



Hooter Hilites

A Publication of the USS Sea Owl Association

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

We still give a hoot!

June 2011 Issue



President's Message

Shipmates & 1st Mates:

Our Groton picnic was another great day. I'm not sure how Ed & Paulette Welch did it, but they arranged to have the rain hold off until we were finished. It rained maybe 30 minutes after we departed from the picnic pavilion.

Congratulations to Shipmate Harry Siska EN 68-69 and his wife Vicki for winning our raffle this year. I hope that Vicki gets to enjoy many hours with her new television. I also want to thank our many other Shipmates who purchased tickets this year. Without your support, we would not be able to do this type of raffle.

Our Reunion this year in Virginia Beach is on for September 28th thru October 2nd. We need to have as many Shipmates attend as possible. It's your attendance that make these reunions both successful and worthwhile. Without your being there, they would not be what they are. I'm encouraging each & every Shipmate to attend.

As many other Boat Associations have done, we will very likely go to every other year for a Reunion. It is my intention to do the same with the Groton Picnic. Ed & Paulette Welch are moving to New Hampshire, so putting on the summer picnic in Groton may be moved to another site. If we could have a Summer Picnic one year, then the Reunion the next year, this could have a less financial impact on our Shipmates. These are the discussions we will have at Virginia Beach during our Association meeting. Be there to let your voice be heard.

Roy

2011 Groton Picnic June 11th, 2011

Here are the winners of the Groton Picnic raffle, Harry and Vicki Siska. When it looked like they might be having a problem fitting it into their car, there were many offers to take it off their hands.



We were pleased to see that Sea Owl "plankowner", Bob Kristian, FT 44-45, was able to make it to this picnic. We, of course, gave him the job of cutting the cake.



Here's the crew that made it this year for the picnic.



Left to right

Herb Hawes IC 66-67, Greg Hankin SN 67-68, Clyde Turner EN 64- 66, Jack Hogan EM 61-62, Herb Lathrop EN 68-69, Ed Bess EM 64-69, John Salarno SO 52-55, Jim Madigan FT 68-69, Stu Jack LT 62-63, Jon Warn LT 63-64, Tony Laub QM 64-66

Kneeling

Ed Welch CS 66-69, Ken Johnson LTjg 62-65, Bob D'Amico SN 68-69

Bob Kristian (Plankowner) FT 44-45, Bruce Blessington QM 63-64

Dave Grant EN 64-66

Laying Down

Roy Purtell TM 66-69

Standing behind Ed Bess is Harry Siska EN 68-69

We are all a bit older and wiser, I hope at least, but as Roy shows we know how to relax and enjoy ourselves.

2011 Sea Owl Reunion

We will have our reunion this year September 28th thru October 2nd at the Virginia Beach Resort Hotel Conference Center (see their website <http://www.virginiabeachresort.com/> for specifics on the hotel). You need to make your own reservations by calling (800) 468-2722. Mention that you are a part of the USS Sea Owl Reunion for the rate of \$89.00 per night. This rate is good for 3 days before and after the Reunion dates.

In this issue you will find a registration form for this reunion which covers the registration fee, all-day tour on Friday and the dinner on Saturday evening. We have signed an agreement for the all-day tour on September 30th for which we were required to send a non-refundable \$100 deposit. By August 19th we need to tell the tour organizer how many people will be taking the tour. While this is for their planning purposes at that time, we ask that you send in the enclosed form with your payment by that time. Initially we have told them that we expect to have 30 participants. By September 9th we need to give them a firm number and at that time they will invoice us for payment in full. Our payment is due on receipt of that invoice. Participation in this tour later is possible on a space available basis, but will incur an extra \$3 charge above the \$75.

Let me tell you a little more about this tour as we have arranged it through Phillips Destination Management Services in Norfolk. We will proceed by motor coach with a tour guide to the downtown Norfolk waterfront to tour Nauticus the National Maritime Center. This center includes the Hampton Roads Naval Museum, one of ten museums officially operated by the U.S. Navy. It also includes the USS Wisconsin, an Iowa class battleship that saw action in World War II, the Korean War and, most recently the Persian Gulf War.

Next we will board the Victory Rover for a two hour tour through the Hampton Roads Harbor

Following the cruise we will ride through historic district and restored areas of Norfolk stopping at the Macarthur Memorial with its display of artifacts, photographs and documents which trace the life of General Douglas Macarthur.

The tour price includes motor coach transportation, tour guide service, admission to the sites visited and a box lunch and is based on having at least 30 people participating. Gratuities for the driver and tour guide are the only things not included in the price.

From the Editor

In this issue Shipmate Bob D'Amico gives us another look at one of the legendary creatures that once inhabited our boat. This one was part of what he sent me back in March and I saved it for this issue.

In the last issue I mentioned the book, "32 in '44 Building the Portsmouth Submarine Fleet in World War II" by Rodney K. Watterson. At the time I thought that I would do a review of this book for this issue. I have since read most of it and found it an excellent study of the wartime management of Portsmouth with several reasons why this shipyard in particular was so successful. At the time I ordered it from Amazon though another book was suggested by them as one I might find of interest. That book was "War Beneath the Waves A True Story of Courage and Leadership Aboard a World War II Submarine" by Don Keith. It is this book that I decided to discuss in this issue instead and you will find this on the '40s page. A surprise that I didn't discover until the end of the book was that LT Charles Rush, the subject of the book, is a Sea Owl shipmate!

What follows is an article that I thought would be of interest to all of you DBFers. Let me just add that the Swedish Gotland-class sub mentioned in the article had a crew that included female members. While I still have not really accepted the idea of women serving on U.S. Navy submarines, it CAN be done and is being done by other nations.

As always, I welcome any and all contributions from Sea Owl shipmates.

U.S. Navy Needs Diesel Submarines

From an article by Gary Schmitt, published in Defense News Daily - 12 June 2011

The U.S. Navy faces a fundamental dilemma: It needs more submarines, but the overall defense budget required to build those submarines is headed south. How should it square this circle?

The answer is that the Navy should procure a fleet of diesel-powered subs. Not only are diesels cheaper than nuclear-powered subs, but they have the advantage of being better platforms for many of the tasks the Navy faces today.

The demand for attack submarines is both quantitative and qualitative. Over the past two decades, for example, China has added more than 40 new submarines. Although they are not equivalent to ours, they still need to be tracked - and that takes numbers. Meanwhile, the list of actual and potential submarine missions, including close-in intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, special operations, and blockade and mining, continues to grow.

These growing operational demands are coupled with the exigencies of new undersea requirements. In addition to the deep-sea dives and prolonged blue-water missions that became the staple of submarine operations during the Cold War, there are a number of scenarios today that are focused on the littoral areas, the green water within 100 miles of land, be they in the strait of Hormuz or Malacca, off the shores of Taiwan or in the South China Sea.

It is these missions that often favor diesel submarines. Diesel subs are smaller, stealthier and more maneuverable in tight spaces than nuclear submarines. For example, unlike a nuclear submarine's power plant, a diesel's primary engine can be turned off when submerged, reducing noise emission. Indeed, unlike a nuclear-powered submarine, a modern diesel can hide on the ocean's floor, deadily silent, while monitoring whatever passes over and around it.

And with the advent of Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) technology, today's diesel subs can remain submerged for weeks at a time. When deployed to bases in the Far East or Middle East, the range and reach of today's AIP-equipped diesels would put them well within striking distance of critical choke points. And, using the recent sale price of Germany's Type 212 subs to Turkey as a point of reference - approximately \$500 million versus the \$2 billion for a Virginia-class nuclear attack submarine - the Navy would be able to ramp up submarine production without breaking the bank.

The U.S. Navy is not ignorant of the advantages of diesel subs. Time and again, American naval crews have struggled to detect their diesel-electric "foes" at sea. Over the past two years, for example, Peruvian and Chilean diesels have made life extremely tough for the U.S. in naval exercises.

Nor is this new; in a joint training exercise in 2005, a Swedish AIP-outfitted Götland-class sub scored a "strike" on the carrier Ronald Reagan. And, most famously, in 2006 a Chinese Song-class diesel

submarine surfaced undetected within striking distance of the carrier Kitty Hawk off Japanese waters.

Building diesel submarines in the U.S. has other advantages as well. There is a growing global market for diesel submarines among allies and partners and it's work U.S. shipyards certainly could use. In addition, having diesels in the fleet provides an in-house training tool for anti-submarine warfare efforts against other nations' diesels. It is useful to remember that Russia and China have successfully incorporated both diesel and nuclear submarines into their force structure.

Of course, the U.S. Navy has been dead set against building anything but nuclear-powered submarines for a half-century now. Indeed, one reason the offer of a sale of eight diesel submarines to Taiwan made by President George W. Bush in 2001 has never gotten off the ground is because the Navy brass has feared that any diesel construction in the U.S., even if strictly for foreign sales, might open the door to Congress asking, "Why not for our own fleet?"

In addition to the decades-old, Rickover-induced inertia, the new excuse for not building diesels is the claim that the missions that diesels might usefully perform can be handled with unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs). Why build a new class of submarine when UUVs attached to nuclear submarines can carry out those tasks?

But while UUVs are a promising idea, "promising" is the key here. Significant questions pertaining to speed, payload, sensors and communication remain.

In what was billed as Defense Secretary Robert Gates' valedictory policy speech at the American Enterprise Institute on May 24, he noted that "more and more money is consumed by fewer and fewer platforms," and that, in the future, the department's "guiding principle ... must be to develop technology and field weapons that are affordable, versatile, and relevant to the most likely and lethal threats in the decades to come."

That's a spot-on assessment as to why the U.S. Navy needs diesel submarines.

Gary Schmitt, is director of the advanced strategic studies program at the American Enterprise Institute.

A Submariner

*I saw this just recently as a post on the **Got Dolphins?** Facebook page and thought it was worth repeating here. I understand it has been around quite a bit, been inscribed on a plaque on several boats and used during qualification ceremonies on many occasions so many of you have probably seen it before:*

Only a submariner realizes to what great extent an entire ship depends on him as an individual. To a landsman this is not understandable, and sometimes it is even difficult for us to comprehend, but it is so! A submarine at sea is a different world in herself, and in consideration of the protracted and distant operations of submarines, the Navy must place responsibility and trust in the hands of those who take such ships to sea. In each submarine there are men who, in the hour of emergency or peril at sea, can turn to each other. These men are ultimately responsible to themselves and each to the other for all aspects of operation of their submarine. They are the crew. They are the ship. This is perhaps the most difficult and demanding assignment in the Navy. There is not an instant during his tour as a submariner that he can escape the grasp of

responsibility. His privileges in view of his obligations are almost ludicrously small, nevertheless, it is the spur which has given the Navy its greatest mariners: the men of the Submarine Service. It is a duty, which most richly deserves the proud and time-honored title of.... "SUBMARINER"

Tom Moniz

By Ken Johnson

I would like to acknowledge the service that Tom Moniz has provided to our Association over the years as Vice-President. He was already here when I came aboard as a member and, according to Roy, has been Vice-President since day one of its existence or as least as long as we had officers. I have personally visited Tom at his home in Sacramento and seen the many file cabinets of submarine information and memorabilia. For that reason I hope he continues to be our Historian. Bravo Zulu Tom!

I believe we once determined that Tom and I reported aboard the Sea Owl on the same day in late December 1962. I was a green Ensign right out of college, then Submarine School Basic Officer Class 120 and Tom was a qualified, EM3(SS) I believe, who had previously served aboard USS Salmon (SS 573). While there are obvious barriers to building close friendships between officers and enlisted crew members while on active duty, those barriers melt away over the years and friendships grow in their place. That is the way it has been with Tom and me.

At Virginia Beach in September we will be selecting a replacement for Tom as Vice-President. So far Ken Nichols, TM2 66-68 is the only one who has stepped forward and offered to take over.



As always, one of the saddest parts of doing the newsletter is the listing of those shipmates who have departed on "eternal patrol" since the last issue. We have learned since the last newsletter of the passing of this shipmate:

Frank Cronin – STS3 66-69 – March 25

We extend our deepest sympathy to family and friends of our departed shipmate.

*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.*

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The 40's

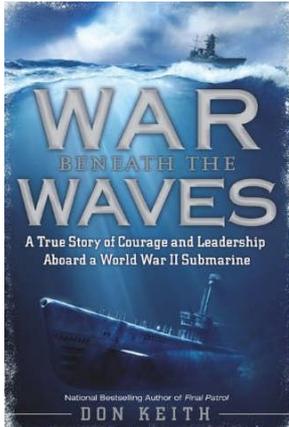
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“War Beneath the Waves A True Story of Courage and Leadership Aboard a World War II Submarine” by Don Keith

By Ken Johnson

I remember a WWII submariner once telling me, “Don’t believe everything you read in war patrol reports.” If you read the book,



“War Beneath the Waves A True Story of Courage and Leadership Aboard a World War II Submarine” by Don Keith and compare the events it describes to the official report of the second war patrol of USS Billfish (SS 286) in 1943, you will see one such example.

This book tells the story of LT Charles W. “Charlie” Rush, a story that remained untold as result of what you may call a “gentleman’s agreement” between LT Rush and his Billfish Commanding Officer, LCDR Frederic Lucas, for more than 50 years. Even

Clay Blair in his book, “Silent Victory” states only that Capt Lucas had a “painfully candid” talk with Admiral Christie on return from this patrol. According to Blair, in his diary Admiral Christie noted, “I am obliged to detach Lucas from command of Billfish at his own request. He is convinced that he is temperamentally unsuited for submarine command.” When it finally “surfaced” in 2002 the Navy awarded then Captain Charles Rush, USN (Ret) the Navy Cross, as well as posthumously awarded EMC John D. Rendernick the Silver Star and awarding a letter of commendation to ENC(SS) Charley T. Odom.

The text of Capt Rush’s Navy Cross citation follows:

“For extraordinary heroism while serving as Chief Engineer and Diving Officer on Board USS BILLFISH (SS 286) during a combat war patrol in the enemy controlled waters of Makassar Strait on 11 November 1943. When an extremely severe depth charge attack incapacitated the Captain and all officers senior to Captain Rush (then Lieutenant Rush), with cool courage and outstanding professionalism he directed the damage control efforts directly responsible for saving the ship. The sustained accurate attacks caused major leaking through the stern tubes and various hull fittings and, it was later discovered, actually ruptured the pressure hull aft. Calling on his prior extensive combat experience, Captain Rush was able to maintain the submarine at 580 feet, almost 170 feet below her test depth, and prevent her sinking further to crush depth. During 12 straight exhaustive hours at his Diving Officer post, his calm demeanor, innovative damage control actions, and demonstrated courage in the face of perceived certain disaster served as the major inspiration to the crew to keep them functioning after most had given up all hope of survival. After finally being relieved by another officer, Captain Rush proceeded to the conning tower to assess the situation. He found the helm unmanned, the Captain and all senior officers incapacitated, and no effective action being taken to counter the relentless depth charge attacks. Captain Rush, in a display of

enlightened leadership, immediately assumed the conn, obtained a helmsman, and proceeded to direct evasive actions to elude the enemy above. Hearing the continuing explosions astern and reasoning that explosions close to the fuel ballast tanks had caused oil leaks that enabled the enemy ships to track the submarine’s path, he then performed an innovative maneuver which resulted in the submarine retracing its own path in the opposite direction to pass under the old oil slicks. This so confused the enemy that they lost contact with the BILLFISH and Captain Rush was able to bring her to the surface after dark some four hours later, safely distant from the enemy now searching astern in a vain attempt to regain contact. He commenced recharging the depleted batteries with the single operable engine-generator and as more machinery was repaired he enhanced the propulsion capability and effected a successful escape from the scene. Captain Rush’s inspiring and exceptional performance of duty under the worst imaginable conditions and in the face of seemingly certain death were directly responsible for saving BILLFISH and all hands from loss and for restoring the shattered confidence of the crew. By his courageous action, superb leadership, and loyal dedication to duty, Captain Rush reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.”

I will leave the details of his story for you to you to read on your own. While the book could have benefited from more careful editing, it is a great read. In addition to this book, his story is also told in a June 2002 issue of Naval Institute Proceedings and is also available on line here: <http://www.northofseveycorners.com/history/rush.htm> . As a matter of interest, the maneuver described in the citation is one which any qualified OOD underway or quartermaster would recognize as a Williamson turn which would be used to recover a man overboard.

The story about how this award came about is an interesting one in itself. Navy rules require that the actions of the person to receive the award must be witnessed by a senior officer. By 2002 all officers who were senior to LT Rush on Billfish had since passed away. While the citation was working its way through official channels an active duty naval aviator named Jeffrey Campbell was shocked that such a technicality might sink this award. He had on his desk a detailed statement from Chief Rendernick, Chief Odom and from the Billfish COB, Emmett Carpenter. “To Campbell’s way of thinking, the statements of three chief petty officers equaled at least one statement from a senior officer.”



I did not learn until the end of the book that LT Rush was a Sea Owl shipmate who had been assigned to Sea Owl briefly during her construction in 1944 before going on to an assignment at BUORD in Washington, DC prior to Sea Owl’s first war patrol. This photo of him in 1943 is from a time when he served aboard USS Thresher (SS 200) with LCDR William “Moke” Millican as CO and with whom he made five war patrols.

Captain Rush, now in his early 90’s, lives in Port Saint Lucie, Florida.





The 50's

June 2011 Issue



More on Sea Owl Shipmate, Charles Rush

From the book "War Beneath the Waves"

After his tour with the Navy Bureau of Ordnance (BUORD) in Washington, DC, Charlie Rush served as XO of USS Carbonero (SS 337) from June 1948 to July 1951. From 1952 to 1954 he commanded USS Queenfish (SS 393)

Later, while assigned to the U.S Navy Office of Operations, he made recommendations that led to the successful under-ice voyage of USS Nautilus (SSN 571) from the Pacific to the Atlantic by way of the North Pole in 1958. His boss at the time, Admiral I. J. Galatin issued a memo to be placed in Rush's file, stating, "In late 1956 when the undersigned was Head, Submarine Warfare Branch, Office of Chief of Naval Operations, the then Commander Charles W. Rush, Jr., as Head of the Submarine Weapons Section (OP-311E) recommended to me that USS NAUTILUS (SS(N) 571)

make a transarctic passage. To the best of my knowledge, the concept of such a transit from ocean to ocean across the northern route was completely original; it had never been suggested before. After your preliminary work substantiated the feasibility of your plan, I authorized you to discuss it with Commander William R. Anderson, U.S. Navy, who was then slated to take command of NAUTILUS . . . the vision and initiative shown in your original proposal were instrumental in the successful planning and execution of this historic naval accomplishment."

Rush was also instrumental in the development of the UUM-44 SUBROC submarine weapons system and worked on other guided missile weapons that were specifically designed to be fired from submarines. He retired from the Navy in 1961 after twenty years of active service with the rank of Captain, later working at several jobs in the aerospace industry.

Cartoon Bob Once Again Explores One of Sea Owl's Legendary Denizens

While some may have a different recollection of where the legendary Sea Owl pet alligator lived on board, I seem to recall that it was the lower level of the Forward Engine Room. It was treated nicely by crew members wearing dungarees and meanly by those wearing khaki. Officers were warned not to venture into the lower level of the Engine Room, lest they risk being attacked by the alligator. Allegedly this was to keep the officers from discovering the still that was installed there, and I don't mean a still for making fresh water.





The 60's

June 2011 Issue



Congratulation "Spots" Leppart!

By Ken Johnson

I just learned that Shipmate Jerry "Spots" Leppart, FN 62-64, has finally succeeded in convincing the North Carolina Legislature to approve a submarine veterans plate for North Carolina. Here it is:



Wait a minute. That's the strangest looking submarine I have ever seen at the top there and, as far as I know, submarines don't fly. Well I guess you can't have everything. As comedian Stephen Wright once said, "where would you put it?"

Well Jerry deserves a lot of credit for persevering at this for 2-1/2 years which is how long it took to finally get it approved.

Reunions

By Ken Johnson

On Memorial Day weekend this year I attended my 50th college class reunion at Brown University. It was great to see some old, and I do mean old, friends again after so long. Several are both college and high school classmates of mine since I went to Classical High School in Providence and many of its graduates go on to college at Brown. A few had also taken NROTC back then and a couple had gone on to Navy careers, retiring as Captains.

It is tradition that the graduating class marches down the hill to the First Baptist Meeting House, preceeded by alumni classes with the oldest first. The building, now on the National Register of Historic Places was originally built in 1775 and was designed "also for holding commencement in," because of the church's early affiliation with Brown University (then called Rhode Island College), which was founded by Baptists. Some of the signs carried by the class of 1986 who were celebrating their 25th reunion were noteworthy. "We wrote our papers using Typewriters", for example, or "We got our mail in mailboxes". There was also one that said, "Tuition, Room and board in our senior year was \$15,096." Today the same would be more like \$50,000.

Brown no longer has NROTC and has not since 1972. Several other Ivy League colleges have or are in the process of reinstating it, notably Harvard, Columbia and most recently Yale. Will Brown do the same? Most likely not, but at least there are some undergraduates and alumni who would like to see it, including me.

Why am I writing about this in a Sea Owl newsletter? Actually it is because a major theme of this newsletter is our reunion this year in Virginia Beach. We don't know how many more we will have and, most likely, we will be going to an every other year schedule for them instead of having them every year. We don't have classes like high schools and colleges do so we don't divide up into such groups at reunions as they tend to do. The only exception there may be that we consider our "plankowners" as well as any who served on combat patrols in World War II to be special. They are a dwindling lot and the majority have health issues that prevent them from attending reunions. Even us "young pups" who served aboard in the '60s aren't so spry anymore and we just lost another one in Frank Cronin. Frank, as many other shipmates, had never attended one of our reunions or even the Groton Picnics.

A friend and Brown classmate who I reconnected with at our reunion went to OCS after graduation and served in the Navy. Even though he was a "skimmer" who served on auxiliary ships, we have since been sharing "sea stories" and he would like to get together again some time, visit the Submarine Force Museum in Groton, a new Marine Corps Museum in Quantico and a few other places. I told him I have the full 26 episodes of "Victory at Sea" on DVD as well as the full series of the old "Silent Service" TV show on DVD that I picked up during our reunion in San Diego. He said we ought to get together, drink some Sam Adams beer, eat some lobsters and clams, and just have a marathon session together. Now I am beginning to wonder why it took me 50 years to go to one of my class reunions!

Incidentally, I pulled out one of the "Silent Service" DVDs this morning and started to watch it. It had Dennis Weaver as the CO (remember Chester from "Gunsmoke"?) and another actor who was playing the role LCDR Ben Benites. I knew the REAL Ben Benites as did Tom Moniz. I met him at Chatham, UK during my first International Submariner Congress there in May 2003. Ben is gone now as are so many WW II submarine veterans. Through this newsletter I get to thank many of them for their service and it pleases me to hear them tell me how much they enjoy reading it. Bob Kristian and I called Stan Ainley while we were at the Groton picnic and talked to him. Stan is a Sea Owl "plankowner" like Bob and one day soon Bob and I will go together to visit Stan in Greenville, RI while we still can.

In this newsletter you will read about Charlie Rush. I have talked to him by phone and written to him recently. I revised the National World War II Registry entry I once made for him to better reflect his wartime contribution. I suggested that the entry for CDR William "Moke" Millican who he served under on USS Thresher (SS 200) before reporting to Sea Owl in 1944 deserved to say more than just "Killed in Action". ("Moke" Millican was CO of USS Escobar when she was lost on her first war patrol in 1944.) He sent me the name and address of CDR Millican's daughter in California. I wrote to her. We will see what happens next.

Consider coming to our reunion in September! I can almost guarantee you won't regret it