



# Hooter Hilites

A Publication of the USS Sea Owl Association

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

We still give a hoot!

December 2013 Issue



## President's Message

Hello Shipmates & 1st Mates:

I hope that everyone is doing well this holiday season. While it seems that our world is getting to be a more difficult place to live in, we all have to be very grateful for having a great country like the USA to call home. Let us never forget our service men and women who provide our safety and comfort that we sometimes take for granted. Carol and I love each one of you - you are a part of our family.

Our Cleveland reunion, for those who did manage to get there, was, I thought, very enjoyable. Cleveland was very hospitable to us. Every restaurant that we went to was over the top on being courteous and friendly to us. The Wyndham Hotel that I choose for our hotel while in Cleveland was also very good in providing whatever service I asked them for.

The USS Cod base of USSVI could not do enough for us. We had a Memorial Service that we held topside on the Cod. I thought this went as well as any Memorial Service that I have ever been to. We were fortunate to have the Naval Sea Cadets from Cleveland as our Honor guard - they were without question top notch in their duties to present Colors during our service. Everyone was welcome to take part, including those that were visiting the Cod that day. I went around to everyone inviting him or her to remember their relatives who may have been lost during the War or any relative who was lost at sea. Everyone had a long stem rose that they could place into Lake Erie in memory of their departed loved one.

This said, I have not planned another reunion at this time. We have normally had between 23-27 shipmates attending our reunions. The Cleveland reunion, as nice as it was to see those shipmates who attended, only had 14 shipmates attending. When you're putting these reunions together, normally about one (1) year prior to its taking place, there are some requirements placed on the person signing the hotel contract. The Wyndham was very good in not making me sign anything for the number of rooms, which was my main sticking point when signing their contract. However there was a minimum that we had to meet for food purchased from them for our main dinner. Their original price was set at \$2500.00. I was afraid this was going to be too high, so they reduced it down to \$1500.00. I thought this was a very manageable price for us to meet, but since we only had 14 shipmates in attendance, some with their wives, we did not meet our food requirement. So in the end, the Cleveland reunion cost the Association about \$1050.00 more than I expected. This is your money, not something that I take spending lightly.

In talking this over with your Association Officers, they came to the conclusion that our Groton picnic could really be our

annual meeting place. The number of shipmates who attend is and has been very strong each year. There are no expenses that we have to meet, only making the food and getting soda, beer & water, which Ed Welch and his family have taken on each year, doing a superb job for us. The Groton picnic is held on the weekend prior to Father's Day - this seems to work out for a lot of you. I know that there will be shipmates disappointed because the reunion won't be closer to their home city, but without the number of shipmates willing or able to take that much of a trip, we have to do this.

We have several shipmates living on the West coast - I don't expect those of you to travel to New London for a weekend picnic. What I encourage you to do is set up a weekend on the West coast where you could meet for a reunion of Sea Owl sailors who are out there. You never know who would be willing to travel to attend such a mini-reunion, if I can call it that. This could apply to any region of the country where we have several shipmates living. Check with your USSVI base commanders, they may want to set up a reunion of sorts to coincide with their summer picnics or Christmas parties. The possibilities are endless.

Also within this newsletter is information on the Sea Poacher's reunion in Charleston, SC, to be held in April 2014. Carol and I do plan to attend. The Sea Poacher Association, lead by shipmate Bill Brinkman FN 59-60, has invited all Sea Owl sailors to join him and his Sea Poacher sailors at this reunion.

## From the Editor

Once again Howland Owl exchanges his wizard hat for one more appropriate for Christmas. He and I wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

For this issue "Cartoon Bob" D'Amico decided to use social media to "crowd source" ideas for a cartoon for this issue by soliciting ideas for the "Subs of the Future" on several Facebook pages frequented by submariners. The result you will find on page 5 of this newsletter.

For those of you who may not be familiar with the term, crowdsourcing is explained on Wikipedia as "the practice of obtaining needed services, ideas, or content by soliciting contributions from a large group of people, and especially from an online community, rather than from traditional employees or suppliers. This process is often used to subdivide tedious work or to fund-raise startup companies and charities, and can also occur offline. It combines the efforts of numerous self-identified volunteers or part-time workers, where each contributor of their own initiative adds a small portion to the greater result. Crowdsourcing is distinguished from outsourcing in that the work

comes from an undefined public rather than being commissioned from a specific, named group.”

In a way this describes in part the way that I do this newsletter and I hope it results in one that you find interesting to read.

### USS Sea Poacher Reunion Invitation

As Roy mentioned, our shipmate Bill Brinkman (FN 59-60) has extended an invitation to any Sea Owl shipmates to attend the next USS Sea Poacher reunion which will be held at Charleston, SC April 29 – May 3, 2014.

Location for this reunion will be Holiday Inn Mount Pleasant, 250 Johnnie Dodds Blvd, Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464.

Room reservations can be made by calling the Hotel directly at 843-884-6000. Be sure to tell them you're with the Sea Poacher Reunion to get the special rate of \$149.00 (plus tax) per room per night (Single, Double, Triple and Quad rate). This rate includes full breakfast for two each day and is good both three days prior and after the Reunion. Rooms not reserved by Sunday March 30, 2014 will be space available at the then current selling price.

Reunion activities will include but not limited to:

Oldest attendee contest

Youngest attendee contest

Three shipmates who travel the farthest get a free night and breakfast at the hotel

Best sea story contest

March of the Crew at the Tolling of the Bells ceremony

Piping aboard the Wounded Warrior's

A very esteemed (maybe the veryest) banquet speaker

A presentation by a TV/movie star

Seeing your fellow shipmates with hair

Walking historical Charleston, voted the best Tourist City in the world three years in a row

Seeing yourself (yeah you) in a Bob Dylan movie

If you would like to attend, there is a fee of \$285/person which covers an Activity Package which includes the Hospitality Suite for all days with full bar open generally from 0600 to 2345 and bus transportation to all of the events and in addition:

**April 29:** Welcome packet with name badges and welcome barbeque dinner

**April 30:** Tour of Fort Moultrie and Charleston harbor dinner cruise

**May1:** Fort Sumter tour, lunch at CPO mess on Aircraft Carrier Yorktown followed by tours of Yorktown, Submarine Clamagore and Destroyer Laffey

**May2:** Tolling of the bells, CSS Hunley tour, lunch at The Citadel with marriage vow renewal, Citadel long grey line parade, and final banquet dinner (formal dress)

**May3:** Breakfast at hotel and departure

There is a registration form on line here:

<http://www.seapoacher.com/registration%201.pdf>

Mail registration form and check payable to:

USS Sea Poacher Association  
4500 Tiffany Nicole Street  
Round Rock, TX 78665-9466

### Groton Base Thanksgiving

For the twelfth year the USSVI Groton Base again served a traditional Thanksgiving dinner to those sailors in the area not able to go home for the holiday. Prior to Thanksgiving the Groton Base holds a series of fund raising events to help finance the cost. The Sea Owl Association, as we have done for several years, made a cash donation of \$100 this year. Also, as I have done once before, I spent four hours on Thanksgiving morning at the club as a volunteer helping to prepare and send out over 500 meals. This year between the meals sent out and those served at the club the Groton Base served almost 1,000 meals on Thanksgiving Day.

As in the past the Groton Base made donations with funds left over from Thanksgiving. They gave \$5,000 to the Submarine Group 2 Caring and Sharing Program, \$5,000 to the local Navy Relief Society, and \$2,000 to the Groton SUBVETTES for their IA Packaging Program. Those donations will go a long ways to helping many Sailors and their families for Christmas.

### Groton Picnic

Our Groton Picnic will again be at Sutton Park, Groton, CT. Ed Welch CS 66-69 has worked with his son Eddie to reserve the park and have the food prepared by an outside vendor, then we only have to bring it to Sutton Park. There have been picnics where it was just too hot for Ed and his family to cook and prepare the food. I really don't want to put this work on Ed and Paulette - So with his son's help and having the food prepared by someone else, all we need to do is bring a few cans of beer, soda and water. Picnic events will be as follows:

**Friday 6 June:** Gather at Groton Motor Inn @ 1830 for dinner. Order food and drinks from the menu and pay individually.

**Saturday 7 June:** Picnic at Sutton Park. Pavilion from 1130 to whenever. Price - \$ 20.00 per adult, children 6 - 12 - \$ 10.00 under 6 - no charge. Price includes all food and beverage.

**Sunday 8 June:** Breakfast 10:30 AM @ Groton Town House. Order from the menu and pay individually.

If planning to attend, complete and return the enclosed form. Make checks payable to Ed Welch or Sea Owl Assn. and mail to:

Ed Welch  
151 Wakefield St.  
Rochester, NH 03867

We hope many of you can make it there!

### Raffle Item

This year we are offering a Bose® Solo TV sound system. This system offers the kind of sound most flat panel TVs simply cannot reproduce from their internal speakers.

With just one speaker and one connection, it offers:

- **Wide, even sound** throughout the room from Bose speaker array technology
- **More effects, music and dialogue**, clearly and naturally, with proprietary digital signal processing
- **Single speaker** fits neatly under your HDTV, no additional equipment needed

- **Extremely easy setup**, with one connection to your TV and one plug to the wall



The Bose Solo system can be used as a stand for most TVs up to 37" and many up to 42". You can also set it below a wall-mounted TV, or on a shelf or media cabinet.

We think that you will welcome the opportunity to win this item! Raffle tickets are \$5 each or \$20 for six. Send checks for tickets, payable to Ed Welch, to:

Ed Welch  
151 Wakefield St.  
Rochester, NH 03867

The drawing will be at the Groton picnic in June. As with our other raffles in the past, you will not need to be present to win.

### STEM and the Submarine Force Museum

by Ken Johnson

Back in July I assumed the duty of Docent Coordinator for the Submarine Force Museum in Groton. The job mainly involves maintaining a schedule of docents to cover two watches per day for every day the museum is open to the public.

Very soon it became a little more involved when the Navy Historical Foundation in Washington, DC began a two week STEM Teacher Fellowship Program there. This was an extension of a program begun two years earlier at the US Navy Museum in Washington to develop Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) focused lesson plans, based on the exhibits and artifacts in the Cold War Gallery at that museum. The goal was to deliver standards-based lesson plans through the web as a companion to the on-line Virtual Tour of the Cold War Gallery's exhibits.

In the summer of 2012, the STEM program added history lesson planning to the fellowship program. Since the history of our Navy is also a history of technology, adding U.S. history teachers to the STEM fellowship teams provided an additional focus on Cold War history.

For 2013 and beyond, the Naval Historical Foundation (NHF) decided to expand STEM-H fellowships to other Navy museums and in July the first of these "exported" fellowships was conducted at the Submarine Force Library and Museum in Groton, Connecticut. Four Connecticut teachers were selected representing Ledyard Middle School, Old Saybrook High School and New London High School. The program was run by CAPT John Paulson, USN (ret) from the Naval Historical Foundation. The lesson plans developed by these talented teachers have been published on line here:

<http://www.ussnautilus.org/education/stemlessonplans.shtml>

Several members of the USSVI Groton Base were recruited to give presentations on various subjects such as torpedoes, navigation, sonar, life aboard diesel-electric, SSN and SSBN submarines and maintenance procedures needed to keep our submarines effective and operational. The teachers also got tours of a Los Angeles class submarine and Electric Boat. A part of the program I gave a presentation on diesel-electric submarines including the development of various upgrades to WW II fleet boats and Mike Polhemus (SO 54-57) gave one on sonar.



As always, 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:

Charles Duffy – TM 44-45 – January 9
John Moore – SA 52-53 - September 20
James Blackwelder – FT 62-66 – September 27
Samuel Packer – LT(jg) 49-51 - October 4
Frank Limpert – QM 47-51 - October 9
Luther "Ed" Bess – EMC 64-69 – November 9
Michael Noon – EN 67-69 – November 25

We extend our deepest sympathy to families and friends of our departed shipmates. In accordance with the wishes of their families, the USS Sea Owl Association made donations of \$50 each to: Our Lady of Lourdes church in Ledyard, CT in memory of Ed Bess, Alzheimer's Association of Cincinnati, OH in memory of Michael Noon and Centre Home Care in State College, PA in memory of John Moore.

*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 semi-annual publication of the USS Sea Owl Association. Issues are published in June and December.

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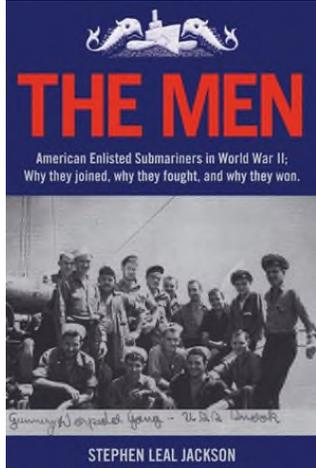
# The 40's

December 2013 Issue



## The Men

By Ken Johnson



I found this book recently at the Submarine Force Museum Gift Shop in Groton and was very interested in the fact that the author decided to focus on the experiences of enlisted submariners. Most books about WW II submariners focus on the experience of officers.

The book tells the stories of six men with a variety of enlisted rates. They include: Robert W. Burr who served as a Cook/Commissary Steward, George O. Jones who served as an Engineman, Ernest V. Plantz who served as an

Electrician's Mate, Jeweldeen Brown who served as a Radioman, Warren F. Wildes who served as an Electrician's Mate and Harry F. Julian who served as a Torpedoman. Most served aboard more than one submarine with a notable exception of Ernie Plantz who spent most of the war in a Japanese prison camp along with other members of the crew of USS Perch (SS 176). After being severely damaged and no longer able to fight Perch had little choice but to surrender or be lost with all hands. Perch was in fact assumed to have been sunk with all crew members "missing and presumed dead" until after the war when they were released.

Having interviewed Ernie several years ago, I was aware of much that is included about him regarding his treatment and that of others in the Perch crew as Japanese POWs. Their treatment was brutal and Ernie's story describes vividly the brutality that he and his shipmates endured. In January 1945 Ernie nearly died from dysentery and malaria and was saved by the heroic action of a Dutch doctor who was also a prisoner and who injected Ernie with a mixture of crushed quinine tablets and fermented coconut juice which he injected with a homemade syringe.

With the exception of Harry Julian, the book is based on extensive interviews with the men it features. Harry served aboard USS Snook (SS 279) which was lost during her ninth war patrol sometime in April 1945. His story is derived from the many letters he wrote home.

What attracted these men and others like them to the discomfort and relative danger of submarine duty? For them it was the lack of formality and the feeling of being part of a team.

The author, Stephen Jackson, is himself a former enlisted submariner who served eight years aboard USS Los Angeles (SSN 688) and USS Florida (SSBN 728). He is described as a lifelong student of American history with advance college degrees in American History. The book is a good read and I highly recommend it!

## Charles Duffy

By Ken Johnson

On 26 August we learned of the passing of Charles Duffy from his son, Michael. At the time, Roy Purtell said about him,



"Charles Duffy was a gun smith well know to those that were into restoring older guns....I have spoken to a few people that had guns restored by him.....they were always very pleased with the work that Charlie did for them."

I was very impressed with this photograph of him which I included in his entry to the WW II Memorial web site. It is probably my favorite of all the photographs of Sea Owl sailors that I included when I created the entries.

## Carter Bennett Letter

By Ken Johnson

Recently I received an image of a hand written letter which was written by Sea Owl's first Commanding Officer, Carter Bennett, in 1969 to a Mr. James Russell who had asked him for material on USS Porpoise. It came from his son, Michael, and contains information that was news to me and which I wanted to share with all of you.

Carter Bennett stated in the letter that he commanded USS Porpoise during her last war patrol in June of 1943 after which she was taken out of combat service. According to Bennett, "She was the last fleet boat in combat with a riveted (rather than a welded) hull. The reason was obvious, a depth charging after an attack in the Marshalls opened up enough leaks in the fuel tanks to leave an oil slick like a four lane highway on the surface, and we were continually harassed by planes".

The letter further states that on their return to Pearl Harbor, "I transferred to command the Permit & Porpoise returned to the States. I made two patrols in Permit and then was returned to the States to put Sea Owl in commission at Portsmouth.

Regarding his service on Sea Owl he states in the letter, "On Sea Owl's first patrol we made the first successful use of a new acoustic torpedo, sinking a 'special Anti-submarine Patrol Vessel' for which I was awarded the Navy Cross – not for the target value but because of the tactics involved

Sea Owl's next patrol which lasted 88 days was blank until the very end when, while enroute back to Midway Is. We rounded up an impromptu wolfpack to trap & finally sink a Jap sub trying to supply Wake Is. That was the end of the war for me, as I was transferred to the staff of Submarine Training Command at P.H to prepare for the "invasion"".

# SUBS OF THE FUTURE

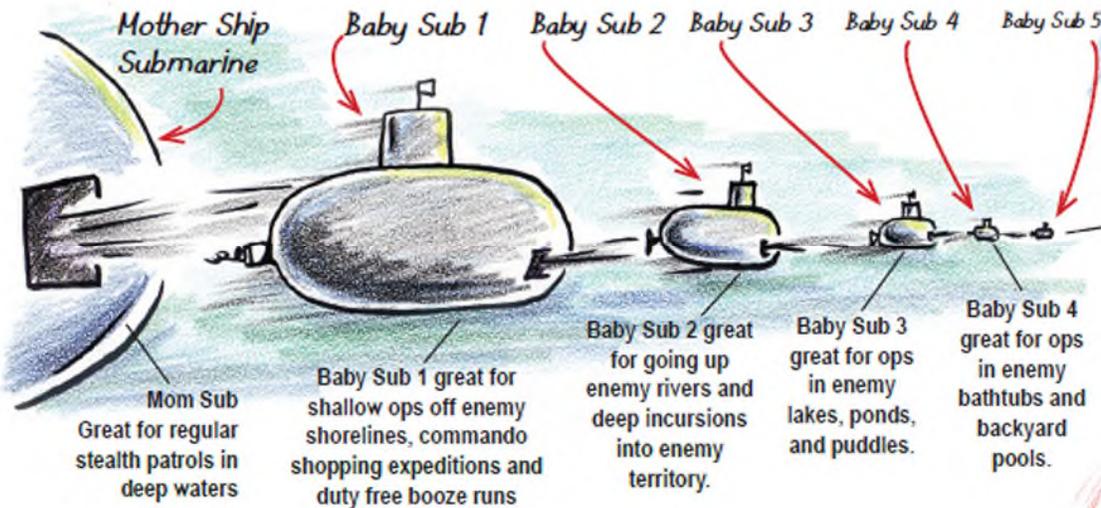
As predicted by actual submarine sailors

It's amazing to see what the submarines of today can do. Yet it boggles the mind to try to imagine the submarines of the future.

Future subs could be very family friendly. Nursery and day care rooms for toddlers and children. A full gymnasium with pool and steam room... Perhaps a sub fully manned by women... (A boom-boomer?) with a rotating pink and gold set of crews. Thanks Roy Purtell, Bruce 'Peanut' Melton, Ron McLain, and Steve C. Scott, and the Dept of the Navy!



Everything is getting smaller and smaller these days... So why not have future submarines join the mini-party? Also, submarines can now carry and launch smaller subs... So why stop with one generation? Consider the possibilities of 'Baby Sub 5' shown below... A 5th generation launch... about the size of an ice cube!



Airborne Predator Drones kick enemy butt from thousands of miles away... so why not also Drone Submarines?... (Wiggler Jimmy) Crews in Nebraska or Iowa enjoy a sunny day outside through their remote control room window. Note the sub can do not only underwater patrols, but also SPACE duty! (David Lee Bowlby) How about a Klingon-like Cloaking mode? (Mark Bisborough) Or even warp speed? (Tim Burkhart)



Padded Overheads, to avoid more head injuries... as requested by 6'4" Bob Denend, nicknamed 'Lurch' by the CO.

Bob D'Amico  
DEC. 2013



# The 60's

December 2012 Issue



## USS Thresher Memorial Update

By Ken Johnson

In the last issue I wrote about the dedication of a 129 foot flagpole at Kittery, ME as a memorial to the 129 men lost aboard USS Thresher on April 10, 1963. At that time there was a scramble to complete the flagpole base in time for its dedication. (Actually the flag was lowered again back then to give sufficient time for the concrete base of the flagpole to cure adequately.)

Since the dedication of the flagpole last April much additional work has been done at the site, not only in the traffic circle at the base of the flagpole, but in a Thresher Memorial Park about 500 feet away adjacent to the Kittery Town Hall.

Among the latest additions to the Thresher Memorial Park adjacent to the Kittery Town Hall is this sculpture and plaque shown here with sculptor Thomas Berger of Green Art in Kittery which is from a recent status update I received about the Memorial.



I had considered going to Kittery and taking photographs now that the memorial has been almost completed, but decided that photographs would be much nicer in the spring than in early December. By then the final touches on this memorial should be complete

Also included in the recent update report was the following which I thought appropriate to include here.

### Sometimes you just need to stop and reflect.

Only a submariner realizes to what great extent an entire ship depends on him as an individual. To a landsman this is not understandable - sometimes it is even difficult for us to understand - but it is so. A submarine at sea is a different world in herself, and in consideration of the protracted and distant

operations of submarines, the Navy must place responsibility and trust in the hands of those who take such ships to sea. In each submarine are men who, in the hour of emergency or peril at sea, can turn to each other. These men are ultimately responsible to themselves and each other for all aspects of the operation of their submarine. They are the crew. They are the ship.

This is perhaps the most difficult and demanding assignment in the Navy. *There is not an instant during his tour as a submariner that he can escape the grasp of responsibility.* His privileges in view of his obligations are almost ludicrously small, nevertheless, it is the spur which has given the Navy its greatest mariners – The men of the Submarine Service. It is the duty which most richly deserves the proud and time honored title of... Submariner. – author unknown

## Groton Veteran's Day Memorial Service

By Ken Johnson

This year's Veteran's Day Memorial Service at Groton, CT was a reminder of the other boat lost during the 1960s, USS Scorpion (SSN 589) in that the featured speaker was CAPT Maryetta Bishop Nolan, Nurse Corps, USNR who is the daughter of TMC (SS) Walter W. Bishop who was COB of the Scorpion at the time of her loss. CAPT Nolan is an active and ongoing supporter of Scorpion memorials.



In May 1999 a new enlisted barracks was dedicated at the Submarine Base in Groton and is named in honor of her father, TMC(SS) Walter Bishop

Two others who also participated in the Veteran's Day Memorial Service were Jeweldeen "Deen" Brown and Warren Wildes, both of whom are among the six enlisted men whose stories are included in the book "The Men; American Enlisted Submariners in world War II" which is mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter. Also present at the service was Ernie Plantz whose story is also told in this book.

As you also may already know the bell of the USS Sea Owl was used in tolling ceremonies during the service.