



Hooter Hilites

A Publication of the USS Sea Owl Association

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

We still give a hoot!

December 2009 Issue



Shipmates & 1st Mates:

My first wish is that everyone has a very Merry Christmas and that your New Year wishes all come true.

It seems now that we have retired, we're more busy than we ever were when we were working. Yes, it's a different type of busy, but things that we enjoy doing. I haven't yet experienced that part of retirement where they say "what am I going to do".

As we move toward our 2010 reunion in Galveston, TX, I think that everyone will enjoy the hotel that Bill Slater has chosen for us. Point your browser toward this:

<http://www.wyndham.com/hotels/GLSHG/main.wnt?cid=14749>. I

think everyone will agree this is quite the hotel. We have room rates of \$115.00 per night, November 8th through the 13th, checkout on the 14th. I have not yet signed a contract, but it appears to be a good rate. My thanks to Bill Slater for pointing me toward the Hotel Galves.

I would like to share with everyone my December 7th: Knowing that Lamar Taylor traveled to Pearl Harbor almost every year when he was able to, I had a Memorial Mass said in his Honor on December 7th at my church, St. Patrick's Church, Troy, NY. As is normal, our Priest announced who the Mass was being said for. Carol, Adrienne & I were the only persons who knew Capt. Lamar

Taylor at this Mass. After Mass a few people asked me who Lamar Taylor was. That's when I was able to tell them who Lamar was and how even though it was very hard for him, he attended every reunion he could. Remember your shipmates as they remember you. I truly hope that each and everyone of you have a very Merry Christmas and Holiday Season....and a....Happy New Year!

Roy & Carol Purtell

From the Editor

By Ken Johnson

Once again this year Howland Owl has ditched his usual wizard cap for this issue in favor of more seasonal headgear. As you can see also, Shipmate Bob D'Amico has blessed Hooter Hilites with more of his artwork featured on page one. I am always grateful to Bob for his contributions which show his great artistic talent!

Each year for the past several years the USSVI Groton Base has served a Thanksgiving Dinner to sailors on the boats and base who cannot get home for the holiday. Many single sailors are fed at the Groton Base 40 School Street clubhouse. Guests are treated to a full sit down family served dinner plus desserts. Take-out meals are provided to local police in Groton, Waterford, Ledyard, and Montville, as well as to duty personnel on SUBASE and to boats which have shut down their galleys. Extra funds and food takes care of many others, including submariner's families locally and as far away as Guam and Naples Italy. Extra food is donated to a local church that uses it for a free meal for Christmas. Leftover funds are donated to the SUBASE Caring and Sharing program helping feed needy Navy Families in the local area for Christmas. This year they served over 800 meals on Thanksgiving Day. As we did last year, this year your Sea Owl Association contributed \$150.00 to this worthy program.

For those who may be interested in what has been happening with the Russian Sub Museum in Providence, the submarine K-77 has officially been transferred to a company which has purchased property on Narragansett Bay to which it has moved the sub and is preparing to dismantle it for scrap. Many artifacts have been identified whose value may be more than just scrap value and it is expected that these will be offered for sale at some time in the future. I have created a memorial Facebook site for it here:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Providence-RI-Russian-Sub-Museum/66734272852?ref=sgm>

A Newsletter would not be complete if I were not to remind everyone to pay their dues. Let me just ask that when you send a check for your dues you make it out to "USS Sea Owl Association" and not to me personally. The bank WILL accept checks made out to me as they have me on record as Association Secretary/Treasurer, but it is still preferable that they be made out to the Sea Owl Association. I know we all have holiday commitments, but please REMEMBER TO SEND IN YOUR ASSOCIATION DUES.

Squat Dive One Follow-up

By Ken Johnson

In the last issue I had an article about Shipmate Patterson Taylor's father and how a poem written in jest nearly ended his Navy career. I asked Pat to give me a follow-up on his dad's later Navy career. Here is his reply:

During the WWII years there were quick promotions to make room for the young up and coming commanding officers... so he entered the war as a LCDR... by '43 he rolled ashore as a full Commander on SubPac's Staff- (only a 7 month tour- fixing Mk 14 torpedo

exploder problems)... was then nominated by CSP, Admiral Lockwood, to be Admiral "Bull" Halsey's 3rd Fleet Weapons and Gunnery Officer aboard USS Missouri. (as a brand new Captain)...[note- after all those fast wartime promotions, he spent the next 10 years in the grade of Captain].

My dad allowed years later that the last half of the war was a lot "scarier" than the first half; he much preferred taking his chances in Haddock than the Kamikazi threat they faced on a battlewagon. By the end of the war, when anchored in Tokyo Bay, my dad was a new "4-striper". After the surrender, he was tasked to search out any and all known submariners who were thought to be held as POWs in Japan; he recalled being especially pleased to find Lcdr David Hurt, who -along with many of his crew, had been captured when we lost the Perch early in the war.

At the end of the war there was an obligatory tour in BuWeps... and then a more pleasant set of tours back in Pearl Harbor, first as ComSubRon Seven, and then a Chief of Staff to ComSubPac. Back to Washington for another Bureau desk assignment in 1950. He rotated to sea, where he commanded the USS Rockwell, one of our amphibious troop transports, and then got command of the heavy cruiser Quincy (CA 71) - both ships involved in the Korean War in the Pacific. Back ashore in the mid-50's, with a tour as Commanding Officer of the Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, Virginia, and a follow-on tour as Chief of Staff to ComPhibLant. Captain Taylor was then selected for Flag in 1955, and first toured to London, England, as the Naval Attache to King James Court. I missed seeing my dad run around in a bright red British MGA with wire wheels!

Flag officer assignments included ComTraLant (Atlantic Fleet Training Commander), and then as a CruDes Group Commander out of Newport, RI. He again rolled ashore as the flag officer, Commanding Officer of the Newport, RI Naval Base, and retired in 1966.

I think he was most proud of his contribution to the war in the Pacific as skipper of Haddock; 2 Navy Crosses, Silver Star, and the Presidential Unit Citation for the ship and crew. He said the Legion of Merit received from Admiral Halsey as the war ended - he viewed as simply his "survivor pin".

A Gift From the Russian People in Memory of 9-11

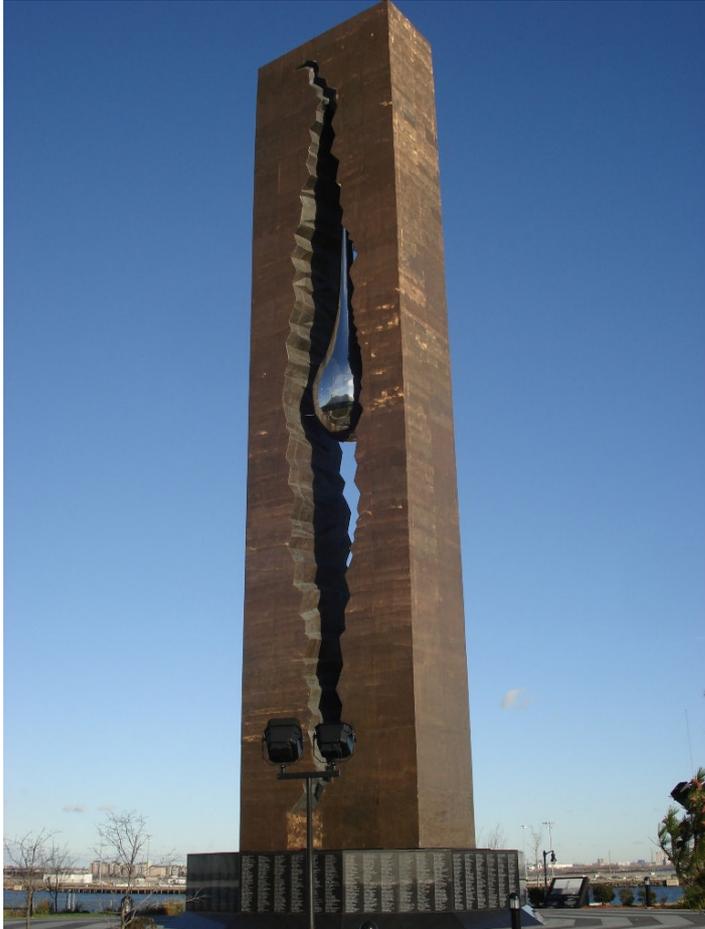
By Ken Johnson

On December 1st two Russians came to visit me here in the US from St. Petersburg. One, Valery Grigoriev, I have known since 2004 when he first visited the US as part of a 12 person Russian delegation to the "Cold War at Sea" conference in Rhode Island in May of that year. Valery had served as an officer aboard the Russian cruise missile submarine, K-77, which was a museum in Providence at that time. The second Russian, Ivan Duplenko, I was meeting for the first time and this was his first visit to the United States. Both Valery and Ivan are currently employed by Reksoft, a Russian computer software company. Valery is a Director of Technology and Ivan is a Project Manager for a part of Reksoft that develops commercial software. This trip was a reward for a project that they both worked on for Reksoft and I was honored that Valery decided to use it to visit me. It was an opportunity for me to return the hospitality he showed me in 2006 when I stayed for a week at his home in St. Petersburg as a guest of his family.

I met them in New York at JFK Airport late in the evening of December 1st and we spent two days in the city prior to going to my home in Massachusetts. During the first day we did the typical "touristy" thing, a boat ride to the Statue of Liberty, visit to Times

Square, Rockefeller Center, the Top of the Rock and in the evening a performance of "Phantom of the Opera".

On the second morning we checked out of our hotel and I drove them to Bayonne, New Jersey to see the memorial to September 11, 2001 which had been given to the people of the United States by the Russian people. Here is a photo of the memorial that I took on the morning of December 3rd.



The memorial is made of bronze coated steel and stands 100 feet in height. It resembles one of the twin towers with a jagged tear down the middle and a 40 foot stainless teardrop hangs within the tear. Around the base are eleven stone panels engraved with the names of nearly 3,000 people who were killed both in the 1993 bombing of the towers and the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001. It is located in Bayonne, New Jersey in what is known now as Harbor View Park (formerly Military Ocean Terminal) on a man-made peninsula which was transferred to the City of Bayonne for redevelopment in 2002.

The memorial was conceived by Russian (actually Georgian) artist, Zurab Tsereteli, who also picked the site where the memorial now stands. As the events of 9/11 unfolded Zurab Tsereteli walked the streets of Moscow. Struck by the outpouring of grief he observed, a memorial with an image of a tear formed in his mind. Shortly after the attacks, Tsereteli visited ground zero and looked to New Jersey's waterfront for an appropriate site for a monument honoring victims of the World Trade Center terrorist attacks. The City of Bayonne was an arrival point for many New York City evacuees on 9/11, a staging area for rescuers and offered a direct

view of the Statue of Liberty and the former World Trade Center towers.

Why I missed my Deadline for This Newsletter

After Valery and Ivan departed from New York on December 9th, I then began preparing for a group of Russians from Worcester's sister city, Pushkin, who arrived on December 12th for a 10-day program on "Public Safety" sponsored locally by the International Center of Worcester where I volunteer and act as driver for visiting groups and get them to their various appointments. This group consisted of the Police Chief, Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief and Chief of Road Police for the City and District of Pushkin in the Leningrad region. We delivered them to Logan Airport in Boston on Sunday, December 20th and I was finally able to sit down and prepare this newsletter. I had hoped to get it out by Saturday, December 19th, but just was too busy to make it.

Since I plan to visit Pushkin in June 2010 for their 300th birthday celebration, I wanted to make sure this group got treated well while here so that I would be treated well when I visit their city.



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:

Larry Noble, SO2 – 60-63 – October 2

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

December 2009 Issue



Pearl Harbor Remembrance

By Ken Johnson

On Monday 7 December the USSVI Groton Base began what I am sure will become a new tradition and held two Remembrance Ceremonies for the "Day of Infamy" Pearl Harbor Day. The first was a service at the National WWII Submarine Memorial East in Groton CT. It was a somewhat informal service without the usual display of flags for lost boats or formal speeches. Groton Base Chaplain, Tom Russell, conceived the service and conducted it. It began at 12:55 pm (07:55 am in Pearl Harbor when it was attacked in 1941) at the WWII National Submarine Memorial East. During the ceremony they fired a 7 gun salute to those who gave their lives that day. Any WW II Sub Vet in attendance was given the opportunity to fire the gun (which actually closely resembled the "deck gun" that Sea Owl had at the end of its service life).



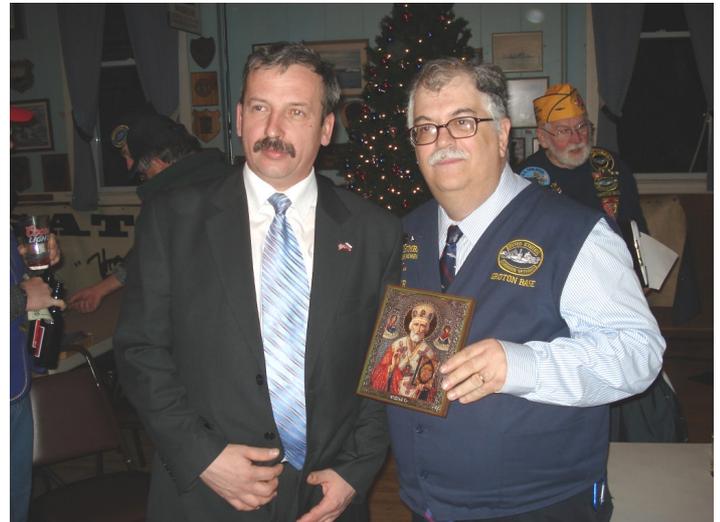
This is Ernie Plantz who, as a member of the crew of the USS Perch (SS 176), was captured on March 3, 1942 and spent 40 months as a Japanese POW.

Later in the evening at 6 pm, 1/2 hour prior to the regular scheduled December Groton Base Meeting, another brief remembrance ceremony was held at the 40 School Street club house.

I attended the ceremonies and the December Groton Base meeting in the evening with my friend, Valery Grigoriev, from St. Petersburg, Russia who had come to visit me here in the USA on December 1st. During the ceremonies I could not help but reflect on what was happening to his city, then known as Leningrad, on December 7, 1941. Hitler had initiated Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941 and the Soviet Union was desperately fighting for its survival. The siege of Leningrad had begun three months earlier on September 8, 1941 and would last until January 27, 1944 with a civilian loss of life of nearly one million.

Hitler wanted to completely level what is today one of Europe's most beautiful cities and is commonly known as the "Venice of the North" with its canals, bridges, etc.

During the Groton Base December meeting that evening, Valery presented the Groton Base with an icon of St. Nicholas, a replica of the one at the St. Nicholas Naval Cathedral in St. Petersburg. The area where the church stands in St. Petersburg was originally settled by sailors in the time of Peter the Great, and the first, wooden chapel was built for them and bore the name of St. Nicholas the Miracle-Worker. Construction of the church in its present form began in 1753, and the main altar in the current cathedral was consecrated in 1760 in the presence of Empress Elizabeth. This church officially became a naval cathedral in July 1762 by order of Catherine II. The walls of the cathedral are decorated with scenes from the history of the Russian Navy. St. Nicholas Cathedral is one of a very few cathedrals in the city that was not closed in Soviet times. In 1941, it became the official residence of Metropolitan of Leningrad and Novgorod, who served in the cathedral from 1941 to 1944 during the 900-day siege of the city. (I visited this cathedral in May 2006 while in Russia for the International Submariners Congress. We had a brief memorial service there and lit candles in memory of lost Russian sailors. I hope to visit it again in June 2010 while in Russia for the 300th birthday celebration of the city of Pushkin.)



This is Valery Grigoriev with John "Gumba" Carciopolo, Groton Base Commander, holding the icon after the meeting. A suitable plaque will be prepared for it and it will go on display.

In the Eastern Orthodox religion, St. Nicholas is known as the Patron Saint of Sailors. This icon was first presented to the cathedral in St. Petersburg by Greek Orthodox sailors in the late 1700s. It was stolen by the French during the War of 1812 and later returned to Tsar Nicholas I by the Prussians in 1835.



The 50's

December 2009 Issue



A Cold War Weapon That Might Have Been

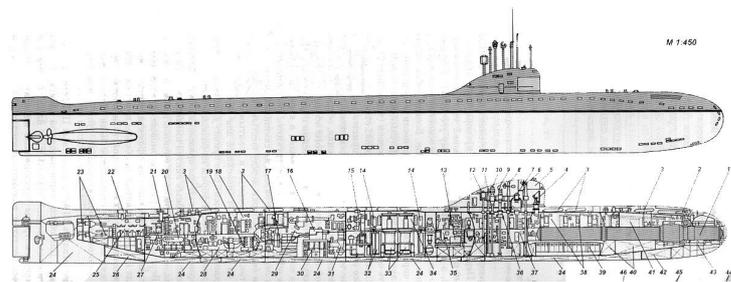
By Ken Johnson



One of the many gifts from my Russian friend, Valery Grigoriev, was a copy of this book whose title translates to English as, "Submarines of the Soviet Fleet 1945 – 1991". Actually he brought two copies and donated the other one to the Submarine Force Library in Groton during our visit there on the afternoon of December 7th.

The book is in Russian and my ability to translate its contents is very limited at this time. I can

understand the pictures and diagrams in it though and it was this



one on page 20 which Valery pointed out to me of a Project 627 (NATO November class) nuclear submarine that I found particularly interesting. It shows a concept proposed in 1954 and proposed configuration of a submarine with one huge torpedo tube for a torpedo 1550 mm in diameter and 24 meters long. When you do the math and conversion to feet and inches, that is a torpedo 61 inches in diameter and 78.75 feet long! It would have weighed 40 tons, had a range of 40-50 km and have carried a 40 megaton thermonuclear warhead. It had the Soviet Navy designation of T-15. I do not know if its proposal was known by NATO in 1954.

What was the purpose of this monster? In 1954 the Soviet Union did not yet have submarine launched ballistic or even cruise missiles capable of attacking the United States. This submarine would have had the mission of approaching the coast of the United States and firing this torpedo into the harbor of a U. S. city like perhaps New York, Boston, New London or Norfolk. There probably would have been no warning of such an attack and the destruction would have been enormous. I asked my friend Valery how many had been built. He said "none".

I did find an English language description of this torpedo on line and excerpts follow:

Andrey Sakharov, considered by many to be the "father" of the Soviet hydrogen bomb or "Tsar Bomb" as it was sometimes called,

tried to find a military application for it in the "Tsar Torpedo". "After testing the 'big' device," Sakharov recalled, "I was worried that it didn't have a good carrier (bombers didn't count because they're easy to shoot down), in other words, in a military sense we were working in vain. I decided that an effective carrier could be a big torpedo fired from a submarine. I imagined that a nuclear jet engine that converted water to steam could be created for the torpedo." Of course, destroying a port with a huge bomb, whether delivered underwater or by air, "inevitably would entail very large numbers of casualties."

Sakharov discussed this project with Rear Admiral Fomin. "He was shocked by the 'atrocious' character of the project and noted in a conversation with me that military seamen were used to fighting armed adversaries in open battle and that the very idea of such mass killing was repugnant to him. I felt ashamed and never discussed my project with anyone else."

We know this story only from Sakharov's Memoirs. Today, when much that was secret is now declassified, Sakharov's tale tells us more about his conscience than about historical reality. The idea of a gigantic nuclear torpedo for attacking shore sites actually came up long before the "Tsar Bomb". It wasn't Sakharov's idea, but was endorsed back in 1952 by Stalin.

The real dilemma was not what is more humane – to burn up a city's population with a thermonuclear blast or to drown it in a giant wave. The real dilemma was how humanity could avoid nuclear war, and frightening a potential aggressor was a serious business. Sakharov worked at it conscientiously but also from inertia. It was to illustrate his mindset of the time that he later told the story of the Tsar Torpedo that never was.

The Soviets did build a number of Project 627 (NATO November class) submarines with eight 533mm (21") torpedo tubes and a carrying capacity of twenty 533 mm torpedoes. The first submarine of the class, K-3 "Leninskiy Komsomol", was first underway under nuclear power on July 4, 1958 and became also the first Soviet submarine to reach the North Pole in July 1962, 4 years after the USS Nautilus. Project 627 subs had much better performance specifications (for example, submerged speed and depth) than the world's first operational nuclear-powered submarine USS Nautilus.

All other Novembers except K-3 belonged to modified project - project 627A. The main visual differences of project 627A were a bow sonar dome in the keel and a hydrophone antenna over the torpedo tubes. The Project P627A armed with nuclear cruise missile system P-20 was developed in 1956-1957 but not finished. The reliability of the first Soviet nuclear-powered submarines was relatively low because of the relatively short service life of the steam generators in the main propulsion machinery, which caused an increase of the radioactivity level in the second loop of the reactor after several hundred hours of reactor operation. Project 627/627A submarines frequently performed Arctic under-ice cruises and patrol missions in the Atlantic.



The 60's

December 2009 Issue



Letter from Captain Kolaras

(Editor's note: This is the letter that Captain Kolaras wrote on 15 November 1969 for the decommissioning crew of Sea Owl. Many who received it back in 1969 may still have their copy. I thought it appropriate with this being the 40th anniversary year of SEA OWL's decommissioning to print it here.)

Dear SEA OWL Friend,

We thought that you would be interested in the final days of SEA OWL as a fighting unit of our Navy after following her through our Mediterranean deployment. So we take this opportunity to tell you what has happened since our last newsletter.

As you know, we arrived in New London on the 18th of September after a remarkably smooth Atlantic crossing from Rota, Spain. Except for one rough day which tossed us about a little, we managed to keep up a steady clip of 14 knots all the way across! Even on her final legs, she churned and burned! But then it's always that way when a sailor is homeward bound. No one complains when the ship pounds or lurches or pitches and groans. It's getting home that counts.

The cooks concocted a fabulous last supper on board on the night before our arrival. The menu was unbelievably delectable and the buffet with candlelight in the After Battery a spectacular work of art. We all partook of it with great relish and will recall with fond memories our last evening on board at sea as a crew.

No doubt, all of us felt grand when we saw all the "Welcome Home" signs and the band but most of all the pretty smiling faces on the pier. Chief Bonner and Torpedoman Tingley managed to make our singular distinctive cannon announce our arrival by loading it with black powder and lighting it off as we turned into the pier. It was a startling "Boom" that ensued and henceforth the perpetrators will be called Gunner Bonner and Gunner Tingley.

As is always the case, it was again very misty eyed on the pier that day just as it was on an early July morning when SEA OWL started the journey. Home was the sailor from the sea

Events since then have transpired quite rapidly. We started transferring some of our crew right away and offloading fuel, torpedoes and spare parts.

During our last muster at quarters, the Captain had the most gratifying task of awarding the coveted silver dolphins to TM2 Dugger, STS3 Kenyon, IC3 Souza, RM3 Price and STS3 Blackwelder. Letters of commendation were also presented to LT Strohmman, RMC(SS) Bouchard, CSC(SS) Dickerson and SM2(SS) Anderson for exceptional performance of duty during the Mediterranean deployment. STS3 Larose, ETR3 Flynn, YN3 Means, SK3 Inglis and ETN3 Hayes were also silver dolphin recipients during one of the later musters.

After undergoing a material inspection by the Board of Inspection and Survey we heard the ship's fate sealed when it was recommended that SEA OWL be stricken from the register of Naval ships. The hand writing was really on the wall all along.

She's an old ship with not much modern equipment. To make her useful in this day and age, she had to be modernized. This would have cost a prohibitive amount of money. As you all know, the President had already directed that the military do their share of saving money. SEA OWL was, therefore, chosen as one of the ships to be inactivated and disposed of.

After reducing the crew to eighteen enlisted people, we started dismantling equipment and distributing it to other ships that had the need for it. Slowly we watched the ship become a hulk losing its personality and the lifelike throb that distinguishes a man-of-war manned by an eager crew. To one who has never been to sea and lived on a ship, it is difficult to describe the gnawing, grievous sense of loss. SEA OWL slowly lost her identity on this day, 15 November 1969, after a brief decommissioning ceremony, her colors were lowered for the last time to mark the end of a remarkable 25 year career.

We thought you might like to keep the enclosed decommissioning program to remind you of a grand old ship that served our country and passed away gracefully. The crew has been scattered to other ships and stations and it is appropriate to list everyone's name and his new duty station for those who want to continue associations that started on SEA OWL.

(What followed was a list of 85 names and new duty stations for what was the last crew of SEA OWL.)

As the last Commanding Officer of SEA OWL, I wish to praise my shipmates for the tender loving care they bestowed upon their ship. Their constant efforts and spirit, undoubtedly, kept SEA OWL running until the bitter end. The fond friendships, memories and liberties will be remembered with a sense of pride and joy. I wish all of them God speed. To the mothers, fathers, wives and families of each SEA OWL crew member, I would like to express my gratitude for that indispensable moral support that sustains men of the sea away from home. Your concern for our ship and our crew was inspiring to all of us. I wish you all success and happiness.

In closing, let me assure you that in spite of the passing of SEA "OWL and other ships like her, our Navy will continue strong, proud and effective as long as the men that sail under our flag are reared with the convictions conceived throughout the lands of our forefathers and nourished in the freedom of our country.

Sincerely,

Demosthenes N. KOLARAS
Commander, U. S. Navy
Commanding Officer

