



# Hooter Hilites

A Publication of the USS Sea Owl Association

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

We still give a hoot!

December 2010 Issue



## One Day In The USS Sea Owl Conning Tower...



*"How else do you think I find out who is naughty or nice?"*

### Shipmates & 1<sup>st</sup> Mates:

As we enjoy this Holiday Season, we really need to remember those soldiers and sailors who are protecting our freedom that we so enjoy. It's not something that we should take for granted!

We had our first annual Christmas raffle this year. First prize was a GPS system won by Shipmate Ernie Wiedemann, F1c 46-48. Second place prize went to Shipmate Tony Rita, EN 59-61, which were a set of books: *The Iranian Deception*; *Operation Poppy*; *Terrorism in the United States*; and *Sub Chaser*, autographed by the

author, Capt. Edward M. Brittingham. My thanks for all those who took part in this Association fund raiser.

I'm starting to put together our 2011 reunion. Without having a 2010 reunion and getting input from those generally in attendance, I have taken it upon myself, with the approval of Ken Johnson, Treasurer, and Tom Moniz, Vice President, to begin working to have us gather in Virginia Beach, VA. I will try to have us meet there sometime during the last 2 weeks of September. More about this will come to you either via e-mails or the Newsletter.

### Our Shake Down Cruise:

During the last few weeks of October, Carol and I took our new 2010 Toyota Prius for a shake down cruise. We started by spending a night in Atlantic City, NJ for a little slot machine fun. Needless to say, the machines had more fun than we did. After that we drove down via the Chesapeake Bay Bridge into Norfolk and Virginia Beach, where, together with my sister Lisa, we enjoyed the sun, the blue skies, the ocean, and the warmth for a week of rest and relaxation! During our stay there, we visited with Shipmates Bob Thomas, EMC 65-67, and Pat Taylor, XO 66-67, and, as Carol and I always do, we enjoyed our visit with these Shipmates immensely. Our thanks to Cecilia Thomas and Karen Taylor for making our visits so very pleasurable. We also visited the General Mac Arthur Museum and the USS Wisconsin BB-64 in Norfolk, where I found a few sailors to share some sea stories with. Shipmates, if you have a chance to spend time in Virginia Beach...do it...it's a beautiful vacation spot!

After Virginia Beach, my sister flew home to New York, while Carol and I drove to Alabama to visit with a colleague (that Carol worked with a short time ago) whose summer home is in Perdido Beach, AL, which is between Mobile, AL and Pensacola, FL. It's right on the water, so Carol and I really enjoyed staying there Sunday, 10/24 through Wednesday, 10/27/2010. We will be going back there for sure!!!

After leaving Perdido Beach, we drove over to St. Mary's, GA to attend the Memorial Service for SubVets of WWII at Kings Bay Submarine Base. This event was great, as it always is. Attendance this year was very good. We enjoyed seeing our Shipmates Walt Deal, TM 62-65, Jim Campbell, MM 45-47, Jerry Leppart, FN 62-64, and Leonard Marcoux, EM 63-66, and our many other friends that we have made over the years of attending this event. Also during this time at Kings Bay, we had the opportunity to tour one of our Trident Boats, the USS Alaska (SSBN 732), and, as usual, a tour of one of these boats is worth the trip in itself! I encourage everyone, if you have never made this Memorial Service, do it at least once...you will enjoy it!

Upon leaving St. Mary's, it was time to head North, getting home in time to make the elections. We made it home with time to spare. We took our time since neither one of us has to work anymore. Our new Prius was a dream to drive; gas mileage averaged out to 46.5 miles per gallon. This has to be considered very good, since the car was loaded with luggage almost all the time!

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to you all!

Roy Purtell, President  
USS Sea Owl Association

### From the Editor

By Ken Johnson

I am pleased to report that, as far as I know, no Sea Owl shipmates have departed on "eternal patrol" since the September issue. It makes the writing of the newsletter so much more pleasant when this is the case

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. Shipmate Bruce Blessington has sent part 2 of the story he began in the September issue. I am grateful to both for their continuing contributions to this newsletter!

Each year for the past several years the USSVI Groton Base has served a traditional Thanksgiving Dinner to sailors on the boats and base who cannot get home for the holiday. This year your Sea Owl

Association contributed \$100.00 to this worthy program. I received a letter and this certificate of appreciation from the Groton Base thanking us for this donation.



This year they served over 900 meals on Thanksgiving Day. As in the past, leftover funds are donated to the SUBASE Caring and Sharing program helping feed needy Navy Families in the local area for Christmas.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Shipmate Mike Polhemus for his recent "unrestricted gift" check of \$50. I will find an appropriate use for this gift that will help a Sea Owl shipmate or member of the Sea Owl family in need.

Finally, the newsletter would not be complete if I were not to remind everyone to pay their dues. Those who receive the newsletter by regular mail can determine their dues status by looking at the mailing label. I will send out updated membership cards with the March issue as well.

### A Southwest Asian Odyssey – Part 2

By Bruce Blessington

"You gotta guns on thisa plane?" "No" I replied. "You gotta firearms on thisa plane?" "No." "You gotta weapons on thisa plane?" "No; we don't have guns, firearms, rocket propelled grenades, swords, spears, clubs or any other kind of weapon or ordinance on this plane." The Italian Carabinieri rubbed his two day growth of stubble, looked at his two brother officers and smiled slyly. "You hava passaportas?" We hand them over. He looks, thumbs through the pages and hands them back apparently satisfied that we are neither criminals nor terrorists. Welcome to Treviso, Italy.

11July 2010 2157 Local, 2057Z Leg 5 1026 miles

It's been a long day. We started in Iceland, refueled in Glasgow and transited across England, France, Switzerland and Northern Italy. We've enjoyed the summer green of the English countryside and the snow capped Alps. We saw one of the most impressive thunderheads I've ever viewed over the French Alps. This monster towered to fifty thousand feet and was easily 75 miles long at its base and just exploding with lightning. Cloud to ground, top to bottom, cloud to cloud; there was an enough electrical energy in this airplane killer to power a city or two. Fortunately, it was 30-40 miles away so we could marvel at its ferocity without experiencing its violence. However, we soon had some thunderstorm activity in the immediate neighborhood and as we overflew the Swiss Alps the

radar was filled with storm cells. We dodged and wove our way along catching glimpses of the snow capped peaks below lit by the setting sun.



Swiss Alps

We experienced a brief period of icing at the higher altitudes as we were leaving the mountains but once we cleared them, conditions improved. As the Alps fell away behind us, the rain began in earnest. It was going to be a night approach into Treviso, a place where none of us had ever been before, in the rain with descending ceilings. Delightful! After a long discussion with approach plates in hand, Ed and Jesse worked through the navigation and began our decent to intercept the Treviso localizer. Fortune smiled on us and we broke out of the clouds at 1200 feet with the field in sight, lined up for a straight-in approach to the runway. We touched down, exchanged some high fives and taxied in to our Italian reception committee. By the time we cleared in and caught the limo to the hotel, it was close to midnight. Dinner was an apple. With no transition time from full alert and flying to head on pillow, sleep didn't come easily. I finally gave up and dragged out a book.

12 July 0600 Local, 0500Z Leg 6 967 miles

Our Italian innkeeper has prepared a fabulous buffet breakfast for us an hour ahead of the official opening of the dining room. I think he took pity on us for having to turn in hungry the previous night. As we ate, he hustled about putting up three huge box lunches. (After we had been presented with three barely edible boxes of junk food in Labrador, at \$25 per, courtesy of our beloved flight planning service, your author had taken over the duties of caterer.) We thanked him and headed back to the airport. We made it through security, passport control and headed for our plane. But wait!

The Treviso Carabinieri had their knickers in a bunch because their colleagues from the night before had failed put the proper stamp in our passports. By radio, they insisted that we return from the plane on the ramp via the crew bus so that they could fiddle with our documents and rectify this grievous oversight. After another wasted half hour, we were finally able to disentangle ourselves, file another flight plan manually and plead with ATC to release us. Wheels up at 0727Z. We were glad to be leaving Italian airspace. The combination of air traffic controllers with an attitude, obnoxious border police and mindless bureaucratic processes made for a frustrating visit. But as the blue Ionian Sea stretched out before us

all was forgotten. The Greek Isles beckon and we are reminded of Homer's masterpiece, The Odyssey. It is so clear we almost expect to catch glimpses of the Sirens as we overfly their island.



Greek Islands

We shoot the approach into Souda Airport on the Isle of Crete and taxi to the general aviation ramp. It's 1330 local, 1130Z. Ed and Jesse are dragging and I urge that we quit right here for the day and get some much needed rest and time away from the airplane. It didn't take a lot of arm twisting to get my two young colleagues to sign on to the program, especially since I promised a night at the best hotel on the island (a bargain by Boston standards) and dinner on me.



Crete-Harbor View from Hotel Megaron

The hotel met expectations and dinner was superb. We all enjoyed roof top dining overlooking the Harbor with great food and sufficient wine to put everybody in a relaxed mood. With a comfortable night's sleep we would be ready for the next leg of the trip

13 July 0710 Local, 0510Z Leg 7 723 miles

Reveille was at 0530 local but a great breakfast buffet made it worth while. Another box lunch catering success was in the works thanks to the Hotel Megaron's great service and total commitment to taking care of this itinerant flight crew. We headed for the airport and said

our goodbyes to the Olympic Airways service crew who had taken such good care of our needs for fuel, flight planning and transportation. (the best by far on this trip). Wheels up at 0710 Local under bright sunlit skies, we make a right downwind departure out over the Sea of Crete and turn east towards Lebanon. This was my leg to fly. The visibility was great and the mountains of Cyprus provided a reliable outside reference. Our destination was Amman, Jordan and we approached via Lebanon to avoid the hypersensitive Israeli airspace controllers.



Amman Jordan

We landed in Amman at 1345 Local, 1145Z. Minarets, grey blocks of identical apartments, head scarves and veils; we're in the Middle East now!

We arrive with two objectives, fuel and a quiet, cool place to dive into our box lunches. The pilot's lounge provided the lunch venue but fuel was another matter. Our Jordanian hosts informed us that the fuel credits furnished by our esteemed flight planners were unacceptable and they didn't take credit cards. Fortunately, we had anticipated the need for cash and had an ample stash on the plane. I went back outside, unlocked the aircraft and went into my brief case for the required sum. As I was counting it out I felt the presence of another person in the cabin. One of the fuel jockeys had decided to come aboard to have a look at all of our neat and classified electronics and peer over my shoulder as I dealt with treasury matters. "You, out, now!" I barked as I jabbed my finger at his chest. He skittered out the door to his truck and waited for me there with the fuel bill of \$569.00. I paid him and then he flashed a big gold filled grin and said "You have a tip for me?" I took a deep breath and handed him a ten spot He was clearly disappointed but said nothing.

With fuel for the plane and for the inner man both on board we started our engines and prepared to taxi out but not before we had one more issue to sort. With both propellers turning our intrepid ground crew refused to duck under the wing and disconnect the ground power unit. The connection point is well out of the arc of the propeller but there he stood, frozen in place. Ed made some sub-sailor like remarks, vaulted his 6'2" frame out of the left seat, opened the door and yanked the GPU cable out of the plane's belly. We buttoned back up, taxied to the active runway and departed to the west, bound for the trackless brown deserts of the Saudi peninsula. *To be continued.*

## Model Progress Report

By Ken Johnson

In the last issue I mentioned building a radio controlled model of Sea Owl using the Revell 1/72 Gato model kit. One of the problems with the kit is that it comes with a 4"/50 deck gun instead of a 5"/25 gun as Sea Owl had during World War II. Well, I managed to find a source for a 1/72 scale 5"/25 deck gun on line from Iron Bottom Sound Hobby Kits. In addition IBS sells several 1/72 scale Balao class conning towers. Apparently there were several variations and I just need to determine which one best fits Sea Owl's WW II configuration.

Another issue with the Revell kit is the number of limber holes along the side of the superstructure. WW II Balao class boats had many more than the Gato class boats. When I served aboard Sea Owl in the '60's most of these were no longer there. I thought perhaps that they were eliminated when the BQR-4 sonar was added, but I have seen at least one photograph of Sea Owl after the BQR-4 sonar was added that still had the WW II Balao limber holes along the side. Does anyone know when these were eliminated?

## Captain Shannon

By Ken Johnson

Recently Shipmate Ken Florey, FTB2 64-66, emailed me this photograph of him reenlisting in October 1964 with Capt Rick Shannon.



This is one of the few photographs I have of Capt Shannon with whom I served until I left Sea Owl in April 1965.

As Public Information Officer in 1964 I recall receiving a 8x10 photograph in the mail of our new Commanding Officer. Let me just say that my first impression was different than that which I soon had of him as a CO. As they say: Don't judge a book by its cover.

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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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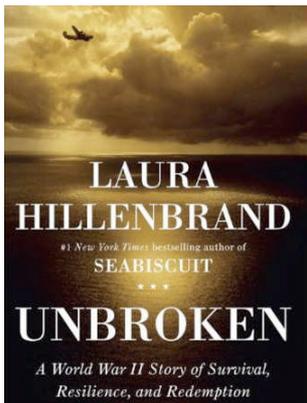
# The 40's

December 2010 Issue



## “Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption” by Laura Hillenbrand

Reviewed by Ken Johnson



This book is the incredible story of Louie Zamperini, a man whose indomitable will and spirit made him a survivor of several events that probably would have killed a lesser man.

During his early years, Louie, son of Italian immigrants was what would be best described as a juvenile delinquent. In high school his brother got him involved in the school track team. In 1934 Louie set a world interscholastic record in the mile, clocking in at 4 minutes and 21.2 seconds, a record that

would last for over twenty years. That record helped Louis win a scholarship to the University of Southern California and a place on the 1936 U.S. [Olympic](#) team. Louis qualified for the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, finished eighth in the 5000 meter distance event at that Olympics, but his final lap was fast enough to catch the attention of Adolph Hitler.

When World War II broke out, Louie joined the Army Air Corps and became a B-24 bombardier. His first B-24, *Super Man*, is badly shot up during a raid and barely makes it back to base with 594 holes in its fuselage.

Louie, his pilot Russell “Phil” Phillips and tail gunner Frances “Mac” McNamara survived the crash at sea of the B-24, *Green Hornet*, on May 27, 1943 during a search for another downed B-24. They spent an amazing 47 days at sea on life rafts while drifting westward about 2,000 miles. During this time they were repeatedly strafed by Japanese aircraft and threatened by sharks. Only Louie and Phil managed to survive the ordeal, but came close to starvation many times.

Initially after being captured by the Japanese Navy they were treated humanely, but this did not last. He is sent to Kwajelin, then on to Japan where he was held at the notorious Ofuna secret interrogation camp. Louie was never reported to be a POW and was reported by the military as having been lost at sea and deceased. On transfer to Omori POW camp Louie first encountered a sadistic Japanese corporal named Watanabe who seemed to delight in making his life and that of other POWs miserable. Watanabe was given the nickname, “The Bird”, by the POWs. His actions warranted his being declared as one of Japan’s most wanted war criminals, but he somehow managed to evade capture.

There is an indirect submarine connection to his story and that is that among the senior POW officers at Ofuna and later at other prison

camps was Commander John A. Fitzgerald, Commanding Officer of *USS Grenadier* (SS 210). After being bombed by Japanese aircraft on April 21, 1943, *Grenadier’s* crew, unable to repair damage and restore propulsion, surrendered to the Japanese and scuttled the ship. Despite brutal and sadistic treatment, all but four of *Grenadier’s* crew survived their two years in Japanese hands.



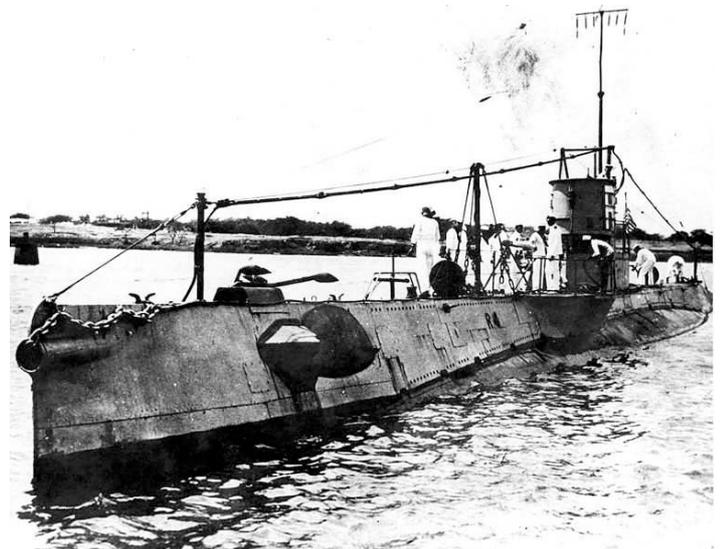
On his 81st birthday in January 1998, Zamperini ran a leg in the Olympic Torch relay for the Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan. Today, Louie, at age 93, is an inspirational Christian speaker one of whose favorite themes is “forgiveness”.

I heartily recommend this book to anyone interested in reading an inspiring story of amazing courage and determination to survive!

### Pre-World War II Video

By Ken Johnson

Recently Shipmate Herbert Hawes forwarded a link to a YouTube video of a pre-WW II film titled “Service in Submarines” The link to this video is: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZmelmOMDIbk> .



Shown in the video is training underway aboard the R-4 shown in this 1920’s U.S. Navy photograph. R-4 served as a Submarine School training boat from February 1931 until May 1941. The video offers a slice of what life was like aboard a pre-World War II vintage U. S. submarine.

By comparison, check out this YouTube video of the USS Texas <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WoL1sbqqmEc> , a new Virginia class submarine. We have come a long way baby!



# The 60's

December 2010 Issue



I have received the following poem by email from several sources as I am sure many of you have as well. I just thought it would be an appropriate way to close this newsletter, especially in view of the excellent "Cartoon Bob" D'Amico cartoon that appears on page one.

## *T'was the Night Before Christmas-Submarine Style*

*By Sean Keck*

*T'was the night before Christmas, and what no-one could see,  
The men with the dolphins were under the sea.  
Most of the crew was flat on their backs,  
Snoring and dreaming all snug in their racks.  
Those men on watch were making their rounds,  
Some manning the planes or listening for sounds.  
Back in maneuvering or down in the room,  
They all hoped the oncoming watch would come soon.  
I'd finished some PM's whose time was now due,  
And hoped for some sleep, even an hour or two.  
Against better judgment I took a short stroll,  
And found myself wandering into control.  
The Nav had the Conn, the CO'W was in place,  
The COB had the Dive and a scowl on his face.  
The helm and the planes were relaxed but aware,  
The QM and ET were discussing a dare.  
To comply with the orders the Nav told the Dive,  
To bring the boat up with minimum rise.  
The orders were given and soon they were there,  
At periscope depth with a scope in the air.  
The QM confirmed our position with care,  
The broadcast was copied, we brought in some air.  
The Nav on the scope let out a small cry,  
He shook his head twice and rubbed at his eyes.  
He looked once again to find what it was,  
That interrupted his sweep and caused him to pause.  
Try as he might there was nothing to see,  
So down went the scope and us to the deep.  
I asked what it was that caused his dismay,  
He sheepishly said, "I'm embarrassed to say."  
It could have been Northern Lights or a cloud,  
Or a meteorite he wondered aloud.  
But to tell you the truth I guess I must say,  
Whatever it was it looked like a sleigh.  
And though it passed quickly and never was clear,  
I almost believe it was pulled by reindeer.  
We laughed and teased him and I got up to go,  
When our moment was broken by "Conn, Radio."*

*They told us a message was just coming in,  
We looked at the depth gauge and started to grin.*

*"Radio, Conn, I feel safe to say,  
Your attempt at a joke is too long delayed.  
If it had been sooner it might have been neat,  
But I doubt we're receiving at four-hundred feet."*

*"Conn, Radio, you can come down and see,  
We're not playing games to any degree."  
I headed aft with nothing better to do,  
Surprised by the fact it was still coming through.*

*It stopped and was sent to control to be read,  
The Nav read it slowly and scratched at his head.  
Then again he began but this time aloud,  
To those that now waited, a curious crowd.*

*"To you Denizens of the Deep and men of the sea,  
Who risk your life daily so others stay free.  
I rarely have seen you on this, my big night,  
For far too often you are hidden from sight.*

*But purely by luck I saw you tonight,  
As your scope coaxed the plankton to glow in the night.*

*And lucky for me I've finally won,  
The chance to say thanks for all you have done.*

*I know that you miss your families at home,  
And sometimes you feel as if you're alone.  
But trust what I say and I'll do what's right,  
I'll take something special to your families tonight.*

*Along with the gifts I'll take to your kin,  
I'll visit their dreams and leave word within.  
They'll hear of your love, and how you miss them,  
I'll tell them that soon you'll be home again.*

*It might not be much I know that is true,  
To thank you for all the things that you do.  
But I'll do what I can, while you do what's right,  
Merry Christmas to all, and to all a goodnight."*

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year Shipmates!

