



# Hooter Hilites

A Publication of the USS Sea Owl Association

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

We still give a hoot!

June 2008 Issue



## President's Message

Hello Shipmates:

Here we are only a couple of months away from our annual reunion; it always amazes me how this just sneaks up on us. As I always do, I encourage everyone that is attending to send in your registration form sooner rather than later. This really helps with planning dinners or day trips.

As you know, we raffled off a Bose wave radio at our Groton picnic this year. The winner of this year's radio was none other than Terry Murphy ST 63-65. If his name sounds familiar, it should. Terry was the winner of last year's LCD TV. Congratulations to Terry -- maybe we shouldn't let him buy tickets next year!!!

We have had a change of the Secretary/Treasurer's position. Ken Johnson has offered to take over the job from John Leers. John Leers has held the position since 1999, doing an excellent job for us. I'm certain that I, as well as everyone else, thanks John for the fine job he did over the years, as well as thanking Ken for taking over this very tasking position. My sincere thanks to both of you.

Update on ill shipmates:

Rufus Weaver CS 47-59 was hospitalized this year, just prior to our Groton picnic. I'm told that Rufus is doing kidney dialysis 3 times a week, but he's home resting, being taken care of by his family.

Ed Bess EM 64-69 was at our Groton picnic. He's also at home, doing what he loves to do most.

Bob Thomas EM 65-67 spends most of his days in the house. He really enjoys hearing from his shipmates.

We wish these 3 shipmates and any other shipmate who is ill or having a tough time our very best wishes. Our thoughts and prayers are with you always!!!

Roy Purtell

## From the Editor

Congratulations to Terry Murphy on once again winning the big Groton Picnic raffle prize! On receiving the prize, Murph sent the following to Roy:

"Thanks guys, coming from guy that earned his living with his hearing this is a truly fine sound coming from such a compact device. I have a complete surround sound system currently connected in my entertainment system yet the Bose outperforms for flat unembellished sound as it was heard at the recording site. Nothing added, nothing remove, truly a joy to listen to. I'm only sorry we all couldn't have one.

My love and gratitude to you one and all. Make sure you pick something DIFFERENT for next years drawing. I don't want two of anything. I'm just cocky enough to get more shipmates into the drawing to ruin my chances of three's a charm.

Love ya all, Murf ST 63-65"

I was hoping to get a photograph of Murph with his new Bose, but did not get it in time to include in the newsletter before I had to go to

"press". Many of us at the picnic on learning that he had won again for the second year in a row would like to bring him along on our next casino visit!

Once again, Shipmate Bob, D'Amico has come through with what I think is his best cartoon yet and I have given over the entire '60s page to it! I turned Bob loose at this year's Groton picnic to gather material for at least the next cartoon. Bob is open to any other ideas for cartoons for future issues as well.

This month Shipmate Bruce Blessington returns as a contributor and I hope you enjoy reading his latest. He has embarked aboard his boat, "Dress Blue" for a journey down the East Coast. His last on lobstering seemed to generate a significant demand for lobster at the Groton picnic and I believe 24 lobsters were consumed with great appreciation thanks to Ed Welch. I was a little worried for a while that he would meet my deadline for publication of this issue as his ability to send email attachments was unreliable at best from the locations where he happened to be. Fortunately though he apparently found the "email buoy" © and was finally able to get through with his article for this issue.

I welcome the opportunity to take on the additional duties as Association Secretary/Treasurer. Actually it simplifies matters somewhat with respect to keeping dues status and current mailing address information. As always a newsletter would not be complete if we were not to remind everyone to pay their dues. I was hoping in this newsletter to provide you with a membership card with your membership status, but events overcame my intentions so I will do it in the next issue. Still, the two digits or letters following your name on the mailing label indicate your dues status according to my 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 "08" would mean you are paid up through October 2008, etc. If you have reason to believe that this status is in error, please let me know.

I had also planned to publish a Treasurer's Report in this issue as per our Association bylaws which call for this twice a year, but again must put this off until the September issue.

Please note that there is included in this issue a registration form for the upcoming Manitowoc reunion in September. If you plan to attend, please fill this out with a check for your payment and return it to me at your earliest convenience.

## Russian Submarine Salvage

By Ken Johnson

As you know by now, a Russian Juliett cruise missile submarine in Providence has occupied a big part of my existence for the past six years since it opened as a museum in August 2002. Tragically it sank at the pier in April 2007 and my involvement since then with it has been assisting in salvage efforts to raise it from the bottom of the Providence River. Since I have intimate knowledge of the boat, I have assisted each dive team from Navy Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit Two and been available to answer detailed questions about the

sub for NAV SEA Supervisor of Salvage who are providing technical support. Over the past year I have gotten to know many of the MDSU-2 divers as well as Army salvage divers who have been assisting them. I have gained enormous respect for their skill and professionalism in the process.

During this fiscal year the Department of Defense budgeted the salvage of the submarine as an “Innovative Readiness Training” exercise. Early this month the Navy began assembling literally tons of equipment on site to continue salvage efforts begun last August. (You can see an illustrated narrative of what took place back then at this web page, [www.oakhamgraphics.com/salvage.html](http://www.oakhamgraphics.com/salvage.html) and get some idea of what is happening now. The goal this time is to have the submarine on the surface by July 15<sup>th</sup>. On June 25<sup>th</sup> they met their first milestone on time which was to right the submarine to an acceptable angle for the effort to raise it.

On the morning of June 26<sup>th</sup> when I arrived on site at low tide, I was greeted with this sight.



This shows the submarine uprighted from its 48 degree port list to a 9 degree port list with 5-6 feet of the top of the sail showing. I must admit it is a more welcome sight than the one that greeted me on the morning of April 17, 2007 when all that could be seen was the tips of the two periscopes at low tide, lying over at a 48 degree angle! Since this photo several orange stabilization pontoons have been attached to the port side and the next phase is about to begin which will be running “belly bands” under the keel and attaching them to lift flotation bags. They will then finally bring the sub back to the surface.

This has been a fascinating operation to watch and a chance to view first hand some of the capabilities that the Department of Defense has in conducting salvage operations. These capabilities extend world wide and can be deployed quickly where needed. This operation is providing very valuable experience and training to all involved. As one of the divers recently stated, “you don’t hear about what we do unless there is a disaster somewhere and we are called upon to assist. Hopefully I can share more details of the experience via my web site soon.

### **Dress Blue Dispatch #3**

By Bruce Blessington

June 11, 2008 was the first time that I’d sailed into Boston Harbor in more than twenty years. It was a perfect morning, sparkling clear after a thorough atmospheric scrubbing the night before by an intense series of thunderstorms rolling through from the Berkshires

to the sea. The city was like a ceramic mural, shiny and reflective in some portions, rich in earth tones and pastels in others. Water traffic was brisk with a mix of high speed ferries on a mission (don’t get in *their* way), commuter boats, container ships, water taxis, tugs with barges ahead, behind and on the hip and yes, a few pleasure craft including Dress Blue.

Our destination was Commercial Wharf, home to the Boston Yacht Haven and some of Boston’s most interesting residential property and where we would spend the next several days of our month long cruise from Maine to Sandy Hook New Jersey. Shipmates who may be interested can follow Dress Blue’s progress at:

<http://www.sailblogs.com/member/dressblue/>

I’ve lived close to, gone to school, worked and played in Boston over the last fifty or so years and seen the city evolve from a self-centered “Hub of New England” (some would have thought the universe) into a world class, cosmopolitan city that compares favorably with London, New York, Paris or Rio de Janeiro. The process has been uneven and at times down right messy but the result is spectacular. For example, during the bad old days of the fifties when eminent domain takings were de rigor for cities that didn’t wish to trouble themselves with more complicated planning protocols, Boston cut a incision in its vitals and built the Central Artery. The takings for this six lane, elevated monstrosity destroyed neighborhoods displaced small businesses and drove a steel and concrete wedge between the downtown and its waterfront. Now fifty years later, thanks to the vision of the late Speaker Thomas “Tip” O’Neil and some courageous local politicians including Governor Michael Dukakis and Transportation Secretary Fred Salvucci, the Central Artery is gone. The highway was buried beneath the city in the largest civil engineering project ever undertaken in this country, the famous and hugely controversial, Big Dig. The project took fifteen years to complete, cost \$14.8 billion and employed 5000 people during its peak years. I commend you to two web sites for the details of this amazing project, one the official line and the second a biting analysis of what went right and wrong with it.

<http://www.masspike.com/bigdig/index.html>

[http://www.city-journal.org/html/17\\_4\\_big\\_dig.html](http://www.city-journal.org/html/17_4_big_dig.html)

I admit to bias but when one sees the scar of the demolished Central Artery healing and in its place parks, fountains and green space appearing, perhaps history will agree that all the inconvenience and expense of fifteen years of construction were worth it.



Boston’s new “Greenway”. The Long Wharf Marriott is to the right.

The Big dig's impact on Boston's waterfront has been significant. New shops, restaurants, condos and plazas have all revitalized life on the water side of the city. One of the more obvious benefits is the creation and accessibility of the Boston HarborWalk, a 47 mile meander from Chelsea Creek in the North to Neponset River in the South. [http://www.bostonharborwalk.com/about\\_harborwalk/](http://www.bostonharborwalk.com/about_harborwalk/)

The planning for Harborwalk began in 1984 and it is now nearly complete. The Walk is an great collaboration between developers and the city since much of its route is over property immediately adjacent to residential structures or onto wharfs that have restricted access. Nonetheless, the bright blue HarborWalk sign beckons the hiker onto some of the most exclusive real estate in New England to capture yet another breath taking view of Boston Harbor and it activities. A great introduction starts at the Evelyn Moakley Bridge near the supposed site of the Boston Tea Party, (the actual site is probably buried underneath the new Intercontinental Hotel) and traverses up and down Rowes Wharf, India, Central, Long, Commercial and Lewis Wharfs. Be sure to stop in beautiful Columbus Park for a rest or a cold drink. A more ambitious program would start in South Boston and include the new Institute of Contemporary Art Museum and the wonderful Children's Museum, a favorite of our grandchildren.



Early morning in Columbus Park from Commercial Wharf. If your shoes aren't worn out on the waterfront then have a go at Boston's Freedom Trail <http://www.thefreedomtrail.org/> The Trail is a 2.5 mile path to 16 of America's sacred historic sights including the USS Constitution and a living history lesson in the events leading up to the Revolutionary War.

No matter how often we come to this jewel of a city we can't quite get our fill. This time was no different and as we sail off towards the Cape Cod Canal on a rainy Sunday morning, we resolve to come back for more. We hope that many of you will also have the chance to discover Boston, not only its magnificent waterfront but its wealth of history, art and food. Enjoy!

*Editor's comments:*

*Boston is one of my favorite cities, especially the Freedom Trail and USS Constitution. The Central Artery(or "Big Dig") is NOT one of my favorite features though it has eliminated the eyesore of the elevated highway that it replaces. To really see the city though you need to walk or drive its historic streets. Thanks again, Bruce! We wish you fair winds and following seas on your journey.*

**Manitowoc Reunion**

By Ken Johnson

The USS Sea Owl 2008 Reunion is in Manitowoc, Wisconsin from Sept. 3rd thru Sept. 7<sup>th</sup>. Our host hotel this year is Best Western Lakefront Hotel. Web address for the hotel is:

<http://www.bestwesternwisconsin.com/hotels/best-western-lakefront-hotel/>

Telephone numbers for reservations are:(920) 682-7000 or (800) 654-5353. You are responsible for contacting the hotel and making your own reservations. Be sure to mention that you are a part of the USS Sea Owl reunion when making your reservations to get this rate. Room rate for your stay is \$79.00 plus tax. This rate is good for your full stay, should you decide to stay longer then our reunion dates.

Association Dinner & Business Meeting will be Sept 5th starting at 6PM at the Best Western Hotel in the Roosevelt Room (our hospitality room). Dinner is \$25.00 per person. Choice is Prime Rib or Chicken Saltimbocca. Please send the enclosed reservation form along with your check payable to USS Sea Owl Association to:

Ken Johnson  
P.O. Box 561  
Oakham, MA 01068

Additional events during the reunion will be planned and announced. Please check the Sea Owl Association web site for information as it becomes available. One possibility I have thought of might be a side trip by bus to the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry to see the U-505 exhibit there. This would be about a 3 hour bus ride each way (340 miles round trip). If enough are interested, it might be a good side trip. It is definitely worth seeing!

If any shipmates who are planning to attend have other ideas, let Roy Purtell know or just write your suggestion on the backside of the reservation form when you mail it to me. Basically the registration form gives us an idea of the number of shipmates planning to attend the reunion.

Looking forward to a good turnout for this reunion!

**Sailors Rest Your Oars**

Usually 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. This time though I am happy to say that we have lost no shipmates that I know of since the last newsletter. I know that there are many shipmates who are struggling with health issues, a few of which Roy mentioned in his message, and these shipmates deserve our continuing prayers and best wishes for recovery.

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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 2008 Issue



## The Search for the USS Grunion

By Ken Johnson

On May 1<sup>st</sup> Shipmates Mike Polhemus, Roy Purtell and I attended a lecture at the Boston Museum of Science which was put on by the Abele brothers, sons of the Grunion CO, Mannert "Jim" Abele. Their story is one of perseverance beyond what most stories can demonstrate.

After over 60 years of wondering about the fate of their father's submarine, with information supplied by a remarkable Japanese gentleman, Yutaka Iwasaki, and help from numerous other sources, the Abele brothers initiated a search for the USS Grunion, their dad's sub, lost since 1942. Using the services of Williamson Associates and a side scan sonar they found a target near the tip of the Aleutian chain, almost a mile down that was about the right length and breadth and that appeared to have an appendage called a prop guard characteristic of that class of submarines. In addition they were able to locate the three Japanese wrecks in the area so it seems unlikely that there is confusion between wrecks.

What finally opened a glimpse of the probable fate of Grunion appeared in a Japanese publication in the form of an article written by Aiura, the military commander aboard the KANO MARU in 1942. The following is an excerpt from the translation of that article:

05:47 "Torpedo! starboard fore!" Suddenly the signal master WAKISAKA first sergeant shouted. I saw two torpedo wake overlapped at 100m starboard fore in the course crossing 45 degree with us, rapidly approaching. I at once ordered "Full turn starboard". As KANO MARU went fast and the rudder turned much degree, the ship change the course rapidly toward right. I prayed the god and got tense for few second that was the most intolerable moment in my life. One torpedo wake passed after the stem we could avoid it, but other one hit the machinery room starboard side where was my back below and large explosion and sound occurred that was like a rumbling of the hell ground.

At the same time the main engine instead of its usual rhythmical sounds, but made two or three times of inertial dull movement and stopped. I was shocked by the force from the bottom and seized unconsciously the handrail and the base of compass. In a moment the machinery room was flooded whole, main engine lost power. We could not go anymore. Also generator, radio communication equipment and other auxiliary machines absolutely stopped. It was my disappointing but I had nothing to do.

The crews and soldiers seemed they did not feel fear at all and was vigorously preparing anti submarine combat or launch work of seaplane.

This time we found a periscope of the submarine at very near right fore. Immediately 8cm gun and 13mm machine gun started shooting. 8cm gun has less possibility to hit the submarine, but we thought the sounds of the gun was the only way to tell the KANO MARU's crisis to the KISKA base. And also the 13mm machine

gun fire were useless against the sub under the water but the splash aids the aim of 8cm gun crews. Further more the 8cm gun on the aft poop deck was malfunction by the heavy shock of torpedo explosion.

The periscope that had been right fore, gradually moved to right aft. 05:57 From the right 157 degree 300m distance the sub shot second salvo. One torpedo wake line from right aft passed below the ship bottom at about the bridge. It was no harm. How lucky we were to transmit our crisis to the KISKA base. ... The periscope sometimes appeared and moved from the stem to the portside. 06:07 From the left 135 degree very near the sub shot third salvo. Three torpedoes wake came toward us. Perhaps the sub shoot whole the rest torpedoes in the tubes and intended to finish us. I gave up whole, thinking the torpedoes must finish KANO MARU and hard to breathe in more than ten seconds. Two torpedoes hit! but nothing happened! One torpedo struck the bridge fore, No.2 cargo hold. But unexpectedly it didn't explode, lost its head and the rest body floated on the water tail down and about 0.5m part dry. Next one torpedo struck amidships portside, but also dud. Last one torpedo went away passing near ship stem. How lucky we are! I thank to the God protection.

06:10 Then we find the periscope at left 13 5 degree about 400m distance. Our forecandle 8cm gun and 13mm machine gun again started the fire. The sub kept the periscope up and moved calmly ignoring damaged KANO MARU. We clenched our fists but had no way to do. Then the sub seemed to begin to surface. The conning tower made ripple on the surface and the wave began washing the conning tower. I think the sub was unable to sink KANO MARU by the torpedo ( reload the stocked torpedo to the tube needs much minutes ) so finish KANO MARU by its gun or the sub thought KANO MARU could do no harm any more. Just then a 8cm gun shot hit the washing wave, made water column and dull water explosion sound. Also we saw the swell of heavy oil. All crews shout 'BANZAI!'.

The above account demonstrates problems that we were having with torpedo performance in 1942. It is quite possible Grunion, frustrated with the failure of her torpedoes, was intending to surface and finish off KANO MARU with her deck gun and suffered a fatal hit from the 8 cm gun in the process. We may never know for sure.

If you want to know more about the account of the attack which is described above and would like to see some of the incredible high resolution photographs of the wreck on the bottom, I urge you to visit the [www.ussgrunion.com](http://www.ussgrunion.com) web site. You will also find there the artist rendition by Jim Christley of the wreck which he drew based on the high resolution photographs taken. Jim and others have spent countless hours analyzing available data to reconstruct what actually happened to Grunion.

Our deepest sympathy goes out to the Abele brothers and family members of all 70 crew members who perished aboard Grunion. At least they can achieve some peace as a result of this search.



# The 50's

June 2008 Issue



## Submarine Force Museum Exhibit

By Ken Johnson

On Friday, June 27<sup>th</sup> a special exhibit opened at the Submarine Force Museum on Groton to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the USS Nautilus trip under the North Pole in 1958. The ceremony included a talk by CDR Al Charette, USN (Ret) who was a senior sonarman on board for the trip. His talk and accompanying slides described some of the equipment installed aboard for this trip, a far cry from what today's submarines carry for under ice missions. Much of the sonar equipment was WW II vintage and surface ship search sonar mounted topside, upside down. A magnetic compass is useless at these latitudes and the magnetic north pole is not a fixed point anyway. Al's talk was followed by a showing of the video, "Operation Sunshine" and a question and answer period. In response to one of the questions, Al explained what a PANOPO was. As those who cross the equator are "shellbacks" and those who cross the Arctic Circle are "blue noses", there was no name for those who cross the North Pole. To fill this void they came up with PANOPO which means Pacific to Atlantic via NOrth POLE.

The exhibit includes a series of wall panels with photographs and text representing different elements of the trip and celebrations afterward. The video, "Operation Sunshine", shows on a video screen within the exhibit. This exhibit is a temporary one that will be on display for the remainder of calendar year 2008.

On July 23, 1958, NAUTILUS departed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on a Top Secret mission: Operation Sunshine - the first crossing of the North Pole by a ship. At 11:15 pm. on August 3, 1958, CDR William R. Anderson, NAUTILUS Commanding Officer, announced to the crew: "For the world, our country, and the Navy - the North Pole." No radio transmission was made at the North Pole as NAUTILUS was under the ice and unable to make such a transmission.

For the achievement that this trip represented, NAUTILUS was given a Presidential Unit Citation by President Eisenhower. The text of this citation is below.



"For outstanding achievement in completing the first voyage in history across the top of the world, by cruising under the Arctic ice cap from the Bering Strait to the Greenland Sea. During the period 22 July 1958 to 5 August 1958, U.S.S. NAUTILUS, the world's first atomic powered ship, added to her list of historic achievements by crossing the Arctic Ocean from the Bering Sea to the Greenland Sea, passing submerged beneath the geographic North Pole. This voyage opens the possibility of a new commercial seaway, a Northwest Passage, between the major oceans of the world. Nuclear powered cargo submarines may, in the future, use this route to the advantage of world trade.

The skill, professional competency and courage of the officers and crew of NAUTILUS were in keeping with the highest traditions of the Armed Forces of the United States and the pioneering spirit which has always characterized our country."

The golden "N" in the above citation medal represents "Nautilus Ninety North". All crew members who have ever served aboard NAUTILUS are entitled to wear the Presidential Unit Citation Medal, but only those who actually made the under ice voyage in 1958 may wear the one with the golden "N". If you visit Historic Ship Nautilus today you can see the citation flag flying from the rear of her sail.



A couple of events are scheduled at the Submarine Force Library and Museum around the actual anniversary date.

### **August 2, 2008: Lecture and Booksigning: Don Keith: "The Ice Diaries."**

Publication date for this book is listed on Amazon.com as July 29, 2008 which has the following editorial review: "The Cold War was in full swing. The Soviet Union had just successfully launched Sputnik, and President Eisenhower badly wanted to redeem the reputation of the US as technologically superior. "Operation Sunshine" was the answer: under top-secret orders, the Captain and crew of one of the first nuclear submarines, the USS *Nautilus*, crossed under the North Pole and became the first naval vessel to forge all the way under the polar ice pack to emerge near the former Soviet Union. Readers will voyage along with Captain Anderson as he shares newly declassified stories of his sub's encounters with terrible storms, fire in the hold, collisions with ice, broken compasses, and more." CAPT William R. Anderson, USN (Ret.) worked with noted author Don Keith in this updated edition of the Anderson-Blair Book "NAUTILUS 90 NORTH," the original story of the epic voyage of USS NAUTILUS. This new addition relates more of the impact of the North Pole voyage against the backdrop of the Cold War. The event is free, at the Museum, at noon.

### **August 3, 2008: 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the North Pole Voyage Ceremony.**

This commemorative event highlights the achievements of the USS NAUTILUS and USN operations in Arctic Waters. The event is free and open to the public. The event will be held at the Museum at 2:00 pm.



# The 60's

June 2008 Issue



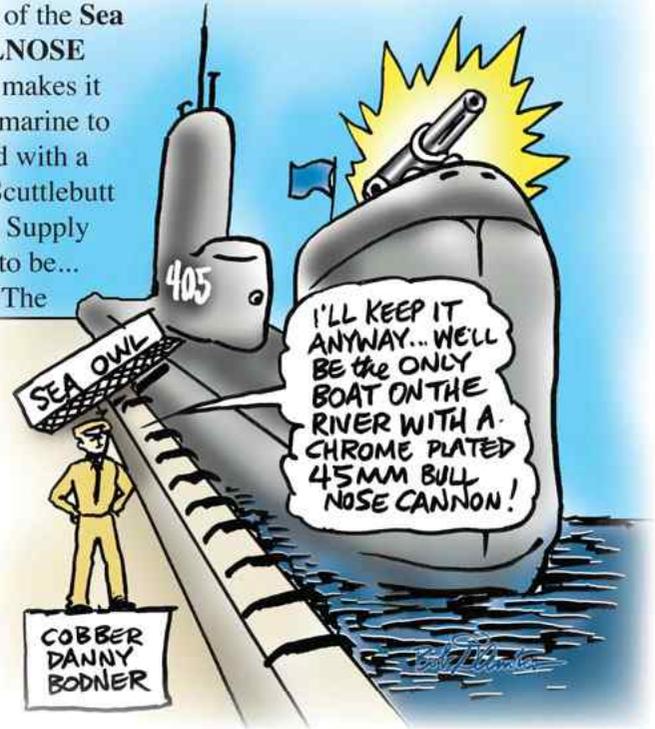
## USS SEA OWL HOOTS SS 405

The legend of the Sea Owl **BULLNOSE CANNON** makes it the last submarine to be equipped with a deck gun. Scuttlebutt

is that a **45 caliber** line-throwing gun was ordered through the Navy Supply System. When the gun arrived in a hugh wooden crate, it turned out to be... you guessed it, a **45 millimeter cannon** *instead of a 45 caliber gun*. The

cobber, Danny Bodner, had the gun chrome plated and mounted the gun on the forecastle as a novelty and conversation piece. The rumor passed along by the last XO, (Taylor) is that submarine sailors from all over the river have

paraded their girl friends under the gun, explaining that the gun will go off if the girls haven't been true to them, or if a natural blonde passes underneath.

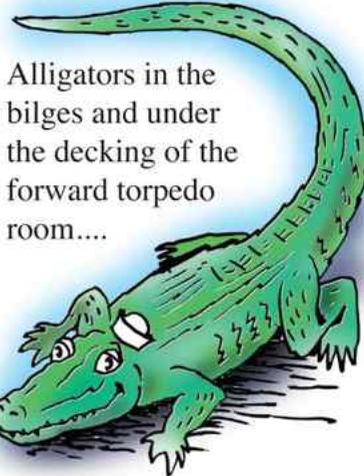


## ANIMALS

**RUMORED TO HAVE BEEN ABOARD THE USS SEA OWL...**  
*based on the scuttlebutt from the recent June 2008 Groton reunion*



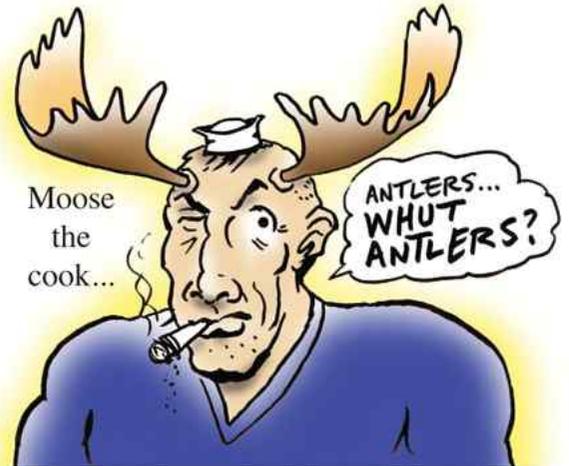
The infamous 500 lb. **CANARY!**



Alligators in the bilges and under the decking of the forward torpedo room....



Sea Bats in the conning tower.



Moose the cook...

*Got a good piece of Sea Owl fact or rumor that might lend itself to a good cartoon? Please email it to: [cartoonbob@mac.com](mailto:cartoonbob@mac.com)*

*Editor's Note:* What can I add to the above other than my recollection is that the alligator was in the forward engine room and trained to attack anyone wearing khaki. The purpose in training it so, as I have heard it, was to keep officers from finding the still that allegedly operated there. Many thanks to Bob D'Amico for continuing to provide his talents to bring back memories of the Owl. I feel especially blessed to have him as a Hooter Hilites contributor.