



Hooter Hilites

A Publication of the USS Sea Owl Association

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

We still give a hoot!

September 2007 Issue



Shipmates & 1st mates

President's Message

Shipmates, as mentioned in the June issue, 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 the Tom Gilbert Endowment Fund through 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.

In the last issue of this newsletter we reported the departure on "eternal patrol" of Shipmate, Joe Zimmerman, EM 52-56 on April 10, 2007. On September 13 we received the following email from his First Mate, Dorothy Zimmerman:

Hello to all,

On August 1, Laurel, Randy, Scott and I delivered Joe's remains to the Naval Hospital at Bremerton, WA for burial at sea. We were told that it might take up to 90 days to do the actual ceremony but on August 15, I received a call from Bremerton that his remains had been put aboard a submarine. I didn't think to ask which one as I was happy that it was a sub. I was also told that his burial would take place during that same week.

Today, I received a package from the CO of the SEAWOLF, SSN 21, with the flag flown while the ceremony occurred, a disk of photos of the ceremony, a chart showing the location of the burial and a great letter from the Commanding Officer. Joe was buried on August 16 at 1901 (7:01 PM for the nonmilitary) with moderate winds and slight seas. The map shows he was buried near Admiralty Inlet at LAT 48 degrees 13'N/ LONG 122 degrees 59'W. On the chart, it appears almost directly across Whidbey Island to Randy and Dave's retirement home and to Camano Island where Laurel and Brad live.

I was just wondering the other day when I would hear from someone and there it is.

Mom, Grandma, Dorothy

From the Editor

I am pleased to welcome Shipmate Bob D'Amico as a contributor to this issue. At the Groton Picnic Bob asked if I would be interested in him providing an original cartoon sketch for a future issue of Hooter Hilites. "Of course I would", I replied! The result (and I hope it is just the first of many to come) you can find further on in this issue.

I also eagerly welcome Shipmate Bruce Blessington as a contributor.

On August 4th I received an email from Bruce that read (in part) as follows: "From 18 August, Marie and I are off to sail the Downeast Maine coast for 4 weeks visiting the harbors and islands from Matinicus to Cutler on our sloop Dress Blue (see photo). Some of



these locations, especially those east of the Schoodic peninsula and the off-shore inhabited islands are time capsules from generations ago. There, life is simpler and regulated by the tides, weather and season. Our habit is to always try to meet and mix with the locals who are much more receptive when one arrives by boat. Each of these marvelous places has its own story and rich maritime history. Tiny Cutler (pop. 400) for example (here's a sub tie-in) has the supposed distinction during the cold war of being on the Soviet's strategic nuclear target list right up there with the Pentagon, White House and NORAD HQ because of the Navy's VLF transmitter.

My proposal is that I send you some "Dress Blue Dispatches" from Downeast as we make our way along with focus on people, places and history. You can use what you like and deep six what you don't (up to 100% of content -I've been disappointed by editors before so I'm long past virginity in that respect!). Digital pictures will be included, again, use what you like.

Let me know if you think this worthwhile."

Is the Pope Catholic? Does a bear ...? Well, you know the answer. I eagerly accepted his offer and on September 11th received the first of his "Dress Blue Dispatches" that you will find further on in this issue. Hopefully there will be several more for future issues.

As always a newsletter would not be complete if we were not to remind everyone to pay their dues. 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.

Those of you who receive this letter by “snail mail” may notice that this issue looks a bit better than previous issues, especially the photographs. For some time I have been using an Hp deskjet 5650 to print the newsletter, but recently this printer developed a serious tendency to jam frequently. Since this printer is one of very few reasonably priced printers that (with an optional attachment) can print double-sided pages, it was well suited for use in printing this newsletter. This printer was purchased by your Sea Owl Association specifically for printing the newsletter and I could have ordered a new one directly from Hp as a replacement. Instead I opted to try a brand new Hp printer, the Hp Photosmart C7280 All-in one that comes equipped with a double-sided print feature. It also uses a new ink technology that Hp calls Vivera. Best of all, it is rated at 33-34 pages per minute, much faster than its predecessor! Since the price of this printer at \$299.99 is more than twice the price of another deskjet 5650, and since I was overdue for a printer upgrade anyway, I have opted to buy this one myself.

For those who get the PDF version of the newsletter, let me point out a new feature I discovered recently in the most recent version of Adobe Acrobat Reader (version 8.1). This version includes the capability to search a PDF document. This feature lets you search the PDF version of any issue of “Hooter Hilites”! If you haven’t already upgraded to Acrobat Reader Version 8.1, I would highly recommend you do so and check out some of the new features that Adobe has added. Since it is FREE, there is no reason not to!

I am always looking for interesting stories, photographs, cartoon sketches 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.

Dress Blue Dispatches #1

by Bruce Blessington

The mission: provide for the physical, healthcare, spiritual and economic needs of Maine’s island and remote coastal communities. The method: the 74’ vessel “Sunbeam” operated by the 102 year-old Maine Seacoast Mission. I’d heard of Sunbeam and her seagoing good works. As she rounded the breakwater inbound at Matinicus Island in the light of late August afternoon, I got my first chance to see her underway, making her rounds.



Sunbeam entering Matinicus harbor August, 2007

Many of Maine’s dozen or so inhabited islands are fragile communities where life can be hard. Things that we take for granted on the mainland are never certain on the islands. A teacher for the one room school, a functioning post office, medical care and a viable micro-economy supported by fishing are all critical elements in sustaining island populations. Some of Maine’s remote coastal communities on the mainland face similar challenges in maintaining their existence. A sampling of small coastal villages between the Schoodic peninsula and Passamaquoddy Bay underscores the point. With Sunbeam and her crew of four, the Maine Seacoast Mission makes a difference in the lives of all who inhabit these communities.



Left to right: Captain Mike Johnson, First Mate Felicia Bland, Registered Nurse Sharon Daley, Engineer Storey King

Founded in 1905 by two Maine pastors, the brothers Alexander and Angus MacDonald, the Maine Seacoast Mission focused early on educating island kids including the children of Maine’s many (in those times) manned lighthouses. Today the ship serves as a medical suite, meeting facility, church, classroom and social gathering spot in each harbor it visits.

We were welcomed aboard Sunbeam at Matinicus as she lay along side the ferry dock. The highlight of the visit was a tour of the ship’s extremely well equipped tele-medicine facility hosted by Sharon Dailey, R.N. The typical on-board treatment process has Sharon taking the patient’s history, conducting a preliminary exam and then connecting the patient visually with a mainland doctor. High resolution cameras and monitors at both ends make it possible for the physician to effectively interact with the patient, visualize ailments from sore throats to skin cancers and either prescribe or refer for further treatment. Sharon’s interview with us was twice interrupted by islanders needing care; including one with a lacerated finger. In addition to its free services, the ship also offers comprehensive diabetes and lipid screens for a mere \$14.00.

Sunbeam’s visit to Matinicus included an Alcoholics Anonymous information meeting, a training session for the island’s EMT’s and religious services conducted by Rev. Rob Benson, Pastor to the Outer Islands. Rev. Benson visits his scattered flock on the islands of Frenchboro, Isle au Haut, Matinicus and Swans twice monthly. On other visits, Sunbeam and her crew arrange inter-island softball games (visiting team transportation provided) retreats for island teachers, child development services and basic dental care. The Mission accomplishes all of this for a bit over \$2 million per year sustained entirely by donations and grants. It pays all of its administrative and fund raising costs from returns on its endowment such that 100% of donor’s funds go directly to programs.

We concluded our visit to Sunbeam with a steaming coffee in the galley chatting with the ship's operating company, Engineer Storey King and Captain Mike Johnson and watching Felicia Bland, First Mate (with a USCG 100 ton master's license and whose cooking doesn't match her name) construct a mountain of confections for the evening's informational meeting. This is an impressive and dedicated group of young professionals. All are Maine Maritime Academy graduates who believe in what they are doing for these communities and do it very well indeed. More can be learned about the Maine Seacoast Mission and its good works at www.seacoastmission.org.

K-77 Salvage Operations

By Ken Johnson

Since the last issue where I mentioned the unfortunate demise of the K-77 Russian Juliett submarine in Providence in April, the first phase of salvage operations was conducted in August. This involved a team of 12 U. S. Army and 12 U. S. Navy salvage divers operating from an Army Reserve LCU. I worked closely with the divers and with the representatives from NAVSEA Supervisor of Salvage office during this operation and took this photo from the bridge of the LCU on August 21st.



The LCU is moored with its front ramp almost directly over the bow of the sunken submarine and divers working are off of the ramp. The orange and yellow floats in the photograph mark key features of the sub which is lying on the bottom in 30 feet of water with a 48 degree port list. If you look closely you can see the tips of the sub's two periscopes sticking out of the water just to the right of the LCU's bow.

Rather than going through a description here of the operations conducted in Providence from August 17 through September 1, let me refer you to my website page which contains photographs and a narrative description:

<http://www.oakhamgraphics.com/K-77/salvage.html>

The operation was funded by DoD as part of the military Innovative Readiness Training Program. You can read more about this program here: <http://www.defenselink.mil/ra/html/irt.html>.

In this instance, LCU 2031 *New Orleans* came to Providence via Little Creek, VA where they took on board equipment from the Navy Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit 2 (MDSU-2) which is based in Little Creek.

During this phase the submarine was stabilized, though not righted as hoped, and key hatches and access plates were removed for use as templates for manufacturing salvage connections to be used during the next phase during the Spring of 2008.

This was a "golden opportunity" for these salvage divers to train on a real submarine, and a Russian one at that.

International Visitors

By Ken Johnson

Prior to and following the above operation in Providence I was involved with two groups of international visitors visiting the U. S. as part of the USAID funded Community Connections Program. The first was a group of 10 medical doctors from Khazakstan who were here to study methods of infection control and maintaining a safe blood supply for their country. I was pleased to welcome one of them, an epidemiologist, to stay in my home as a "home stay" guest. The second group was a diverse one from the Donetsk region of Ukraine and they were here to study industrial waste management techniques that they might apply in their country. I assisted with these groups by driving them to various assignments and spent much time with them during their stay. As always with such groups, I found the experience very rewarding and a chance to make a real difference in how this country is perceived by visitors from other countries. I think without exception that these visitors leave with an entirely different, and more favorable, perspective on the United States than they arrived with.

I already mentioned in the last issue that these groups leave surprised with the amount of work done by volunteers. There is one thing that I find disturbing though and that is the difficulty in finding souvenirs for them to take back that are "Made in USA"! Both groups visited New York City and their visit included a trip to the Statue of Liberty. On his return my Khazak home stay guest showed me the souvenirs he purchased at the Statue of Liberty, *ALL MADE IN CHINA!* The Ukrainians even commented on this during a teleconference with the USAID person in Washington, DC at the end of their visit. They added that they, "hoped that the U. S. flag flying over our capitol building was not also made in China".

Sailor 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 shipmate:

Dan Cooper, ENC 61-62 – July 21, 2007

We extend our deepest sympathy to the 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

September 2007 Issue



U-505 Exhibit at the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry

By Ken Johnson

Back in July one of the stops I made on my way back from visiting children and grandchildren in Colorado was the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago to see the newly renovated *U-505* exhibit. I had first seen the sub back in 1962 when I took a trip to Chicago after graduation from college. At that time the submarine was outside the main Museum building. I knew that about 2 years ago the exhibit had been extensively redone at great expense and that the submarine had been moved inside the Museum building.

The story of the capture of *U-505* is a dramatic one and involved great heroism not to mention luck. Since it happened just two days prior to D-Day in June 1944, there was great concern on the part of the Allies that the Germans would find out about it and change their codes at a very critical time. As a result, all members of the task force were required to sign an agreement not to disclose the capture under penalty of death.

Following her capture, *U-505* was towed 2,500 miles to Bermuda and then sent to the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard for examination. By 1946, the Navy had extracted all the information and technology it needed from the *U-505*. With no reason to keep the sub, the Navy planned to use her as a target. The story of the *U-505* would have ended there were it not for Retired Admiral Daniel V. Gallery, the Museum of Science and Industry and the people of Chicago.

A Chicago native, Admiral Gallery was looking for a permanent home for the *U-505* in his hometown. As luck would have it, the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry had been searching for a submarine for its collection. In 1953, Admiral Gallery and Chicago Museum of Science and Industry President, Lenox Lohr, managed to convince Under Secretary of the Navy, Charles S. Thomas, to give the sub to the Museum. The only catch was that the Navy refused to cover the cost of the move. In response, the Museum, the City of Chicago and private groups banded together to raise the \$250,000 that would be necessary to repair, move and install the sub for exhibition.

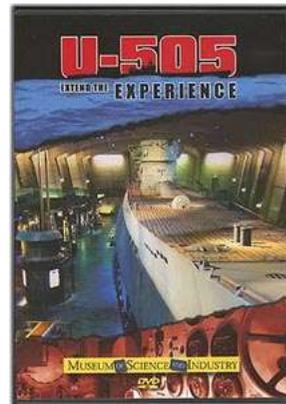
The *U-505* arrived in Chicago on June 26, 1954, only to face another major hurdle: an 800-foot overland trip from Lake Michigan to the Museum. The task required extensive planning to cross Lake Shore Drive without destroying the pavement and tying up traffic. Engineers designed an elaborate rail and roller system to move the heavy sub out of the water and over the land. The City closed Lake Shore Drive the night of September 2, 1954 to allow the sub to cross. It took another week for the sub to complete its journey from the road to the Museum.

On September 25, 1954, the *U-505* was dedicated as a war memorial and a permanent exhibit at the Museum of Science and Industry. In 1989, the sub was also designated as a National Historic Landmark. The *U-505* is the only Type IX-C *U-boat* in existence today. Left untreated and outdoors, it would have been unsafe for tours by 2004 so in 1997, the Museum launched the

largest exhibit conservation project in its history – to preserve the *U-505* and move it indoors to a climate-controlled environment. A large crew spent five months welding, cleaning, repairing and painting the hull. Brackets, stringers and ribs were re-manufactured using original construction drawings recovered from Germany and the patterns from badly eroded parts. It was difficult to find the sub's original color. The Museum conservation team used photos, a German archive painting manual, veteran recollections and more so the sub could be conserved authentically. Ballast by ballast, tank by tank, the team installed reinforcements, focusing on jacking points and cradle locations. Ultimately, it took more than two years to ensure that the *U-505* was structurally sound. By 2004 the *U-boat's* exterior had suffered noticeable damage from weather, and on April 8, 2004 the Museum began the lengthy process of moving the *U-boat* to a new underground, covered, climate-controlled location. Now in an enclosed area and protected from the elements,

the restored *U-505* reopened to the public on June 5, 2005.

The *U-505* exhibit is included as part of the General Admission to the Museum, but for an extra \$5 you can tour the inside of the submarine with a guide. These tours are scheduled every 15 minutes and are limited to 12 persons each. Each tour guide has a carefully timed script keyed to sound effects in each compartment and does not take any questions until the tour is complete.



You can order this DVD on line from the Museum Store for \$19.99 here:

<http://enssc.com/Products.aspx?product=102406>

It was well worth the trip to Chicago to see this remarkable exhibit, but you can take an on line virtual tour here;

<http://www.msichicago.org/exhibit/U505/virtualtour/index.html>

USS Cod

By Ken Johnson

As I also mentioned in the June issue, my next stop after Chicago was the USS Cod in Cleveland. This was everything I had been told to expect as the Cod looks as though she could get underway as soon as the crew came off liberty. Unlike many museum boats, no extra stairs have been installed and the After Battery has not been "gutted" of bunks. Of course, there are no batteries on board, but they do have limited DC shore power so the sub's original ventilation system is operational! Since I had made some strategic phone calls in advance, I got what we used to call the "Gilligan Tour" at the Russian Sub Museum, about 3 hours long and into areas most visitors don't get to go. Since Cod has GM diesels, a matter of local pride, it was no surprise to see one of them in pieces being "overhauled" as anyone who has served on a boat with "Jimmies" can appreciate. Again, well worth the trip to see!



The 50's

September 2007 Issue



The Soviet Submarine Threat of the 50's and Response

By Ken Johnson

The Soviet Union's conquest over Nazi Germany had paid handsome dividends for Soviet submarine designers. A wide array of technologically-advanced German design U-boats, many operational and others in various stages of completion in the ship yards, were procured at war's end. The revolutionary Type XXI U-boat, with its radical streamlining and unheard-of underwater speed of 17 knots, was studied by Soviet submarine designers. The result was the Soviet Whiskey-class of which a total of 238 were built between the years 1949 and 1958.

The Allies obtained their share of war prizes as well. Current and new American submarines would incorporate many of the features of the Third Reich's Type XXI "electro-boat".

It was clear that in order to contain Soviet naval forces there was a great need to deploy picket lines of NATO submarines at certain "choke points" around the USSR. As part of Project KAYO, three SSK boats, USS *Barracuda* (SSK-1), USS *Bass* (SSK-2) and USS *Bonita* (SSK-3) were built around the large BQR-4 bow-mounted sonar array which experimented with the use of passive acoustics with low-frequency, bow sonar arrays. When the boat was rigged for silent running, these arrays gave greatly-improved convergence zone detection ranges against snorkeling submarines. *Barracuda* type SSK's were designed to be smaller than contemporary attack



submarines and simpler in design and construction. It was hoped that this would allow them to be inexpensively mass produced in the large numbers it was thought would be needed to combat the growing Soviet submarine fleet. It was also thought that this would allow shipyards without submarine experience, and contractors with experience in the mass production of large complex aircraft, to build these submarines.

Like other attempts to build smaller, cheaper submarines, the experiment was a failure. The result was a ship with insufficient performance to meet their intended operational usage. The *Barracuda*-class subs were slow and had limited endurance, and so were retired by the late 1950s. Their sonar, however, proved excellent, with good convergence zone detection ranges against snorkeling submarines.

Following the *Barracuda* class experiment, several Gato-class fleet type submarines were converted to a hunter-killer submarines. The first of these was USS *Grouper* (SS 214), followed by USS *Bashaw* (SS 241), USS *Angler* (SS 240), USS *Bluegill* (SS 242), USS *Croaker* (SS 246) and USS *Bream* (SS 243). With the

exception of *Grouper* which, similar to the Type XXI, had the sonar array installed around the forward end of the sail, the most obvious change was the incorporation of the latest passive sonar equipment, the BQR-4 array which was wrapped around the bow.



USS *Bream* is shown here as representative of this installation. This was an American adaptation of the German low frequency sonar unit. In these boats this necessitated the removal of two of the six forward torpedo tubes and their piping. The thinking was that early detection and advanced torpedoes with homing capabilities would offset the slight loss of firing capacity. Although ultra-quiet operation had originally been needed, the Bureau of Ships was able to modify these submarines to the point where they could listen while running equipment such as air conditioners, which improved habitability and reduced electronic maintenance. These submarines would be classified SSK; submarine hunter/killer.

SSK submarines were to lie in wait on enemy transit routes, listening for snorkeling Russian submarines and surface transits. The target's diesels would allow the SSK to detect their presence. In the event of hostilities, the American SSKs would ambush Soviet submarines leaving their ports, when they would be at their noisiest, snorkeling at high speed to make good the long distance.

During the mid-50's three Balao-class submarines also received the BQR-4 bow sonar array, USS *Piper* (SS 409), USS *Sterelet* (SS 392) and USS *Sea Owl* (SS 405). These differed, however, from the Gato-class installations in that no torpedo tubes were removed to accommodate the sonar installation. Instead, the BQR-4 array was mounted higher on the bow.

Shipmate Mike Polhemus, noted recently that the *Sea Owl*'s entry in the on line encyclopedia Wikipedia had no reference to the BQR-4 installation availability and has proposed the following:

In the spring or early summer of 1956, Sea Owl entered Philadelphia Naval Shipyard for installation of the AN/BQR-4A and AN/BQR-3A sonars . The Sonar Shack was moved to a space in the AFter Battery immediately below the Galley. The AN/BQR-4A gave the boat its final characteristic external lines with the massive bow dome while the AN/BQR-3A Sonar occupied a space between the sail and AN/BQR-4A bow dome with its associated "inverted bathtub" array. Sea Owl returned to its home port in New London following this yard availability.



The 60's

September 2007 Issue



Yellow Submarine

by Ken Johnson



You have heard of the Beatles' song "Yellow Submarine". Well here is a picture of an actual yellow submarine from the 60's. After leaving the Navy in 1966 I worked at the Westinghouse Ocean

Research & Engineering Center in Annapolis as part of the Deepstar design group. This is the Westinghouse Deepstar 4000, designed in France by Cousteau and assembled in Marseilles and Annapolis from French and American components. It had a 5 ft diameter pressure hull made of HY-80, giving it an operating depth down to 4,000 ft. This was the major American-made part

No, I never got to ride in it and only saw it once in Panama City, FL. I have often wondered what became of it, whether it is lying in a scrap heap someplace or was scrapped.

Bob D'Amico's Cartoon

The below cartoon submitted by Shipmate Bob D'Amico may bring back some memories to those who made this Mediterranean cruise just prior to Sea Owl's decommissioning. I guess the moral is that you should never assume that someone who may overhear what you say can not understand you. One can only guess what it was that these Greek linehandlers were saying and what Capt Kolaras said back. My guess is it would not be something I would not want to print in this newsletter.



SEA OWL MEMORY LANE.... MED CRUISE - 1969

When we'd set the 'maneuvering watch' to pull in to a port, my station was topside as one of the 2 lookouts. During a last Med Cruise for our boat in the summer of '69, we had a new captain, greek-american Commander Kolaras. When entering the harbor city of Piraeus near Athens, there were a few local dock guys hanging around the pier we were pulling into. When we were close enough, they had a few choice words in greek to say... out loud for all to hear and supposedly not understand. It was truly a great moment to see their faces when the Captain gave them a few choice words back... in greek! We (the crew) had fun talking about that one all the way back to New London, where unfortunately, we had our decommissioning ceremony waiting for us.