



# Hooter Hilites

A Publication of the USS Sea Owl Association

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

We still give a hoot!

June 2010 Issue



## President's Message

Shipmates & 1st Mates:

### Galveston Reunion is cancelled

Because the hotel management at the Galvez Hotel in Galveston would not work with me in reducing the number of rooms that I originally signed for I have no alternative but to cancel this year's reunion all together. There will not be a 2010 Sea Owl reunion. Those shipmates that want to see or meet with their shipmates can gather at the WWII Memorial Service in St. Mary's, GA at the Kings Bay Submarine Base on Oct 27-30, 2010. This is NOT a reunion, just a chance to see your shipmates and enjoy sea stories between shipmates. You must call 912 882 2782 which is the St. Mary's Submarine Museum to have them mail you a registration form. Don't delay doing this.....registrations must be returned to them so that they can all be checked by the base.



2010 Groton Picnic

Kneeling front left to right:

John Salerno ST 52-55, Ken Nichols TM 66-68, Roy Purcell TM 66-69, Bob Kristian (Kostyna) FT 44-45  
Ken Johnson LTJG 62-65, Greg Hankin QMS 67-69

Standing Left to Right:

Herb Hawes IC 66-67, Herb Lathrop EN 68-69, Jack Hogan EM 61-62, John Barnes MM 63-67,  
Bruce Blessington QM 63-64, Allen Wells TM 68-69, Harry Siska EN 69-69, Clyde Turner EN 64-66,  
Ed Bess EM 64-69, Bob D'Amico SN 68-69, Mike LaRose ST 68-69, Frank Limpert QM 47-51,  
Jim Madigan FT 68-69, Stu Jack LT 62-63, Mike Polhemus SO 56-57, Ed Welch CS 66-69

This year's Groton Picnic was a great time as usual. The rain held off most of the day, until we had enjoyed another beautiful day in Groton. The winner of this years raffle was John Bergren ST 52-53, Congratulations John !!!!! Our Thanks to Ed Welch CS 66-69 and to his whole family who work so hard in putting this picnic together each year for us. Our Thanks also to Lee Oelka TM 63/68-69 for his gift of a Sea Owl klaxon, and to Shipmate Allen Wells TM 68-69 for transporting the Klaxon from Lee's home in Tennessee to Groton. We all enjoyed hearing the Klaxon during our picnic.....it will be present at all of our gatherings.

Roy

## George Snell

Shipmate Ed LaBreck has forwarded the following information regarding shipmate George Snell:

"George is back in the hospital. Dixie and I visited him yesterday at Tanner Hospital in Carrolton, GA. George isn't doing well at all. He has several issues and his kidneys have begun to shut down. Marie and the family are asking for prayers from all that are inclined to ask for mercies for George and for strength for Marie and their families.

## Excerpts from a Submariner's blog

By Ken Johnson

For some time now I have been receiving the Undersea Enterprise News Daily which is published by COMSUBLANT. In the recent June 15<sup>th</sup> edition was a blog by CMDCM(SS) Andrew Crider, CSG-10 CMC and I thought some of his thoughts from this blog were worth sharing here:

I was sitting on my couch this weekend thinking about submarines and submarine Sailors. What do you think came to mind? You guessed it, the good old days. I've been serving in the submarine force for almost 24 years now and it seems that the focus on basics is not what it was when I was a young sea pup. I do not mean that Sailors work less because the fact is you are all working harder. I do not mean you are not as sharp a group of logistics and support personnel, mariners, engineers or weaponeers. What I do mean is that with the speed of modern communication and technology you have a harder time keeping up with changing expectations. When I started my career it was very easy to identify the top two or three things I was expected to do. First, study hard to learn my watch station and my ship's systems. Second, learn how to fight casualties and employ damage control gear to save my ship and my shipmates. Third, keep myself and my equipment safe from damage due to poor maintenance or cutting corners in processes and procedures.

I challenge every submarine Sailor to take a close look at where they stand on the basics of our craft:

1. Is the ship rigged for dive? Can I rig it myself?
2. Am I the expert on my gear and my watchstation? Do I need a supervisor to tell me what to do in an emergency?
3. Can I find my way from one end of the ship to the other in an EAB? Can I do it if the boat is filled with smoke?
4. Can my shipmates count on me to do the right thing even when it is difficult? Am I trustworthy?
5. Am I the submarine warrior my Grandfather was on Barb's third war patrol? What do I have to do to get there?

## From the Editor

This month we are blessed with another excellent "Cartoon Bob" D'Amico cartoon which you will see on the '60s page. I think you will find something in it that you can relate to as you think back to your years aboard the Owl.

On Friday evening, June 11<sup>th</sup> at the Groton motor Inn dinner I was asked by Ralph Stetson, TM 67-68, if I knew how many Sea Owl shipmates were Freemasons. He also asked how many Sea Owl shipmates are also Amateur Radio Operators. (He holds the Amateur Extra Class License.) You can contact Ralph directly by email at [kd1r@arrl.net](mailto:kd1r@arrl.net) or write to him at:

943 Osgood Hill Road  
Westford, VT 05494

It was good to see Bruce and Marie Blessington at this year's Groton picnic. They expect in another year or so to move to Charlestown, MA not far from where the USS Constitution is moored. Bruce has promised more "Dress Blue Dispatch" articles for future Hooter Hilites issues about his sailing adventures.

We have learned recently from Tom Moniz that he would no longer like to continue as Vice-President of the USS Sea owl Association. That being the case, would any of you be interested in taking on this position? I believe Tom will continue to act as Association Historian so we are not looking for anyone to assume that role as well. If you are interested, please contact Roy Purtell.

I am pleased to report that this issue contains no names of shipmates who have departed on "eternal patrol" since the March issue. While many shipmates out there are not in the best of health, it is good that they are still with us.

### **Galveston Reunion**

By Ken Johnson

In September 2009 at our San Diego reunion we voted to hold our 2010 reunion at Galveston, Texas around the Veteran's Day holiday in November. We decided that our reunion should be held in a city that had a museum boat and the Cavalla at Galveston seemed particularly needy in view of damage done by hurricanes there in recent years. As Roy mentioned, however, because of problems working with the hotel there that he had chosen he had no choice but to cancel the reunion for this year.

This year the memorial service dates have changed to 27-30 Oct 2010. The hospitality room will be at the Cumberland Inn & Suites and rooms there may still be available. The registration forms were mailed out in May by John Crouse, Museum director of the St. Mary's Submarine Museum, to WWII sub vets. All registration forms must be returned to him by 6 OCT 2010 to ensure access to subase and SSBN tours. Registration thru John is restricted to sub vets, sub vet widows and their guests only. Sub vets not members of WWII Sub vets and USSVI must submit copy of their DD-214. It looks like Al 'Big Al' Konetzni will be the guest speaker for this year's memorial service. If you are interested in attending the memorial service and have not yet received a registration form, you can contact John by phone or by mail. The mailing address for the museum is:

102 St. Mary's Street West  
St. Mary's, GA 31558-4945  
Phone number: 912-882-2782

### **St. Mary's Submarine Museum**

By Ken Johnson

We recently received the following via email from John Crouse at the St. Mary's Submarine Museum:

I've been sending our museum's newsletter out via US Mail, if I had your mailing address. To help save postage costs I'm going to send out via email from now on. I hope this is fine for all. Please forward

to your members if you desire. As with all of our submarine museums in the country we all display submarine artifacts.

As with all non-profit organizations we are always looking for new sponsors and members. Even with the economy still not doing well, the expenses still continue. Sponsors start at \$100, family membership \$25 & Individual \$15. Something special that the St. Mary's Museum did recently was to help Kings Bay Subase collect small items for care packages they will be sending to their deployed IAs. About 85 subase personnel presently are deployed to or near combat zones from the subase. The museum collected toiletry items, baby wipes, individual wrapped drinks, paper back books, old USB drives that can hold photos and other small items appropriate to be mailed. The Family Service Center on the base will mail the care packages near the 4th of July. Money is needed to pay for the postage, and to purchase items they need to complete filling the care packages. Can make checks out to St. Marys Submarine Museum. We will provide one big check to the subase. Mark check for 'Subase IA' Now one of the most important reason for the email. If traveling down I-95 in SE Georgia please plan to stop in the submarine museum, located in downtown St. Marys, GA.

I figure we are the 6th largest submarine museum in the country. We also have the Ben Bastura Submarine Library & Museum located in our museum, following his death back in 2005, lots of submarine history. If you want to look at our submarine files please let me know prior to your arrival because the files are under lock and key to protect the paper history. Reunion coordinators if planning a reunion in our area I do not charge for the reunion group to enter the museum.

John Crouse, USSVI Life Member, Museum Manager.

At the suggestion of Jim Campbell, your Sea Owl Association officers agreed to make a \$100 donation to the St. Mary's Submarine Museum in St. Mary's, GA in memory of our departed Sea Owl shipmates.

### **Home Depot and Lowe's Discounts**

Recently we received emails describing discounts offered by Home Depot and Lowe's. This information is summarized below.

Effective March 1st, 2010 Home Depot offers, when asked, a 10 % discount, up to a \$500 maximum, to all active, reserve, retired or disabled veterans and their family members with a valid military ID. All other military veterans will qualify for a 10 percent discount during normal holiday events (e.g., Memorial Day, Veterans Day and Independence Day). This philosophy is consistent with their long standing price match guarantee.

The Military discount cannot be combined with any other promotions and is NOT offered online through homedepot.com. During normal holiday events, it's Store Manager's discretion to offer the discount without a Military ID.

A retired veteran must have qualified and gone through retirement with the Military. Disabled Veterans should have a Veteran's Identification Card (VIC) that is given to them from the Department of Veteran's Affairs. The VIC and their DL should be sufficient ID to get the everyday Military Discount.

Lowe's offers a similar discount. Lowe's Military policy states that they offer an all-day, every-day 10% Military discount to all military personnel who are active, reserve, retired or disabled veterans and their immediate family members, with a valid, government-issued Military ID or VIC (Veterans Identification Card). To claim the

discount, visit your local Lowe's store, provide a valid, government-issued Military ID or VIC, and ask the cashier for the discount. All other military veterans will receive the discount on the Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and Veterans Day weekends. (Customer must provide Military ID, VIC, or a DD214).

### K-77 Status

By Ken Johnson

During a visit to Providence on April 30<sup>th</sup> I took a few photos of what is left of the Russian submarine K-77.



This is one of the cruise missile tubes which has been removed and cut in half on shore.



Here is a portion of the missile tracking radar antenna. Since it is made of titanium, it still looks like new. Much of the rest of the sub is little more than piles of rusty steel. It is heartbreaking for me to see this happen to this submarine and I wish it didn't have to be so.

At this time the company that is dismantling the sub for scrap has not entered the interior of the sub to remove some of the artifacts that are to be preserved. Hopefully some of them can find a home in submarine museums. Meanwhile, if you are on Facebook, you can "Like" the Russian Sub Museum fan page that I created there. My intent was to preserve the memory of the museum with a series of

photos and to provide a place where visitors could share their experiences.

What endures for me are the personal friendships that I have made as a direct result of my involvement with this sub museum. As I write this, I am preparing to leave for St. Petersburg where I will spend time with one of those friends, Valery Grigoriev. Back in December 2009 Valery came to the USA to visit me

In August another Russian friend I have made as a result of this submarine will come to the USA. Captain 1<sup>st</sup> Rank Dmitry Zubkov (Ret) will come as a guest of the USS George Washington Carver to attend their reunion in Groton from August 12-14. Two years ago at our Groton picnic Captain Jon Warn, USN (Ret) asked me if I knew of a Russian submariner who might be interested in attending their reunion in August 2010. Jon served aboard Sea Owl as an Ensign in 1964 and was on a planning committee for the Carver reunion. I told him that I knew the perfect one to ask, if he would come, but that he lived in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Dmitry commanded the Russian Delta I class ballistic missile submarine K-475 from 1978-86. He had been to the USA before in 2000 as the guest of the submarine USS Henry L. Stimson. At that time he became an Associate Member of USSVI, Groton Base, a membership he has maintained since.

At Jon's request, I sent an email to Dmitry to see if he would be interested. He was. What followed was a series of email exchanges between Dmitry and the Carver reunion planning committee.

What even I did not know when I helped make the connection was that Dmitry had written a book about his experience as CO of the K-475 and that he had translated a version of it into English. The Carver has actually put this up on their web site as a PDF document and this is a link to it:

<http://www.gwcarver.org/KeepASteadyCourseCO.pdf>

The Carver has quite a program planned and I am looking forward to taking part in it. August 12, 2010, the first day of their reunion happens to be the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the loss of the Russian submarine, Kursk. I plan to assist them in conducting a memorial remembrance of Kursk on that day. There is a link between the K-77 and Kursk that I learned about back in 2006. At one time in the early 1980's Gennady Lyachin, Kursk's Commanding Officer, had served as Executive Officer of K-77.

I have also met and made friends with many others from former Soviet republics as a result of my involvement with K-77. I became interested and involved with the International Center of Worcester as a volunteer because of my interest in K-77. Through my work with this organization I have made friends in many places I hardly knew existed before. You never know what experiences may change your life in many ways!

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 2010 Issue



## Squat Div One

By Ken Johnson



We were pleased that Bob Kristian and two of his sons were able to attend our Groton Picnic this year. His son, Paul on the left is a 1986 graduate of Massachusetts Maritime Academy and now works as an engineer at the Pilgrim nuclear power plant in Plymouth, MA. His son Neil on the right graduated from Babson college in 1990 and works for Absolute Investors in Hingham, MA.

## St. Mary's Submarine Museum Project

One of the St. Mary's Submarine Museum admin history projects is to type all WWII Patrol Reports into Microsoft Word. Yes they are in the naval archives, and those have been scanned into the computer as a graphic. But not all of these microfilm and scanned copies are readable, Those of you who may have tried to read them on line may agree. The paper copies that the St. Mary's Museum has, and that many WWII Subvets have, may be the only copy of legible words for some reports. If disposing of official copies of patrol reports please mail them to the St. Mary's Submarine Museum so they can be preserved.

## The USS Barb – The Sub That “Sank” a Train

*Editor's note: My thanks to Shipmate Jim Campbell for forwarding the email that is the basis for this article.*

In 1973 an Italian submarine named Enrique Tazzoli was sold for a paltry \$100,000 as scrap metal. The submarine, given to the Italian Navy in 1953 was actually an incredible veteran of World War II service with a heritage that never should have passed so unnoticed into the graveyards of the metal recyclers. The U.S.S. Barb was a pioneer, paving the way for the first submarine launched missiles and flying a battle flag unlike that of any other ship. In addition to the Medal of Honor ribbon at the top of the flag identifying the heroism of its captain, Commander Eugene "Lucky" Fluckey, the bottom border of the flag bore the image of a Japanese locomotive. The U.S.S. Barb was indeed, the submarine that "SANK A TRAIN".

The rail line itself wouldn't be a problem. A shore patrol could go ashore under cover of darkness to plant the explosives...one of the sub's 55-pound scuttling charges. But this early morning Lucky Fluckey and his officers were puzzling over how they could blow not only the rails, but also one of the frequent trains that shuttled supplies to equip the Japanese war machine. Such a daring feat could handicap the enemy's war effort for several days, a week, perhaps even longer. It was a crazy idea, just the kind of operation "Lucky" Fluckey had become famous...or infamous...for. But no matter how crazy the idea might have sounded, the Barb's skipper would not risk the lives of his men. Thus the problem... how to detonate the charge at the moment the train passed, without endangering the life of a shore party. PROBLEM? Not on Commander Fluckey's ship. His philosophy had always been "We don't have problems, only solutions".

Solutions! If you don't look for them, you'll never find them. And even then, sometimes they arrive in the most unusual fashion. Cruising slowly beneath the surface to evade the enemy plane now circling overhead, the monotony is broken with an exciting new idea. Instead of having a crewman on shore to trigger explosives to blow both rail and a passing train, why not let the train BLOW ITSELF up. Billy Hatfield was excitedly explaining how he had cracked nuts on the railroad tracks as a kid, placing the nuts between two ties so the sagging of the rail under the weight of a train would break them open. "Just like cracking walnuts," he explained. "To complete the circuit (detonating the 55-pound charge) we hook in a micro switch ...between two ties. We don't set it off, the TRAIN does." Not only did Hatfield have the plan, he wanted to be part of the volunteer shore party.

The solution found, there was no shortage of volunteers, all that was needed was the proper weather...a little cloud cover to darken the moon for the mission ashore. Lucky Fluckey established his own criteria for the volunteer party:

- ...No married men would be included, except for Hatfield
- ...The party would include members from each department,
- ...The opportunity would be split between regular Navy and Navy Reserve sailors,
- ...At least half of the men had to have been Boy Scouts, experienced in how to handle themselves in medical emergencies and in the woods.

When the names of the 8 selected sailors were announced it was greeted with a mixture of excitement and disappointment. Among the disappointed was Commander Fluckey who wanted to go, but surrendered his opportunity at the insistence of his officers that "as commander he belonged with the Barb.

The story of the “saboteurs” of the U.S.S. Barb is one of those unique, little known stories of World War II. It becomes increasingly important when one realizes that the 8 sailors who blew up the train near Kashiho, Japan conducted the ONLY GROUND COMBAT OPERATION on the Japanese "homeland" of World War II. The eight saboteurs were: Paul Saunders, William Hatfield, Francis Sever, Lawrence Newland, Edward Klingsmith, James Richard, John Markuson and William Walker.



# The 50's

June 2010 Issue



## Sea Owl Sports in the 50's

By John Salerno, SO 52-55

In addition to being a very popular shipmate on the Owl, Bobby Kreeger was an outstanding athlete. As the shortstop on our softball team, ground balls did not get by Bobby as he covered a wide range. He had an arm that was likened to a cannon. His throws were always on time and accurate and really hurt. I know because I was the first baseman that had to catch those cannonballs. Although he was adept with the glove, his forte was actually with the bat. Those that served with him would remember Bobby as a powerful man, who frequently drove the ball a "country" mile. When you heard the crack of his bat, the question was not "home run?" but "how far?" I believe the Coast Guard Academy was within Bobby's reach. Bobby Kreeger was one heck of a ball player and one heck of a shipmate.

During '55 our basketball team was less than spectacular. To no surprise we had lost our first three games and in game four we were coming up against the Sub Tender Fulton (ship's compliment 1600 men), which, to no surprise, had won their first three games. We stood in awe as they came running out on the court. Fulton was tall and slender and wore bright and shiny warm-up suits. They looked as splendid as if they were one of the top college teams in the nation, whereas the Owl team looked, well...

After a hard-fought and bruising game which included a few "scuffles," the final scoreboard read Sea Owl 28, Fulton 23. Once again, David had slain Goliath! A few days later I was discharged (honorably) in December of '55.

## Submarine Operations in the Arctic

From a Summer 2009 Undersea Warfare Magazine article by Lt. j.g. Megan Isaac

In 1958, USS *Nautilus* (SSN-571) made history when it completed the first submerged trans-polar crossing and forever changed the nature of submarine operations in the Arctic Ocean. U.S. Navy diesel submarines had been conducting short excursions into the marginal ice zone (MIZ) since the early 1940s, but with the advent of unlimited range and endurance offered by nuclear propulsion, a new era began.

The Arctic Ocean is one of the most strategically important areas for current and future military leaders and policy makers. The ocean borders on multiple nations and serves as an important waterway that connects the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The capability to operate in the Arctic Ocean at any time of year and under any environmental conditions is vital to our national interests and provides the United States with assured access to all the world's maritime operating areas.

"The Arctic is important to the nation and the Navy because it really is a maritime domain," said Admiral Gary Roughead, Chief of Naval Operations [CNO]. "We have some very fundamental security interests in the Arctic regions."

Operating in the Arctic is unlike any other maritime operation due to the extreme, harsh, and unforgiving conditions of the environment. The majority of the Arctic Ocean is covered in thick

pack ice during most of the year, making it inaccessible to surface ships. As such, the U.S. Submarine Force has taken the responsibility to maintain proficiency in Arctic operations.

In addition to extremely low temperatures, the constant freezing, melting and re-freezing of the ice make salinity and density of Arctic water drastically different from that of any other ocean. Every aspect of the Arctic Ocean presents a different challenge for submarines operating under the ice, and maintaining a high degree of skill requires constant training and testing in the environment. "Routine" operations are much more complex under the ice. Varying water density makes it difficult to maintain neutral buoyancy under the ocean and requires the ship control teams to be vigilant in maintaining the trim and ballast of the submarine. The overhead ice canopy, with ice keels that can reach as deep as 200-feet, adds another layer of operational complexity that submarines do not routinely encounter. Additionally, salinity differences throughout the Arctic Ocean present challenges to even the most experienced sonar operators. Underwater mapping, torpedo exercises, contact tracking, and almost all other sonar functions are affected by the unique and varied sound velocity profiles encountered in this unpredictable environment.

In 2009, the Submarine Force and the Arctic Submarine Lab (ASL) conducted the most recent Ice Exercise (ICEX). ASL is the Navy command that specializes in Arctic operations for submarines. Every two years ASL and Applied Physics Laboratory at the University of Washington (APL-UW), under the command of Commander, Submarine Force (COMSUBFOR), set up an ice camp on the pack ice to support ICEX. APL-UW provides field engineers to support every aspect of logistics at the camp—from building the camp, to providing and cooking food, to the recovery of any torpedoes fired by the submarines.

While initially a small and modest undertaking, the ICEX program has evolved into the development, testing, and certification of highly specialized tactics, techniques, and procedures designed to optimize the Submarine Force's performance in under-ice operations.

"ICEX is important to our maritime strategy because it really allows us to better understand and operate in all areas of the world," said Roughead while onboard USS *Annapolis* (SSN-760) during ICEX. "We, as a Navy, are a forward deployed navy, we're a global Navy; we're a Navy that exercises sea control and power projection, and if we are a global Navy, we have to be able to do it everywhere."

The *Los Angeles*-class fast attack submarines *Annapolis* and USS *Helena* (SSN-725), home ported in Groton, Conn. and San Diego, Calif. respectively, were the two submarines that participated in ICEX. The event took place approximately 200 nautical miles north of Prudhoe Bay, Alaska. All operations during ICEX were conducted within a portable tracking range closely monitored by personnel at the ice camp, who assisted in data gathering and analysis of the exercises conducted by the two submarines.

The knowledge about the dynamic nature of the Arctic Ocean gained during ICEX will be used to ensure that U.S. Naval forces continue to exercise operational excellence in the Arctic now and for the foreseeable future.



# The 60's

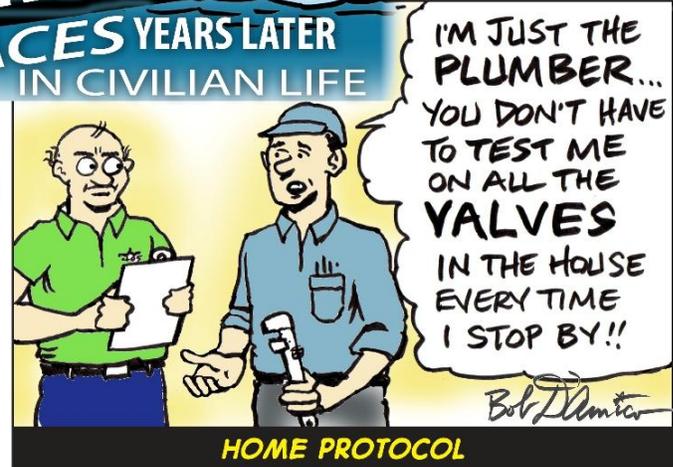
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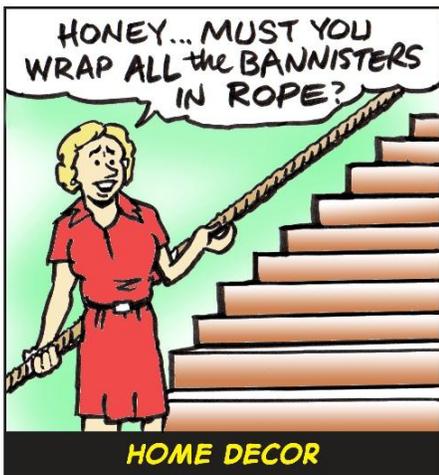
## HOW SUB LIFE SURFACES YEARS LATER IN CIVILIAN LIFE



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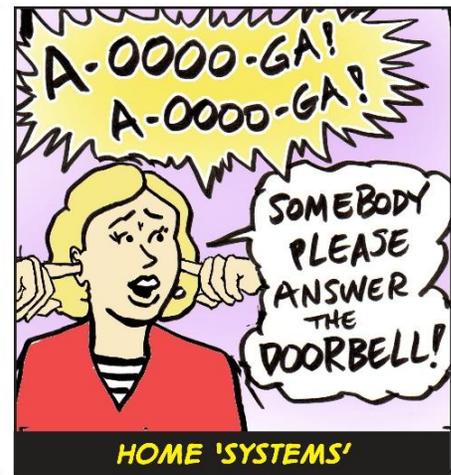
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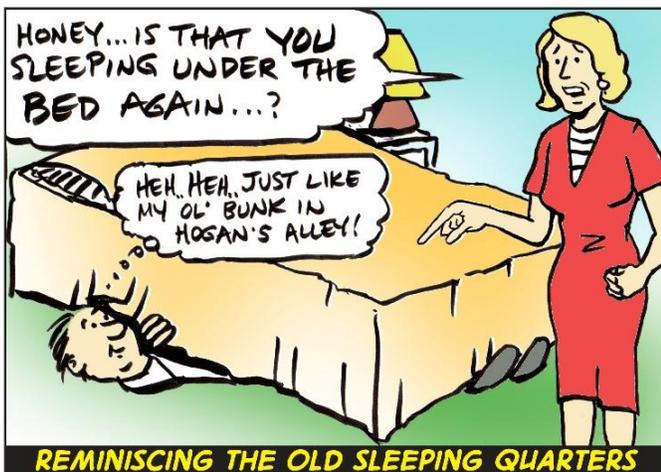
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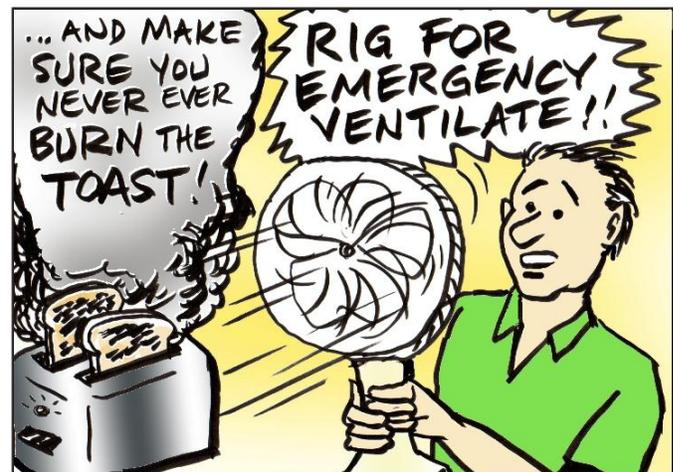
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