



Hooter Hilites

A Publication of the USS Sea Owl Association

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

We still give a hoot!

December 2007 Issue



Shipmates & 1st mates

President's Message

Here we are again, preparing for the Holiday season. We have Thanksgiving under our belts, some a little more than we like. Now with Christmas and New Year's only around the corner, we can expect to celebrate and eat even more, thus adding to our belt size. In all sincerity, Carol and I send our Holiday Wishes to everyone. May you have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

As we joined the SubVets of WWII in their Memorial Service, I could not help but notice that their ranks are getting smaller. These men of iron & steel are what made the submarine service what it is today. We owe them our sincere thanks each time we are in their presence. My thanks to Bob Evans EM 44-45 & Alton Calvert EM 44-46 for joining us during our reunion and cruise.

Each reunion we try to outdo our last reunion. Looking back on our 2007 reunion in St. Marys, GA and the cruise that followed, this past reunion will be hard to beat. Even though the weather called for rain in St. Marys, we somehow managed to get fair seas & warm breezes. Although Ed Welch was taking credit for this, I somehow think there was a higher power working for us. I could go on for page after page of sea stories that took place at this reunion, but I will save that for other reunions.

Our cruise onboard the Carnival ship Celebration was as one would expect. It was a party from the time we stepped onboard until the last time we disembarked in Jacksonville, FL. From my vantage point, everyone was having a good time. As with anytime you gather this many people, there are little annoying things that pop up, but overall it was a very successful shakedown cruise. In part, to each person that sailed under the Sea Owl group received a free \$50.00 shipboard credit, which was automatically deducted from your final statement. Also, the travel agency where we purchased our tickets also sent us a Thank You check for \$345.00 My thanks to Howie Stein for coming up with this idea, and his work behind the scenes to ensure that everything went as planned.

Business Meeting:

During our business meeting, it was voted on and approved by those members present that the Sea Owl Association sends \$2,000 to USSVI to put into the Tom Gilbert endowment fund, which will pay interest to the USSVI Fellowship Fund which helps fellow submariners out during hard times that they may be going through. As of now this endowment fund has about \$2800 in it. Anyone wishing to donate directly to this Fund can do so by sending a check to USSVI, POB 3870, Silverdale, WA 98383. Include a note that this donation be put into Tom's endowment fund; also note it on your check.

Also during our meeting was a drawing of a 50-50 raffle that Ed Welch ran for us. To my complete surprise the winner returned \$138.00 back to the Sea Owl Association. Our thanks to Ida

Campbell, the bride & 1st mate of shipmate Jim Campbell MM 45-47 who was the winner. (Jim and Ida did not make the cruise with us.)

Winners onboard the Cruise:

John Leers' daughter-in-law Cindy I believe was the biggest winner. Taking part in the slot machine tournaments paid off for Cindy. She won a 7-day cruise, free of charge. Mike & Cindy are looking forward to an anniversary cruise this coming April. Congratulations to Cindy for all the hard work it took to win this cruise.

Paulette Welch & Walter Brinkman (Bill's brother) each won \$750.00 playing bingo. If I had known the prizes were that big, I would have played them. Congratulations to Paulette & Walter.

Reunion 2008:

Our 2008 reunion will be in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, home of the Wisconsin Maritime Museum and the USS Cobia SS 245. Since this is a cold water port, our reunion will be September 3rd thru 6th, 2008. As always, you can come early or stay later to enjoy what Wisconsin has to offer. I will have more on this reunion in the next Newsletter and on our web site.

Groton Picnic June 6th, 7th & 8th

Normal picnic fare, with lobster available at a extra charge. We will have pricing at next newsletter.

Raffle item for this year is the Bose wave radio with CD player.



Tickets are available through Ed Welch \$5.00 each or 5 the \$20.00. Checks can be mailed to Ed Welch (his address) your name will then be put into the drawing, to be held at the summer Groton picnic.

From the Editor

This issue finds Howland Owl decked out in his usual Christmas attire and comes to you with my best wishes for a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

I am once again pleased to have Shipmate Bob D'Amico contribute another cartoon for this issue. (Please send ideas for future cartoons that I can forward to Bob!)

I am also pleased to have the second "Dress Blue Dispatch" from Shipmate Bruce Blessington for this issue. I hope you enjoy reading it and sharing his adventure.

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”, and within a year of being paid up, you will find a note reminding you to pay your dues by the end of the year to remain on the mailing list.

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 #2

by Bruce Blessington

It's 1630 with visibility less than 100 yards in a cotton candy fog. The wet southwest wind is slowly backing to the southeast. The radar, GPS and chart plotter have just finished an electronic conference to which I wasn't invited and report that the center of the roadstead between Criehaven and Matinicus is a half mile, dead ahead. I confirm it the old fashioned way with a sounding and a DR plot.

My three grown sons, all around age forty and a bit, have joined me for a late September off-shore cruise on our Alden sloop, Dress Blue. We're bound for Maine's most remote inhabited island, Matinicus. As we slowly work to the east down the roadstead, we catch glimpses of the ledges that make out from the shoreline on both sides. The thunder of breaking surf carries clear in the fog. We swing north around Tenpound Island and give the nasty business of the Hogshead rock, just to the south, lots of room. The shoreline is closer now but only throws grey shadows at us through the white. We douse sail, switch to the diesel and listen from the foredeck for the bell buoy at the harbor entrance. Guided by its sound, we turn west and glide past the heard but unseen bell, making only headway speed. Through the breakwater entrance at last, we nose over to one of Josh Ames's big strong moorings and make Dress Blue fast to its pennant. A safe arrival out of the fog is always keenly satisfying for sailors and this time is no exception. We secure the boat, stow the foul weather gear and settle in for the evening. Later, over dinner, my eldest asks me to “tell us about Matinicus”. My narrative follows.



Dress Blue moored in Matinicus Harbor on a day without fog.
The bell is in the background.

Matinicus sits more than twenty miles out in the Atlantic off Maine's mid-coast. This geographic fact is a strong determinate of its culture and social structure. Currently, it reports a year 'round population of 35-40. The few sturdy summer people who come here swell the ranks to a 100 or so; hardly a mob. The island is two miles long and about a mile wide. The terrain is a mix of dense spruce forest, open meadows, brilliant with wild flowers in summer, a rocky shoreline and no paved roads. The sounds, smells and sights of the sea saturate the senses as the harbor entrance bell tolls its mournful note and clouds of gulls wheel and cry.

The sea too is the driving force in the islanders' lives. Lobster fishing is the principal commerce and every Matinicus family earns its living directly or indirectly from the fishery. Lobstering on Matinicus is serious business. The catch is hauled mostly from deep water, with soundings of 100-200 feet. Unlike the smaller inshore fishing craft, out here, lobster boats are powerful forty footers with massive beams, high bows and spacious working decks. At times, two sternmen handle traps instead of the usual one. Even with rising fuel and bait costs, Matinicus fishermen can still make a decent living from the sea. But it comes hard. Success requires long hours, often in fierce weather, ten sometimes twelve months a year. The work is both physically demanding and dangerous.

Since its earliest days, Matinicus has always been different from other inhabited Maine islands. The remoteness, isolation and sense of being completely self reliant forge a society of unique mettle. The island was inhabited by visiting fishermen as early as the 1600's and the first permanent settler, Ebenezer Hall arrived in 1750. The Penobscot Indians were less than thrilled with Hall's laying claim to an island that they regarded as an important food source. The last straw came when Hall killed two braves, buried them in his garden, burnt their canoe and kept their firearms. In 1757, the Penobscots returned the favor and raided Hall's home, scalped him and captured his wife and four children. The island was resettled in 1765 and over the next fifty years more families arrived, the ancestors of some present day residents. The families Young, Burgess, Philbrook, Crie and Ames all swelled the population and by 1870, it reached its peak of 276. In those years agriculture was as important as fishing to the local economy. The 1900's saw a steady decline in island population. World War II gave some Matinicus men a taste of life on the mainland and they never returned. With declining population came the failure of the island's only store and restaurant in the '90's.

Today, the island's infrastructure includes the one room school house, a Post Office that is only slightly larger than a turnpike toll booth and a non-denominational church that doubles as social center and town meeting place. Public utilities consist of a telephone system and locally owned Matinicus Power Company which began generating electricity in the late 1960's. Matinicus "International" Airport, boasting a 1000 foot grass strip trending smartly downhill and ending in the ocean provides a vital air link with the mainland via subsidized Penobscot Island Air. The tiny but hospitable Tuckanuck Lodge bed and breakfast provides the island's only accommodations for the adventurous few who visit. The state ferry calls once a week in the summer and once a month, weather permitting, in the winter. When the state proposed a more frequent summer ferry schedule, Matinicus folks wisely said no thanks. They understood the impact that hoards of day trippers would have on their remote island environment with no facilities to receive such visitors or cater to their complicated needs. Most fishing families use their own boats for access to the mainland. They often are able to get better prices for their lobster catch shoreside so it makes sense to

combine these deliveries with a shopping trip. However, planning is still the key to managing household logistics on Matinicus unless you like lobster for breakfast.

The hardy and committed island people themselves are the essence of Matinicus. While the visitor can get carried away by the romance of island life, this social microcosm has all of the issues of greater society. Just like the world outside, there are some feuds, fights and unhappiness. But overall there is a real sense of community, of being in it together with a shared fate. It is said that you become an islander when you get a call for help from someone you dislike and drop everything to run to their assistance. This community spirit is seen in the islander's devotion to their school and support for community enterprises like Lisa Twombly's new preschool and EMT Eva Murray's bakery, strategically located in her kitchen. When the church needed running water, the Calendar Girls of Matinicus dared to bare, with discretion of course, and raised the funds through the sale of their publication. Over the years, it has been my privilege to come to know some of the island people; the capable seagoing Ames family, artist and historian Donna Rogers, Postmistress Wanda Philbrook, to name a few. They each have a story worth telling and have been kind to this visitor. (I hope in future Dispatches to introduce some of these remarkable people to you.)

My narrative has taken my patient audience through dinner and beyond. Now it's black outside. A fast moving front has shifted the wind around to the northeast, blowing 20-25 knots, driving the rain in sheets across the harbor. Dress Blue tugs gently on her pennant but we're secure where we lie within the protective sweep of the breakwater's arm. Tomorrow will come soon, bright on a clearing northwesterly, a perfect beginning to a day ashore with time to experience this special place.



Early morning light in Matinicus Harbor.

Book Review: Submarine Stories – Recollections From the Diesel Boats” – Edited by Paul Stillwell

By Ken Johnson

I first came upon this book in the Gift Shop of the Submarine Force Library & Museum in Groton. Published in 2007 by the Naval Institute Press, this is a compilation of 58 short stories spanning the history of U. S. Navy diesel submarines from the earliest days to the decommissioning of the USS Dolphin (AGSS 555) in 2006.

The authors and their stories span a wide range and even include President Theodore Roosevelt. In the case of the latter, the chapter

entitled “The President Takes a Plunge” is an excerpt from the letter that the President wrote on 28 August 1905 to Charles Joseph Bonaparte following his ride in 1905 aboard the USS Plunger, the Navy's second submarine. Mr. Bonaparte was at the time serving as Secretary of the Navy. Following his experience on Plunger, the President had several recommendations including:

- (a) That enlisted men regularly detailed for instruction in submarine boats but not having qualified shall receive five dollars per month in addition to the pay of their rating.
- (b) Enlisted men serving with submarine boats and having been reported by their commanding officers to the Navy Department as qualified for submarine torpedo-boat work, shall receive ten dollars per month in addition to the pay of their rating.
- (c) Enlisted men serving with submarine torpedo boats having been reported by their commanding officers to the Navy Department as qualified for submarine torpedo-boat work shall receive one dollar in addition to their pay for each day during any part of which they shall have been submerged in a submarine boat while underway.

The stories in this book as recounted by their many famous and not so famous authors make fascinating reading and this book would be a great addition to your bookshelf. Many of the stories have been previously published by the Naval Institute Press and several are appearing in print for the first time. Sources for each are cited by the editor in the back of the book.

I had suggested this book as a possible raffle item at this year's reunion, but since we really did not hold a raffle at Kings Bay or aboard the cruise ship maybe a copy will be included as a raffle item for the 2008 Groton Picnic.

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:

Roger “Red” Fuller, XO 67-68 – December 13, 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

December 2007 Issue



WW II Memorial Service

By Ken Johnson

This year our reunion at Kings Bay included attendance at the annual WW II Memorial Service on 2 November. The ceremony was on base in an open air pavilion which is officially designated as the "Submarine Veterans of World War II Memorial Pavilion".

During the ceremony the Florida Times-Union photographer captured several photographs which include Sea Owl shipmates. These two appear on the Florida Times-Union website with the captions indicated.



"Attendees at this year's Submarine Veterans Memorial Service at the Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base in Kings Bay, Georgia, sit under the battle flags of several U.S. World War II submarines at the memorial pavilion on base, Friday, November 2, 2007."

This photograph which appeared in the Jacksonville paper shows me, Shipmate Tom Moniz, and Barbara Moniz in the first row and Shipmate Frank Kenyon in the



upper right-hand corner. (There may be others in it as well, but I cannot positively identify them.)

"World War II submarine veteran Jim Campbell holds his cap over his heart as the names of the 56 U.S. submarines lost in service are read at the 2007 Submarine Veterans Memorial Service at the Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base in Kings Bay, Georgia, Friday, November 2, 2007."

As it is each tear this was a most impressive program. World War II submariners were, of course, the guests of honor, but each year

their numbers gat fewer.

Sea Owl Mentioned

By Ken Johnson

The October 2007 issue of The Submarine Review, the quarterly publication of the Naval Submarine League, contains a reference to

the Sea Owl sinking a Japanese submarine at Wake Island. The reference is actually at the end of a story about the USS Pampanito titled "Second Chances: From Torpedoes and Bombs". I quote, "On April 16th the submarine SEA OWL radioed us that she had observed a Japanese supply submarine diving in her vicinity. That night SEA OWL observed the same submarine surface and enter Wake Island via Peacock Point. Before dawn, she fired a spread of three torpedoes into Wake Island's lagoon. She got one hit on the submarine while it was unloading cargo and sank it. The Japanese captain had evaded four American submarines that were blockading the island." There is speculation in the article that this submarine may have earlier sunk the USS Snook.

Naming Submarines

By Ken Johnson

Ever wonder where they got all of those fish names? An amusing article in the book "Submarine Stories Recollections from the Diesel Boats" is titled "Not Enough Fish". It was written by retired Capt. William F. Calkins (USNR) whose job for two years as a young reserve officer during World War II was to assign names to the large number of submarines being built. Using the scientific name which generally was Latin just was not an option. Sometimes also the "common" name would not be appropriate. Can you imagine serving aboard the USS Sea Slug for example? Doesn't USS Trepang sound much better? In fact, a trepang is just that. I am not sure either the WW II Trepang or its later SSN 637 class namesake ever had a framed picture of their namesake on display on board. Some fish like the minnow or sardine would hardly do as names of fighting submarines, but hardhead (a type of minnow) and sarda (actually a sardine) would do just fine. In some cases foreign language versions were used tiburon, for example, is the Spanish word for shark.

Actually, Capt Calkins admits in this article that sometimes when a sub commanding officer requested a photograph of the fish their sub was named for, after seeing what the creature actually looked like and realizing it might not be well received he might send a photo of a more attractive looking fish, like a trout.

According to the article, some of the fish names came about as a sort of collaboration between the National Museum staff and Lt(jg) Calkins. He describes how after running out of appropriate fish names he would search through the dictionary for "fish" sounding names. He would then ask the ichthyologists on the staff of the National Museum if there was actually a fish by that name. If there was not, he would ask them to find a card in their files for a fish which did not have a "common" name assigned to it. In this manner, he would actually provide a "common" name for a fish or "denizen of the deep" that did not have one!

There is no reason to believe that this is how the sea owl fish actually was named, but who can say for certain. In some instances, like Seahorse and Plaice, the ship's patches actually looked like the creature. Neither Sea Owl patch looks anything like the North Atlantic lumpfish for which she was named however.



The 50's

December 2007 Issue



Letter received from shipmate Lamar Taylor, 11/19/2007

Dear: Sea Owl Family,

Many, many thanks for the cards, the telephone calls from all of you. The best medicine or medical care I received is the telephone calls from all of you. I hated to miss this year's reunion, which I had been looking forward to for a year because attending our reunion is one of the highlights of my life. I plan to attend next year's reunion. I am very grateful to all who do so much to keep the reunions alive.

I started to have chills, fever and pains. The doctor admitted me into the hospital and immediately started me on drinking gallons of water, plus several types of medicines; after 6 days, I came home and I am very fortunate my driver is a nurses aid.

I wanted to go to Key West when I joined the Sea Leopard SS 483. We operated there for 6 weeks before going to the Navy Yard. I have never forgotten the BOQ without air conditioning.

Since my illness, I have reread the cards, looked at the photos of this and other reunions, plus several pictures of the Sea Owl and crew. For years I have attended Pearl Harbor events, but I wanted this year to go on our cruise instead of Pearl. I belong to several reunions, but none can compare to the Sea Owl.

My family joins me in wishing every one of you a very merry and healthy Christmas, plus a wonderful 2008. Can you imagine that it is 2008, we are getting old!

Roy & family—Merry Christmas & thanks for all you have done for our Sea Owl

An Old, Old Shipmate

Ace-Lamar

Submarine Pancake Diesel Engines

By Ken Johnson

I think anyone who served on a boat with Fairbanks-Morse diesel engines, like Sea Owl, will agree that they were the best of all the diesel engines used aboard U. S. Navy submarines.

One of the stories in the book "Submarine Stories - Recollections from the Diesel Boats" is titled "Those Troublesome Pancake Diesels" by ADM Harold E. Shears, USN (Ret) based on a 1992 oral history interview by the book's editor. The picture, from the article in the book, shows one of these diesels being lowered into the hull of Trigger at Electric Boat during construction.



In the 1950's the U. S. Navy designed and built a new class of submarine based largely upon information gleaned from

inspection of captured German Type XXI submarines after WW II. This was the Tang Class and a total of six were built. Primarily to save space and to minimize the length of the submarine, they tried a different type of diesel engine, a vertically mounted General Motors 16-338 diesel engine with four radially mounted banks of four cylinders each all installed in one single engine room. In this design the generators were mounted beneath the engine. The "pancake" diesels were only 1,000 horsepower each and operated at 1,600 RPM, faster than either the Fairbanks-Morse or GM (Winton) diesels used aboard fleet submarines.

When the boats went to sea in the early 1950s, the new engines did not work well. Their compact design made them difficult to maintain, and they tended to leak oil into their generators. ADM Shear had served under CDR Edward "Ned" Beach as his executive officer aboard the USS Trigger. Captain Beach, eager to show off the capabilities of this submarine, was frequently frustrated by the problems with the "pancake" diesel engines. It took considerable effort on the part of his executive officer to try and keep his commanding officer from complaining too loudly to his superiors about the problems with these engines. Rarely if ever were all four engines operational at one time. At times all four would be down and the submarines would have to be towed back to port for repairs.

In 1956, realizing that a mistake had been made, the Navy decided to replace the "pancake" engines with a lightweight version of the proven ten-cylinder Fairbanks-Morse opposed-piston diesels. To accommodate the larger engines, the boats had to be lengthened some nine feet in the engine room, and even then only three could be installed, all in just one engine room. Accordingly, in 1957 and 1958, the first four Tang Class subs (Tang, Trigger, Wahoo and Trout) were cut in half and lengthened, while Gudgeon and Harder, still in the ways, were built to the new length, to accommodate the new engines.

In 1973 Trigger was transferred to Italy where she served in the Italian Navy as the Livio Piomarta (S-515). Harder was also sold to Italy where she served as the Romeo Romei (S-516). Tang was transferred to the Turkish Navy where she was renamed and served as the Piri Reis (S-343). She was decommissioned from the Turkish Navy in 2004 and is now a Submarine Museum in Turkey. In 1983, she was transferred by lease to Turkey and renamed the Hizir Reis (S-342). She was decommissioned in 2003 and is now a submarine museum in the city of Izmit Turkey. Wahoo was placed decommissioned in 1980 and remained at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard in storage until the early 1990's when she was sold out for scrapping. Not much remained of her as most of the parts had been used to supply spares for the other boats in foreign service.

One place where you can still see these "pancake" diesels is aboard the USS Albacore (AGSS 569) where she lies as a museum in Portsmouth, NH. Because of the unique nature of Albacore as a test platform for the "teardrop" shape hull, she was not lengthened to make room for larger engines. Ultimately when there were no longer spare parts available to keep the "pancake" diesel engines running, Albacore was retired from service.



The 60's

December 2007 Issue



PNS Ghazi

by Ken Johnson

During the cruise on Celebration Shipmate John Solon mentioned the group of Pakistanis that Sea Owl helped train during our time aboard together in the early '60s. The purpose was to train them to operate a submarine which was to be transferred to Pakistan by the U. S. Government. On my return home I decided to see if I could find out what had happened to that submarine.

In 1964 the U. S. Government transferred the USS Diablo to Pakistan. This was the first Pakistani Navy submarine and was given the name PNS Ghazi. It served in the 1965 Indo-Pakistani War and in a later war with India in 1971. On December 3, 1971 PNS Ghazi was lost off Visakhapatnam harbour with all hands. There is some controversy as to whether this resulted from attack by an Indian Navy destroyer or whether it was the result of an accident during minelaying operations. The Indian Navy claimed that the submarine was sunk by two depth charges from the destroyer INS Rajput. Pakistan however has maintained that Ghazi sank when the mines it was laying were accidentally detonated. Another more plausible theory is that the explosive shock from one

of the depth charges set off the torpedoes and mines (some of which may have been armed for laying) stored aboard the submarine. The only information on the subject from an independent source comes from an Egyptian naval officer serving at that time on an Egyptian submarine under refit in the harbor. He has confirmed the occurrence of a powerful explosion in the vicinity of the harbor late at night. There were no naval ships, as reported by this officer, outside the harbor at that time and it was not until about an hour after the explosion that two Indian naval ships were observed leaving harbor.

Bob D'Amico's Cartoon

The below cartoon is the second submission by Shipmate Bob D'Amico may bring back some memories to those who made this Springboard cruise just prior to Sea Owl's decommissioning. The boats in order from the pier outward are Irex, Sea Robin, Tusk, Sablefish and Sea Owl.

If anyone can answer Bob's question of which port this was, let me know. I didn't ask why Bob couldn't remember the name of the port. Perhaps he was doing his own share of celebrating.

SEA OWL QUIZ: WHAT PORT IS THIS?
 Does any shipmate know which port in the Carribbean this is?... (anybody?)... I had a late night topside watch on our boat... last in line... and remember seeing more than one 'happy' crewmate swiftly (NOT!) make his way across all 4 gangplanks to get home that night. (scratchy 38 year old polaroid from '69)

Seen late one night on one of these 4 gangplanks during Springboard '69.

Also remember as 'ships artist'... the cobbler having me re-paint our emblem while next to a tender in Puerto Rico.

Bob D'Amico