer work is done supporting the International

Center of Worcester (ICW) and I try to spend at least two days a month in Groton as a docent at the Submarine Force Museum.

Back in February I attended the Annual Meeting of the National Council for International Visitors in Washington, DC. During one of the sessions on recruiting new members one of the “target groups” mentioned was retirees in their second year of retirement. I realized, “this was me!” When I first retired 2-1/2 years ago and realized I now had time to do so many of the things I had wanted to do but had been putting off, it wasn’t long before I found myself so busy I wondered how I had ever found time to work a full-time job! The difference was that most of these things were what I *wanted* to do versus what I *had* to do. I then found myself becoming selective and concentrating on those activities that were most satisfying and rewarding and where I felt I could do the most good.

As always a newsletter would not be complete if we were not to remind everyone to pay their dues. Again, the two digits or letters following your name on the mailing label to indicate your dues status according to our records. To review, if there is a “LM” on your mailing label, you are a Life Member and you never have to pay dues again. A “06” would mean you are paid up through October 2006, etc. If you are overdue or “dink”, but still within a year of being paid up, you will find a note reminding you to pay your dues before October 31st or you will no longer receive the newsletter by mail.

I am always looking for interesting stories and articles to publish in the newsletter that would be of interest to shipmates. If you have sea stories, unusual hobbies, stories of trips you have taken or any other material you think would be of interest to your Sea owl shipmates, please send them on to me. If you prefer to remain anonymous and not take credit for the story, Howland Owl is always happy to tag on his byline instead.

Groton Picnic

by Ken Johnson

Below are photographs of shipmates who attended this year’s Groton Picnic. As Roy mentioned earlier, the main raffle prize was won by Shipmate Terry Murphy, ST 63-65 who was in my division during the end of my Sea Owl tour.



Kneeling l to r: Ken Johnson LT(jg) 62-65, John Bergren ST 52-53, Frank Maguire ENC 51-57, Greg Hankin SN 68-69, Roy Purtell TM 68-69, Clyde Turner EN 64-66, Ed Welch CS 66-69, Jack Empie EN 62-64/66-69

Standing l to r: Jim Madigan FT 68-69, John Evans EN 53-56, Jack Mahan TM 61-63, Bob D’Amico SN 68-69, Rufus Weaver SD/CS 47-59, Herb Lathrop EN 68-69, Bob Kreeger TM 50-54, Herb Hawes IC 66-67, John Salerno SO 52-55, John Barnes MM 64-66, Mike Polhemus SO 56-57, Tony Laub QM 64-66, Jim Jack LT 62-63

In addition one shipmate who was attending a Sea Owl function for the first time was Stu Jack, LT 62-63. I remember Stu as the one I relieved as Photographic Officer on the Sea Owl in 1963 after he was detached. This was the beginning of my strong interest in photography that has lasted to this day.



Digital photography in those days was not even on anyone’s “radar screen” and periscope photography was done using a 4” x 5” special periscope film camera. As one of our competitive exercises, Sea Owl was required to conduct a photo reconnaissance of a section of beach, develop the film, make enlargements and print the results on board. To do this, the Wardroom would be set up as a photographic darkroom to enlarge and print the photographs.

Below are the “first mates” attending this year’s picnic.



l to r: Carol D’Amico, Jane Salerno, Alice Madigan, Carol Purtell, Marlene Mahan, Honey Taylor, Dianne Hawes, Barbara Turner, Paulette Welch, Margurite Weaver

Sailors Rest Your Oars

One of the saddest parts of doing the newsletter is always the listing of those shipmates who have departed on “eternal patrol” since the last issue. Since the last newsletter we have learned of the loss of the following shipmates:

Harold Shealey, ENC 54-56 – April 10, 2007

Joe Zimmerman, EM 52-56 – April 20, 2007



This photo of Joe Zimmerman was taken in 1999.

We extend our deepest sympathy to the families and friends of our departed shipmates.

*There is a port of no return, where ships
May ride at anchor for a little space
And then, some starless night, the cable slips,
Leaving an eddy at the mooring place . . .
Gulls, veer no longer. Sailor, rest your oar.
No tangled wreckage will be washed ashore.*

Hooter Hilites is a quarterly publication of the USS Sea Owl Association. Issues are published in March, June, September and December.

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The 40's

June 2007 Issue



The Revell 1/72nd Scale Gato Model

By Ken Johnson

Last fall Revell released the long awaited 1/72nd scale model of the World War II Gato class submarine. This kit includes decals that permit completing it in one of 4 different configurations, USS Cobia (SS 245), USS Silversides (SS 236), USS Flasher (SS 249) or USS Growler (SS 215). Cobia and Silversides are preserved as museum boats in Wisconsin and Michigan respectively and the Flasher conning tower is the centerpiece of the National Submarine Memorial (East) in Groton. The Gato class USS Growler was Being a fan of model subs, I ordered one of these model kits. It is my intent eventually to make it into a radio controlled model once a modification kit for this purpose is available from more experienced R/C modeler than I.

Since its release a number of after market items have been offered that enable enthusiasts to create different boats from this kit. One of these is Nautilus Models, AAA Hobby and Supply of Marietta, GA. Pictured below, for example, is an assembled 5"/25, 1/72 scale deck gun offered as a kit by Nautilus Models for \$25.



Sea Owl, of course, was not a Gato class submarine, but was a later Balao class boat. Since the 5"/25 deck gun was the model installed on Sea Owl, I could purchase this as a replacement for the 4"/50 gun which comes as part of the Revell Gato model. There is an excellent source of information about the 5"/25 submarine deck gun here: http://www.fleetsubmarine.com/5_25_gun.html. It has several photographs of the 5"/25 deck gun aboard the USS Cod in Cleveland. In addition there is one installed outside the Submarine Force Library & Museum in Groton.

Other sources are making available different conning tower variations, including Balao class conning towers. This opens the possibility that I could then complete this kit as a reasonably accurate replica of the World War II Sea Owl!

I understand that different sail variations will soon be available as well, including a Portsmouth fleet snorkel sail. This would make it possible to complete an early '50s Sea Owl. You would probably

be on your own making a BQR-4 bow kit, if you wanted it to look like Sea Owl as she was from about 1955 on.

USS Cod

By Ken Johnson

On my list of things to do this summer is a visit to the USS Cod in Cleveland. If you have not visited Cod, you can check out their Website, <http://www.usscod.org/>, and get an idea of what they have done with this boat. It is generally acknowledged as one of the best WW II submarine museums in existence anywhere.

There is much of interest on their Website including a schematic diagram of the Torpedo Data Computer (TDC). Apparently Cod has restored their TDC to operating condition!

Third War Patrol Video Clip

Recently while using a trial version of Macromedia Flash, I made a clip of the rescue of the downed aviators by Sea Owl in July 1945. The clip is here: <http://www.oakhamgraphics.com/aviators.html>.



The video portion of the clip is taken from the video originally filmed by Sea Owl "plankowner", Victor Scholz. The audio portion is from an oral history interview I did last fall at Charleston with another Sea Owl "plankowner", Bob Schlichenmaier, who was Sea Owl's Leading Quartermaster at the time. While it is a relatively short clip, I would not recommend trying to view this over a dial-up connection.

There are several other parts of this video that I would like to combine with narrative eventually, preferably by shipmates like Bob Schlichenmaier who were actually there and experienced it.

As you will read on the '50s page, I also interviewed Capt Dave Wessinger, CO 58-60, at Charleston and have posted a clip from that interview on my Website as well.



The 50's

June 2007 Issue



USS Trout (SS 566)

By Ken Johnson

Following World War II the Allies captured many advanced design German submarines in various stages of construction as well as a few that had already entered service. The most significant of them were those that were known as the Type XXI, which is generally acknowledged as the first true submarine design. In Russia these boats became the basis for the post-war Whiskey class submarine. In Great Britain they influenced the design of the British Porpoise class submarine. In the United States analysis of the captured Type XXI submarine U-3008 inspired the design of the Tang class fast attack diesel-electric submarines.

Six Tang class submarines were built: Tang, Trigger, Wahoo, Trout, Gudgeon, and Harder. One of the less successful of the innovations incorporated into the Tang class submarines was the General Motors 16-338 lightweight, compact, high-speed "pancake" engine. This engine had a vertical crankshaft and the cylinders were arranged radially like an aircraft engine. Because of their compact size four of these engines could be installed in a single engine room, thus deleting an entire compartment from the submarine's design, but their compact design made them difficult to maintain, and they tended to leak oil into their generators. In 1956, the Navy decided to replace them with the more reliable and proven ten-cylinder Fairbanks-Morse opposed-piston diesels. Those of us who lived with these rugged engines on Sea Owl can certainly appreciate this decision. To accommodate the larger engines, the boats had to be lengthened some nine feet in the engine room, and even then, only three could be installed. Accordingly, the first four Tang class subs, including Trout, were lengthened, while Gudgeon and Harder, still under construction, were built to the new length, with the Fairbanks-Morse diesel engines.

Trout was built by Electric Boat. Commissioned on June 27, 1952, she became the first of the class to enter service. Trout had a long and distinguished service during the Cold War. Trout operated out of Squadron 10 in New London from 1952 to 1959. From 1959 to 1970 she was assigned to Squadron 4 in Charleston. Following this she was transferred to San Diego and operated in the Pacific until 1976.



Stricken from the Navy records on December 19, 1978, Trout was sold to and scheduled to be transferred to Iran in 1979. Following the seizure of the American Embassy in Teheran, Trout was seized

as an Iranian asset. In 1992 Trout was transferred to the Naval Underwater Warfare Center to be used at Key West as a remotely controlled target vessel for US Navy aircraft.

For a period of time the USS Trout was available for acquisition as a museum boat and the USSVI San Diego Base was actively trying to get it for the San Diego Maritime Museum. It would have made a very fine addition to the museum there, but their efforts to raise the necessary funds proved unsuccessful and they had to abandon their effort. It is unfortunate that this submarine will not be preserved as a museum. At this time Trout remains in Philadelphia where it is being prepared for sale as scrap. Recently Trout was opened up to those from certain other submarine museum boats to salvage artifacts.

The San Diego Base and the San Diego Maritime Museum are currently attempting to acquire the USS Dolphin (AGSS 555) as an addition to the museum. We hope that they are more successful in obtaining this, our last operational diesel boat, but regret that they were not able to acquire the Trout.

Capt Dave Wessinger and the USS Pickerel

By Ken Johnson

As I mentioned on the previous page, I interviewed Shipmate Dave Wessinger, CO 58-60, at Charleston last fall. I was particularly interested to learn that as a junior officer he was the diving officer for the high angle surfacing of the USS Pickerel in 1952. I took the portion of my interview, made it into a Macromedia Flash video and posted it on my Website.



The URL is: <http://www.oakhamgraphics.com/wessinger.html>.

This is one you will definitely need a high speed connection to view since it is about 8 minutes long and would take some time to download over a dial-up connection. It is a fascinating interview and one worth watching. I hope to make more such clips available on line eventually.



The 60's

June 2007 Issue



Unusual Dolphin-Wearing Rate

By Ken Johnson

During the Groton Picnic I was talking with Shipmate Bob D'Amico, SN 68-69. I asked him what rate he was while in the Navy and he said "Illustrator Draftsman". (In case you don't know



what the DM rate badge looks like, this is it.) It occurred to me that he may just have been the only dolphin-wearing Illustrator Draftsman in the Navy since it is not normally a rate you would find aboard a submarine. Unfortunately, as Roy and I learned

from him, Bob did not receive his dolphins on Sea Owl, claiming that Sea Owl was decommissioned when he was within two weeks of qualifying. Since he had decided to strike for the Illustrator Draftsman rating, he was not reassigned to another submarine and never got the opportunity to complete his qualification. Roy and I hope that it may be possible to rectify this and get him a letter declaring him "qualified in submarines".

Bob is now Creative Director and Principal of Millenium Design Group in Brooklyn, NY. He has graciously offered to contribute one or more original drawings for future issues of "Hooter Hilites" and I welcome his contribution with great enthusiasm!

41 For Freedom

By Ken Johnson

As I am sure you already know our first 41 ballistic submarines were named after American patriots. Not all of these men were citizens of the United States or even of the 13 original British Colonies. Lafayette, (full name Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette) was a French nobleman, Von Steuben was Prussian soldier and Casimir Pulaski was a Polish nobleman, but all helped our cause during the Revolutionary War. Simon Bolivar probably never even set foot in the United States but was a *South* American soldier, patriot and statesman.

What you may not know is that when each of these submarines was commissioned, starting with the USS George Washington, Admiral Rickover would send a letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives with an essay about the man for whom the submarine had been named. While not a historian, Rickover had a keen interest in education and these men represent a broad range of American historical figures.

In July 1968 the United States Congress approved a resolution stating, "That there be printed as a House document the letters of Vice Admiral Hyman G. Rickover, United States Navy, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives relating to the distinguished Americans in whose honor the United States Navy Polaris nuclear submarines were named." The result was a book titled, "Eminent Americans Namesakes of the Polaris Submarine Fleet" which was published by the Government Printing Office in 1972. While the book was published in the public domain as an official House document, the resolution approving its publication granted Admiral Rickover copyright over the content. I am hoping soon to get permission to reproduce these essays in electronic format either on a CD or on the Internet and to make them in this

format available for their historic content through the Submarine Force Library & Museum.

These essays are historically significant and represent a part of our submarine heritage. While they represent little more than a brief "snapshot" of the lives of these men, perhaps they will in some measure stimulate an interest in learning more about these men and the history of our country in the minds of today's school children.

The Fate of the K-77

By Ken Johnson

I have spent a great deal of time over the past almost 5 years working in various capacities with the Russian Juliett class cruise missile submarine, K-77, in Providence, RI. Unfortunately this past April 17th the K-77 sank at the pier as a result of a severe nor'easter storm that struck the Providence area. I will not go into the details of just how that happened here, but if you want the details you can visit the Website: <http://www.juliett484.org> and find links there to the latest information, pictures on my Website, etc. At this time K-77 still rests on the bottom of the Providence River in 30 feet of water waiting salvage efforts. Planning for the salvage is ongoing, but just when it will be raised and what will happen to it then I do not know.

In an article I wrote for the June 2007 issue of the USS Saratoga Museum newsletter, I mentioned the fortune cookie message I got on April 17th in a take out order from a Providence restaurant. The message read, "You are given a chance to take part in an exciting adventure." It brought some humor into what was otherwise a very sad day and experience.

This same message could well have applied if I had gotten it back in August 2002 when I first signed on as a volunteer at the Russian Sub Museum. It was this sign that caught my interest back then.



In many respects the past almost 5 years has been just that. I have met many Russians and made friendships among them that I hope will last a lifetime. These friendships and the visitors to the United States that I have met over the past two years through the International Center of Worcester are examples of the opportunities I would likely never have experienced had it not been for my interest in this old Russian submarine.