



# Hooter Hilites

A Publication of the USS Sea Owl Association

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

We still give a hoot!

September 2011 Issue



## President's Message

Shipmates & 1st Mates:

I feel our Virginia Beach Reunion 2011 was a smashing success, thanks in a very large part to the 29 Shipmates who attended. I want to thank all of those for taking the time to attend it to make this Reunion the success that it was . . . THANK YOU!!

During our dinner at Virginia Beach, Shipmates Mike Jansen and Howie Stein, as always, ran a 50-50 in which everyone took part. The winner of the 50-50 was Terry Schlichenmaier, the son of Shipmate Bob Schlichenmaier QM 44-48 (Plankowner). In Honor of his father, Terry donated the money back to the Sea Owl Association . . . Terry we appreciate this very much. THANK YOU!!

We elected a new Vice President for the Sea Owl Association, Ken Nichols TM 66-68. Ken is a retired Navy Chief. I have known him for a long time and am looking forward to working with him. Welcome Ken!!

I hope that everyone supports our Christmas raffle this year. Ken Johnson has explained the raffle in another piece within this Newsletter. Send your checks in now; don't lose out on this great item!

It was voted and approved during our Virginia Beach Reunion to move our reunions to every other year. As I have said before, this will hopefully take some of the strain off those Shipmates who attend more than one reunion each year. As of now, our next Sea Owl Reunion (2013) will be in Cleveland, Ohio (home of the USS Cod). We have been in contact with those on the Cod in Cleveland; they encourage us to attend during the Labor Day weekend - there will be Memorial Services, Air Shows, and Parades, which will all be taking place during the weekend of September 1st. As I prepare to put this Reunion together, it looks like the dates will be August 30th thru September 3rd. These dates are not cast in stone, but mark these dates down for your 2013 Sea Owl Reunion.

I'm looking at having the Groton Picnic, which so many Shipmates look forward to each year, at Captain Scott's, which is an outdoor Sea Food Eatery that is very popular with the locals in Groton. Even with Ed Welch moving to NH, I don't want to lose the good times that we have in Groton during this picnic. I think this will serve our purpose fine. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone there. More on this as we move forward.

Roy

## Treasurer's Report

By: Ken Johnson

Now that the dust has settled and we have paid all of the bills related to the reunion at Virginia Beach, we have a checking account balance of \$5,503.00 and have a zero balance owed on our Capital One Visa credit card. In spite of having to pay \$250 to the tour company for 10 empty seats on the Friday tour, we actually made some money largely on ship store sales.

## From the Editor

Back at the Groton Picnic in June Bob D'Amico asked me if I had any ideas for future issue cartoons for future issues. I had just read the book "Thank You Notes" by comedian Jimmy Fallon and suggested maybe we could do a series of "Thank You Sea Owl" notes. I gave him a few suggestions from a forward battery perspective and thought he might come up with a few from the after battery perspective. The first results you can see in this issue and the subject has proven rich enough to where we can probably span several future issues with it.

In the June issue you read about the book "War Beneath the Waves" by Don Keith. After reading it and discovering that the person who was the subject of the book, Capt Charlie Rush, was a Sea Owl shipmate, I decided to invite Capt Rush to our reunion at VA Beach and offered to pay for his meal and hotel accommodations if he would agree to speak at our Saturday evening Banquet. Capt Rush and his wife, Lavonne, arrived Friday afternoon and Shipmate and former Sea Owl XO 66-67 Capt Pat Taylor picked them up at the airport. We thought this would be appropriate since Pat Taylor's father was a WW II submarine Commanding Officer.

## Virginia Beach Reunion

By: Ken Johnson

The reunion at Virginia Beach was a great success! The hotel accommodations were the best that I have ever seen for any Sea Owl



reunion I have attended. This is an aerial view of the Virginia Beach Resort Hotel & Conference Center from their brochure.

As you can see it is right on the beach, but away from the resort area of Virginia Beach. This proved to be particularly good since while we were there a Neptune Festival was going on down in the resort area along the ocean front of Virginia Beach. Also while the beaches there are nicer the only decent beach day was Thursday since a cold front roared through on Friday and dropped the temperature about 30 degrees.

The tour on Friday included a visit to the MacArthur Memorial. Those who visited it may be interested in this YouTube video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EqRTWMVqMY>

We then had a boat tour of the harbor which went as far as the Navy base piers and back, then a visit to the Nauticus Museum including the battleship Wisconsin. Here we are on the Wisconsin deck.



Following the tour we went back to the hotel and most of us got together and posed for this group photo



(Left to Right)

Front row: Roy Purtell TM 66-69, Jim Blackwelder ST 68-69, Frank Kenyon 68-69, Charles Rush LT '44 (Plankowner), Bob Schlichenmaier QM 44-48 (Plankowner) Jerry Leppart FN 62-64, 2nd row: Danny Hicks IC 59-60, Mike Jansen TM 59-62 Between Kenyon & Rush: Ralph Lucas TM 44-46 (Plankowner), Bob Lynch IC 63-65, Ken Johnson LTJG 62-65. 3rd row: Dick Meinke EN 63-66, Jerry Morrison EM 53-55, Behind Lucas: Howie Stein IC 59-61, Stein's left: Ken Nichols TM 66-68, Behind Lynch: Jim Franks TM 66-68, Gerald Farr QM 62-64, Behind Johnson: Allen Wells TM 68-69, Back Row: Tom Camenisch EN 63-67, Bob Kail ET 64-65, To Morrison's left: Allen Polhemus SO 56-57, Behind Nichols, Ken Boyer IC 59-60, Behind Franks, Bill Brinkman FN 59-60, Missing: Ed Bess EM 64-69, Bob Thomas EM 65-67, Ed LaBreck EM 64-66, Pat Taylor XO 66-67, Jim Grilli MM 62-63.

Then we held our business meeting and discussed the following:  
Tolling of the boats

Tribute to Tom Moniz (Acknowledgement of his years of service as Association Vice-President.)

Vice-President Nomination and Vote (Ken Nichols elected to succeed Tom Moniz.)

Vote on reunion frequency (every two years vs. every year)

Bill Brinkman invitation to 2012 Sea Poacher reunion (San Antonio, TX – April 2012)

Vote on next reunion location and date (Cleveland, Ohio – September 2013)

Future Groton "Picnics" (Informal gathering vs catered picnic.)

49<sup>th</sup> International Submariners Congress – Kiev, Ukraine in September 2012 (Information provided to those interested.)

Financial Report (Preliminary only pending final payment of reunion charges.)

50-50 Raffle

Sea Owl Association Facebook page (Alive and well.)

Possible Sea Owl Association YouTube channel (coming soon.)

On Saturday night we held our banquet where Captain Charlie Rush was our featured speaker. (See the '40s page for details.) We had seated Capt and Mrs. Rush at a table with two Sea Owl Plankowners, Bob Schlichenmaier and Ralph Lucas and their wives. Also at the table were Capt Pat Taylor and his wife. After dinner I approached Capt Rush and asked if he was ready to speak. He said yes, but his wife, Lavonne, took my arm and said, "Not yet. There's still a lot of chatter going on here." I told her to let me know when the time was right and we would start.

I introduced Capt Rush by reading his Navy Cross citation.



After Captain Rush spoke, Sea Owl Shipmate and XO 66-67 retired Captain Pat Taylor told a couple of stories. The first was a "sea story" about helping Admiral Rickover find a suitable burial plot during his last days on earth. (He was not looking for anything special since he only planned to stay for three days.)

The second was a true story about Capt Taylor's dad who was Commanding Officer of USS Haddock (SS 231) during WW II. It happened during Haddock's third war patrol in early 1943. Haddock was a "thin skin" Gato class boat with a test depth of 312 feet. While under depth charge attack they went to 450 then 500 feet. Because of some comments made by a Congressman back then about the Japanese not setting their depth charges deep enough, the Japanese had learned that our boats could go deeper than they first thought and were resetting their depth charges so Haddock was getting quite a pounding.. At one point Pat's dad asked the XO to take over so he could make a run to the head in the forward torpedo room.

While he was in the head, the XO went 50 feet deeper and the hull compressed around the sheetmetal that enclosed the head. His dad was locked into the commode yelling, "Get me the hell out of here!" He spent 25 minutes in there.

Capt Taylor's dad never told him this story. He heard it from a Chief Steward in 1956 who had been a 2<sup>nd</sup> Class aboard Haddock back when it happened.

In closing I can't say enough about the Virginia Beach Resort Hotel & Conference Center and all the people on their staff who made our reunion such a pleasant experience. In my opinion it was the best place we have ever had a reunion. Our rooms were suites and each had an outside balcony and cost just \$89/night!. Our hospitality room was actually one of the hotel's meeting rooms with its own bar, but we could buy our own beer, wine and snacks from a supermarket just across the street.

### Christmas Raffle

By: Ken Johnson



We are doing a Christmas raffle for this Sony digital frame. The specifications for this frame in part are as follows:

Aspect Ratio : 4:3

Format(s) Supported : JPEG, TIFF (Exif Ver 2.21 compatible), BMP (1, 4, 8, 16, 24, 32 bit Windows format) and RAW (preview only: SRF, SR2, ARW)

Panel Type : LCD Panel size: 8" (panel diagonal); Clear Photo LCD

Playback : Still Image Playback; Frame placement supported; Slideshow Playback(10 patterns); Slideshow Interval setting (10 patterns); Index Playback (3 patterns); Clock & Calendar Playback (14 designs); Image display setting, Resume playback, Landscape, Portrait, Auto orientation

Resolution : SVGA 800 x 600

Tickets for this raffle are \$1.00 each or 6 for \$5.00, 12 for \$10.00, or 25 for \$20.00 (best deal)

Send your check made out to USS Sea Owl Association to:

Ed Welch  
151 Wakefield Street  
Rochester, N.H. 03867

The drawing will be on December 15, 2011 so don't wait! Get those checks in the snail mail now!

As a bonus there will be included a thumb drive with photos of Sea Owl shipmates who have attended each of our reunions since 2000, including this year's reunion at Virginia Beach.

### Sea Poacher Reunion

By: Ken Johnson

Shipmate Bill Brinkman has graciously extended an open invitation to any Sea Owl shipmates who would like to attend the Sea Poacher reunion at San Antonio, Texas in April 16-20, 2012. This slide show produced by Bill and Lin Brinkman that we showed during the business meeting at our VA Beach reunion will give you an idea of what they have planned:

<http://www.photoshow.com/watch/tu3Wd9wy>

Those who may be interested can find the application form here on the Sea Poacher web site:

<http://www.seapoacher.com/2012ReunionReg.html>

### Congratulations Jerry "Spots" Leppart!

After 2-1/2 years working with the North Carolina legislature you finally got the license plate you wanted!



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 these shipmates:

Edward S. Longee – ET3 52 – August 22, 2011

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.*

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

September 2011 Issue



## Charlie Rush

By Ken Johnson



The highlight of our reunion was what Sea Owl shipmate Capt Charlie Rush had to say at the Saturday evening banquet. I had told him that if he would agree to come and speak at our Saturday evening banquet, we would pay for his dinner and hotel room. I said he could speak about anything he chose and that I would introduce him by reading his Navy Cross citation. He said he would give "three speeches": first about his 35 years of marriage to his wife Lavonne, second why he left Sea Owl in 1944 instead of going to sea as her first XO and third what he did after leaving Sea Owl.

I will let each of you make up your own mind about why Captain Bennett chose to let him go as his XO after you hear what he said about it. Let me just say that in my opinion Capt Bennett allowed personal feelings toward LT Rush interfere with his professional judgment. (*I recorded his entire speech and thought I might include the video of it with this newsletter on a Pocket CD. Since a Pocket CD only holds 210 megabytes of data, it would have been way too small. Even a regular CD would not hold enough. I would have to go to a DVD instead. Since a DVD would hold much more than just Capt Rush's talk, I thought that I should put together a more extensive program which would take much longer than I had available. So the Christmas issue of Hooter Hilites will probably be published on DVD and will include his speech in its entirety.*)

I will just summarize here some of his experiences as he related them with his tour at the Bureau of Ordnance (BuOrd) and later at the Bureau of Aeronautics (BuAer). After leaving Portsmouth and Sea Owl, LT Rush reported to BuOrd in Washington, DC. He said he entered a large room with just one person in it, a Navy Commander who said to him "You are in charge of developing a high speed, wakeless electric torpedo for submarines. Now get busy!" At the time the manufacturer of the MK-18 electric torpedo, a copy of a German design, was Westinghouse. When he approached them, Westinghouse said they were not interested in developing a new electric torpedo because they were already making so much money

producing the MK-18 torpedo that it wouldn't be in their best interest to change. Within 24 hours LT Rush called General Electric who said they had some engineers in Connecticut who were busy making washing machines. When he asked these engineers if they would be interested in working on a new torpedo for submarines, they were delighted. They were tired of washing machines! GE told BuOrd they had a group of engineers who would get right on it.

When Westinghouse found out, LT Rush became a "bad guy" with them, but they entered into a race with GE so now there were two major manufacturers now interested on working on the problem. Also Bell Laboratories in New Jersey had an engineer who had invented and designed a sea water battery consisting of a series of plates sealed in a vacuum chamber that did nothing until exposed to water, preferably salt water. It would then generate enough power to drive a torpedo. With that technology, GE and Westinghouse designed and built two torpedoes that met the Navy's specifications. When the Chief of the Bureau of Ordnance found out what LT Rush had accomplished working with these manufacturers, he had him ordered to graduate school at Cal Tech to get a degree in aeronautical engineering.

When he finished graduate school he was required to work one year for the Bureau of Aeronautics. He had been with BuAer for one day when the Captain in charge said "Oh by the way, you are the new Safety Officer". A rocket plant just out of town had just exploded and LT Rush conducted a safety survey there. After doing a survey of the rocket plant, LT Rush wrote to the president of the company and said he had found 12 potentially hazardous conditions that needed to be corrected. The president of the rocket company sent a letter to the Chief of BuAer saying in effect, "Who does this guy think he is?" The Chief wrote back and said, you had better to listen and gave LT Rush a commendation.

LT Rush then had a decision to make. Either he could spend the rest of his Navy career as an aeronautical engineer or go back to submarines. He chose to go back to submarines. He went on to serve as XO of the USS Carbonero (SS 337) and served as CO of USS Queenfish (SS 393) from 1953-56. He retired from the Navy in 1961 with the rank of Captain.

After retirement from the Navy he went to work for the Foreign Sales Division of North American Aviation who were at the time the primary developer of inertial navigation systems used in nuclear submarines. Working out of Geneva he traveled a lot. During his travels he managed to become a member of the Royal Ocean Sailing Club in Great Britain. Through a contact he made there he learned of a deal where some civilian civil servants in Washington would take U.S. rejected inertial navigation systems and sell them to the British. He told this person "perhaps you should send your technical people to Washington to find out what is going on." When they did they were horrified as to what was being foisted off on them and reported back this to the Admiralty. North American was quite upset and as a result were selected to provide inertial navigation systems to the Royal Navy for use in their nuclear submarines.

The above is the gist of much of what Capt Rush said during his talk.



# The 50's

September 2011 Issue



“Cartoon Bob” D’Amico’s Thank You Notes

## Thank you Sea Owl...

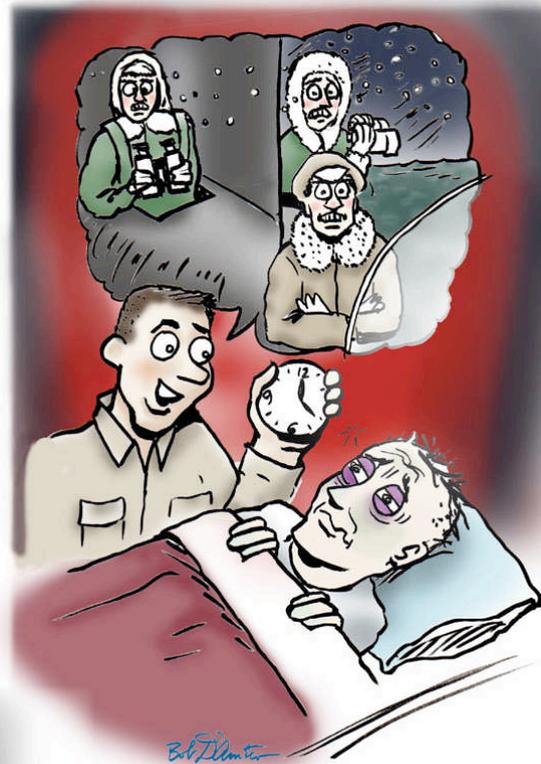
**Thank you Sea Owl...** for introducing me to the fact that there is life that goes on between midnight and 4:00 AM and how refreshing the North Atlantic can be sometimes during those bridge watches at that hour.

**Thank you Sea Owl...** for introducing me to the wake up call informing me that I had the next watch on a cold and wet North Atlantic submarine bridge at midnight.

**Thank you Sea Owl...** bridge bubble for protecting me from cold seawater spray during so many of those bridge watches when it was cold and wet on the bridge.

**Thank you Sea Owl...** for the master's degree in using Nev-R-Dull to shine anything and everything metal... including the inside of those wonderful stainless steel toilets.

**Thank you Sea Owl...** for introducing me to the smell of diesel fuel mixed in with several other unpleasant smells. You made me change clothes after I got home sometimes before I could really be made to feel welcome there.



Next issue: barfing 101, torpedo sleeping, and tracing systems. SHIPMATES: Got something to THANK the Sea Owl for? Please send it to [cartoonbob@mac.com](mailto:cartoonbob@mac.com), and maybe we'll make it into a cartoon in a future issue.



# The 60's

June 2011 Issue



## Reunion Hospitality

By Ken Johnson



Aside from the formalities and business that takes place at our reunions there is ample time to socialize and get to meet some shipmates. Here Shipmates Jim Grilli (l.) and Jerry Leppart (r.) get a chance to chat informally with Captain Rush and get to know him a bit better in our hospitality room at the hotel.

I only wish I could have had more time chatting with him, but I did get to spend some time with him and his wife, Lavonne when I drove them to the airport on Sunday morning. I thought they were going home to Florida, but they were actually going on to Ohio to attend the USS Queenfish reunion. Capt Rush served as CO of Queenfish (SS 393) from 1953-56.

I did manage to tell him though that in my opinion he should have gotten the Medal of Honor instead of the Navy Cross. I found Lavonne Rush to be a delightful lady and could see that she took very good care of Capt Rush.

## Salt Water Activated Torpedo Batteries

By: Ken Johnson

I was intrigued by what Capt Rush said about what he did after leaving the Sea Owl at Portsmouth in 1944. One thing he mentioned was being assigned the task at BUORD to work on development of a high speed electric torpedo for submarines powered by a salt water activated battery. I was curious so I posted the following to Ron Martini's Submarine Bulletin Board:

When Capt Charlie Rush spoke at our Sea Owl reunion he mentioned being assigned to BUORD in late 1944 to work on development of a high speed electric submarine torpedo powered by a salt water activated battery. Usually you want to keep salt water away from batteries on a submarine since bad things can happen when they mix.

I did a search though and found this about the MK-44 ASW torpedo carried by DASH helicopters.

[http://www.gyrodynhelicopters.com/mk-44\\_torpedo.htm](http://www.gyrodynhelicopters.com/mk-44_torpedo.htm)

According to this article the MK-46 torpedo replaced the MK-44 for ASW DASH helicopter use by late 1967. The MK-44 was eventually withdrawn from U.S. Naval use in 1990.

I did not ask any questions after his speech since at age 92 I think he was rather tired after speaking for about 45 minutes and didn't think he should have to answer too many questions.

I know in the early '60s we did not carry any submarine torpedo that had a seawater activated battery. Does anyone know what happened to this late WW II project? Did the Navy abandon the idea? If so, when and why?

In response to this post I got this link:

[http://www.navweaps.com/index\\_tech/tech-082.htm](http://www.navweaps.com/index_tech/tech-082.htm)

The article describes the development of air launched ASW torpedoes powered by salt water activated batteries starting with the Mark-35 and including the Mark-41 Mark-43 and Mark 44. These were all air launched and the advantage of the salt water activated battery was that they could be lighter because they did not need to carry electrolyte for the battery.

Most of this work was done by General Electric working closely with some of the research and testing being done at the Navy Large Scale Water Tunnel Facility at Pennsylvania State University

The article concludes with the following amusing "sea story":

GE transferred its torpedo development resources to the Polaris Fire Control and Guidance Program where they were associate contractor in the Navy's highest priority program. Then, about two years later, the former Design Cognizance Technical Director who had become a member of the staff of GE's Technical Military Planning Operation (TEMPO) think tank in Washington, DC, working on antisubmarine system studies, attended an acoustic conference. At that conference, two researchers from Pennsylvania State University described their acoustic research program in the Florida Straits. To lighten up this arcane presentation, they told a sea story. Some days the researchers had to stop work and haul in their gear and go ashore because of porpoise. It seemed that the porpoise loved to gather around the transducers and mimic their transmissions. The researchers showed a slide which showed the same extraneous noise that had plagued the MK-44 program – and had then gone away with a change in location. *Tursiops truncatus*, the common dolphin, turned out to be the elusive culprit.

At the next break, the GE engineer asked how they were sure it was porpoise. They replied that the porpoise had followed their transducers right to the surface, talking to them all the way. The GE engineer told them of his own baffling experience with torpedoes that he had now deduced had been caused by those same noisy porpoise. They all agreed that the porpoise had gathered at the transducers to ask when their talkative, silvery, frisky little friends would be coming back to play.