



Hooter Hilites

A Publication of the USS Sea Owl Association

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

We still give a hoot!

March 2004 Issue



Shipmates & 1st Mates:

As I prepare to write something for our March Newsletter, my thoughts are drifting to the outdoors. I know that Spring is "just around the corner", and I'm looking forward to seeing those crocuses come up from under the last of the snow. And those days when we can complain that it's too hot can't get here fast enough for me! With those warm summer days in mind, it's time to look ahead to our Groton, CT picnic and our Baltimore, MD reunion.

Groton Summer Picnic

Our summer picnic will be held the weekend of June 11th, 12th & 13th. See the registration form included with this Newsletter.

Registration forms, including checks payable to Ed Welch, should be mailed back to Ed Welch, 33 Waco Court, Groton, CT 06340-4719, tele #(860) 446-9104 **before May 15th**. Mark your calendars; you won't want to miss this one! Hope to see everyone there!!!

Rooms are available at the GROTON MOTOR INN, tele #(860) 445-9784 or (860) 452-2191, at the following prices: Single, \$107.10; Double, \$116.10; Suite \$125.10. Mention that you are with the Sea Owl Group when making your reservations in order to get these prices. . **Room reservations must be made by May 3, 2004.**

I made a note in the December Newsletter that we were looking for donated items to raffle off at both the picnic and the reunion. If you are interested in donating raffle items, let me know.

2004 Sea Owl Reunion

The Sea Owl 2004 reunion will be in Baltimore, MD, September 21st thru the 25th. Our host hotel is the Days Inn at Glen Burnie, MD.

The room rate is \$68.00 plus tax. Reservations can be made at the Days Inn by calling (410) 761-8300. Make certain that you let them know you are a part of the "USS Sea Owl" group to get the \$68.00 room rate.

We are planning a tour of Washington, DC monuments on Wednesday, the 22nd, with lunch at the Smithsonian Institute; a tour of the US Naval Academy on Thursday, the 23rd, with a box lunch at the Academy; and, right now, Friday, the 24th, is open for touring the local venues in Baltimore. I will have a registration form in the next edition of the Newsletter for shipmates to send in checks for buffet and tours.

Sea Owl Muster Lists

As reported in December's Newsletter, the Sea Owl Muster lists are posted on our web site. They include everyone that was ever assigned to the Sea Owl. After viewing these pages, should you find an error, please let Roy know so that it can be corrected. See this web page: <http://www.ussseaowl.com/Text/MusterList.html>

Ship's Stores on Sale

Ed Welch, CS 66-69, has put all clothing on sale: 25% off all sweatshirts, T-shirts, denim shirts. This sale does not include ball caps. We are hoping to move items that have "Sea Owl Good Guys" embroidered on them. Those shipmates that were onboard during the late 60's remember those Good Guys sweatshirts. Contact Ed

Welch, 33 Waco Court, Groton, CT 06340, tele #(860) 446-9104 or erwelch@comcast.net to see if your size is available. Your 1st mate will look good in these shirts as well. !!!!

Association Dues

Sea Owl Association dues are due November 1st. If you have not yet sent John Leers, YN 53-57, your dues for 2004, you are late. Yearly dues, \$10.00; lifetime memberships are available for \$100.00. John's address is 1453 Marty Drive, Reynoldsburg, OH 43068, tele #(614) 866-3707. Those shipmates that fall behind on their dues after 2 years will no longer receive the Newsletter. Send in your dues now. !!! Thanks to those members that have sent in your dues; it is the blood that keeps the Association alive.

New Association Members

Jerry Morrison, EM 1951, (Jerry joined while at the Mobile reunion), (954) 725-7996

Charles (Blackie) MacKinnon, TM 1958-1961, (508) 697-2153

Douglas Bryant, ENCS 1952-1953, (508) 774-8982

Charles Cushman, LTJG 1949-1951, (860) 535-4511

Bill Hyler, ET 1966, (864) 944-0940

John Kolodziej, LT 1963-1965, (John joined as a Life Member while at the Mobile reunion), (228) 255-7967

Harold Maurer, EN 1953-1956, (610) 258-2508

I sincerely hope that I have not forgotten anyone. In which case, please let me know; it will be noted in the next Newsletter.

E-mail

If you haven't gotten e-mail from Roy and you're wondering why, send him a message. It's very possible that for whatever reason you are no longer on the list to receive e-mail from him.

Helping Fellow Submariner

Your Sea Owl Association has come to the aid of another fellow submariner. Shipmate Ed Luther, a submariner from the USS Trumpetfish, has again come on hard times. Several years ago, Ed & Pat Luther lost their home and all their possessions in a tornado that caused millions of dollars in damages to homes in the Mechanicsville, NY, area.

Now, shipmate Luther has lost another home and its belongings in a house fire. Ed spent weeks in the hospital due to smoke inhalation that he received going back into his burning home, while Pat was next door calling 911. He's lucky to have gotten out alive.

Your Association officers agreed to send Ed & Pat Luther a check for \$100.00 to help them replace their lost belongings and to try to alleviate his suffering and pain. Anyone wanting to help Ed can do so by sending a check payable to: Ed Luther, addressed to: Al Singleman, 425 East Campbell Road Ext., Schenectady, NY 12303.

Shipmate's Business Sites

It has come to my attention from shipmate Pat Kennedy, QM 65-66, that many of you have a business that you own and operate. These

are either commercial businesses, such as Pat Kennedy's, or maybe a bed & breakfast, or it could be a hobby that you run from home. In any case, I would like to hear from you; I intend to put a web page together that will list your business for other shipmates to see. Send me any information you have. What better customers to have than fellow submariners. !!!

Ghosts of the Abyss

Movie review by Ken Johnson

This is not a feature length movie, but is a film that was made in 3D IMAX format of the remains of the Titanic. If you have never seen a 3D IMAX film, you ought to experience one. The one featuring the International Space Station, narrated by Tom Cruise is spectacular and one I have now seen twice. *Ghosts of the Abyss* was produced by Disney with James Cameron who directed the movie, *Titanic*, and features actor Bill Paxton who starred in the *Titanic*. Scenes from the *Titanic* are in fact superimposed in this film over views of the wreck of the Titanic on the ocean floor.

I was particularly interested in this film because of the use of the high tech Russian research submersibles Mir 1 and Mir 2 which were used for the filming the Titanic at a depth of over 12,000 feet in the Atlantic. These were built in 1987 in Finland as a joint venture with the Soviets and operate from a Russian oceanographic research vessel, the world's largest such vessel. They are capable of diving to 20,000 feet. I recalled my experience working at the Westinghouse Ocean Research and Engineering Center in Annapolis after leaving the Navy in 1966. We were working on a design for just such a vehicle for the Navy, the Deep Submergence Search Vehicle or DSSV, but that's another story.

This film will be released on DVD in April as a two volume set. While it cannot duplicate the experience of seeing this film in an IMAX theater, it will delve into the challenges of making the film. This will include background information on the dives and footage not seen in the theater version. It will also include information on some of the technology that was developed for the making of this film. Among these were the special digital 3D cameras and small, remote operated vehicles, deployed from the Mir submersibles and controlled by fiber optic cables which were used to explore interior regions of the Titanic. I have reserved it in my Netflix DVD rental queue, but this is one I will most likely purchase.

From the Editor

First let me call your attention to my new e-mail addresses. These are seaowl@charter.net and OakhamGraphics@charter.net. As part of my recent upgrade to high speed broadband cable Internet access, I have decided to drop my America Online account.

For some time now, I have mentioned wanting to produce a Sea Owl CD. Recently, after acquiring a DVD burner for my computer, I decided that a DVD would be a more appropriate medium to tell the Sea Owl story. This is now finally coming together and I expect to have a preliminary version available by the June Groton picnic.

Meanwhile, I have put together DVDs of the King's Bay reunion in 2002 and the Mobile reunion in 2003.

You may order these DVDs from me by mail for \$5.00 each. Price includes postage. Send orders to:

Ken Johnson
P.O. Box 561
Oakham, MA 01068

One of my other projects has been the entry of all World War II Sea Owl shipmates into the National World War II Memorial Registry.

This memorial will be dedicated on Memorial Day, May 29, 2004. These entries can be viewed on line and printouts will be preserved in a looseleaf notebook that will be available at future picnics and reunions.

Spud Guns

By Ken Florey, FT3 64-66

(Editor's note: It has come to my attention that some of you engage in some rather unusual hobbies. This article by Shipmate Ken Florey is the first in what could be a series of articles about such hobbies. I am looking forward to future articles by those of you out there who would like to share your experience.)

Ken Johnson asked me to write up a short article about my spud gun and how I got interested in them. I retired from the Alaska Department of Fish & Game in 1994 after spending over 20 years as a fisheries biologist with that department. My wife Debi and I cruised the country for a year in our motor home checking out the sites and visiting friends in various parts of the country.

One of those visits was to one of my old buddies who I had worked with in Alaska who had retired to western Montana on the banks of the Clarks Fork River. He is an avid fly fisherman and golfer. We were sitting on his back porch watching the river and I noticed an odd looking black pipe object standing in the corner next to the door. I asked him what it was and he said a "Spud Gun". I had never heard of one so he asked me if I would like to see it in action. Always being an old FT, I naturally was eager to shoot anything that makes lots of noise and tossed objects far into the sky.

The gun consisted of a 2" ABS barrel about 4 feet long that was attached to a 4" ABS combustion chamber that was about 2 feet long. The end of the combustion chamber was fitted with a clean out screw cap similar to the ones you see on a sewer line. On the side was mounted a spark igniter like the ones you see on a barbecue. Inside the combustion chamber, the igniter was wired to 2 set screws mounted close together so a spark would jump the gap when the igniter was pushed. The end of the barrel was beveled so when you mashed a potato against it, it would be cut to the proper diameter and fit the barrel very tight. The fuel was a squirt of hairspray or Right Guard. After loading the barrel, you squirt the fuel in the back, replace the cap, and touch it off.

I found this to be a total blast especially shooting at the boxcars going by on the train track across the river. I decided when I got settled, I had to build one of these great guns.

When we finally did settle in Bend, Oregon, I did build one of these guns and gave it to my best friend Tim McDaniel (another old retired Fish and Gamer) for Christmas. We were playing with starting fluid as the propellant, but it was cold and we were not getting the results that I wanted. We decided to try oxygen and acetylene as the fuel. Now we're talking serious power. My buddy Tim said it sounded much like the 105's cannons he crewed on in Nam. His golden retriever was so panic struck, it tried to hide in the bathtub. We got a little afraid of it and decided to wrap the whole gun in wire and then duct tape in case we got too carried away and blew it up. It was a good thing because, before the day was over, we managed to blow the barrel off the thing.

I decided then and there that maybe compressed air would be a bunch safer and potentially more powerful. It was a few years before I finally found what I was looking for, a big fast valve that could hold up to 100psi and release the pressure very fast in high volume. I was surfing the web one day a few months ago and found The Spudgun Technology Center. If you have any interest in spud gunning or just want to read a great web page, this one is a must. The URL is: <http://www.spudtech.com/default.asp>. The guy who

owns the site and makes and sells spud guns and parts for a living and is named Joel Surprise.

Joel lives in Wisconsin, has a wife in the Army currently stationed in Iraq, and is an amazing person with whom to talk. I ordered a couple of barrels from him and the incredible Supa valve, which is the heart and sole of pneumatic spud gunning. After getting all the parts and building my rendition of a Big Mother Spud Gun, I again gave it to my buddy Tim as a Christmas present.



Ken with friend, Tim McDaniel, and “the gun”

This baby is the serious deal. It will shoot a golf ball clear through a 1 1/8” piece of plywood or a piece of 2x12 from a distance of 50 feet with lots of energy to spare. It will shoot a golf ball over a half a mile and a spud out of sight. The 1 1/2” schedule 40 PVC barrel works great for spuds and golf balls. You have to grind the edge off the balls a little to make them fit. The 2” schedule 80 PVC barrel fits super balls perfectly. Obviously you have to have a compressor.



Ken and friends, adjusting gun angle for maximum range

Spud gunning is great fun, but it is not a toy. They could severely injure or even kill a person if used in a careless manner. But if you want to impress your old buddies and make your wife shake her head and mutter, “It must be a guy thing”, then check out Joel’s web site and build one of your own, or Joel will build one for you as well. You can find the website easily by searching Google for Spud guns.

Now we could build a serious spud gun if we could get our hands on one of the old compressors off the SEA OWL. I’ll have to work on that.

Radio-Controlled Submarines

By Ken Johnson

Building radio-controlled submarines is not yet one of my hobbies, mainly because of the first item on the “Shopping List for Beginning RC Submariners”, “Get lots of money.” For now, I am going to have to remain an interested and enthusiastic spectator and stick to display models. A scale model radio-controlled submarine, with the performance features that would want to make you build one, would set you back at least \$1,000.

I recently attended the monthly meeting of the group that sponsors an annual RC Submarine Regatta in Rhode Island. It was held at the home of one of the members. While I did not get the opportunity to see one of these in action in the water, I did get a chance to see them up close, inspect the internal workings and get a good description of how they work. I was particularly fascinated by Art Broder’s Russian Alfa. The sleek lines of the Alfa make a beautiful model. Most, like Art, purchase the hull from one of the suppliers that have sprung up to support model sub enthusiasts. Art, a semi-retired dentist, built his own ballast system using a blood pressure cuff and miniature air compressor. Incidentally, Art also has a radio controlled duck that he chases other ducks with in ponds.

These are not kids toys! Like Art’s Alfa, most incorporate at least a four channel radio transmitter and receiver to give you speed, rudder, planes and ballast control. Some, for those who just can’t resist, go beyond this with the capability of launching torpedoes and even missiles. These appear to be miniature “spud guns” using paint spray propellants, also used by most to blow ballast “tanks”. Recent developments of miniaturized electronic speed controls, automatic angle keepers and fail safe devices make these very sophisticated and ingenious devices that are easier to control and less risky to operate. I am looking forward to seeing them in action soon.

Another item on the “Beginner’s List”, “lots of patience and time”, is another deterrent for me right now. If any Sea Owl shipmates out there have not been deterred by lack of money or time and have built one or more of these, let’s hear from you – and include pictures.

Sailor Rest Your Oars

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. Since the last newsletter we have lost one shipmate:

Dr. Victor Sholz, MD, FN - 44-46 – January 2, 2004

Dr. Sholz was a Sea Owl “plankowner”. We extend our deepest sympathy to family and friends of our departed shipmate.

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 2003 Issue



Sea Owl Birthday

By Ken Johnson

May 7th will mark the 60th birthday of the USS Sea Owl. This photo, taken on May 7, 1944 shows Sea Owl entering the water for



the first time, only three short months from the date her keel was laid.

Some of you can recall that day and can even point yourself out in this photograph. Personally, I was not quite five years old back then.

Those of you who attend the Groton picnic in June can attend a little birthday party and have a piece of a special Sea Owl birthday cake we hope to have for the occasion.

National WW II Memorial Update

By Ken Johnson

I am pleased to report that I have as of this date entered 120 names of Sea Owl shipmates who served aboard up until the end of hostilities on September 2, 1945 into the National World War II Memorial Registry web site. I hope that at least some of you will consider attending the formal dedication of this memorial in Washington, DC on May 29th.

One dilemma I have encountered is that some of you have listed various campaign ribbons, etc. received, whereas others have not. I want to be consistent and either include these in all entries or not at all. For now, I am listing only submarine combat patrol pins and medals earned for conspicuous acts of bravery. Several of you have sent photographs to be included in your entry and for this I am grateful, as they provide not only this lasting memorial to your service on this historic memorial site, but also a record for our own

Sea Owl archives. These are just a few of the photographs received so far and posted to the respective Registry entries.



Ralph Lucas
TM 44-46



Charles Duffy
TM 44-45



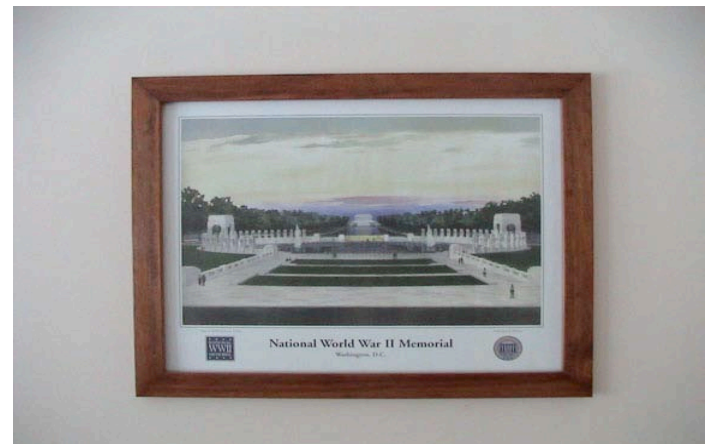
Emmett Pipher
F1 44



Gordon Braine
LT 44-46

Many have also returned the forms I included in the last newsletter with corrections and additions to the information I had initially entered. I thank you for this. I want also to acknowledge the help that the ship rosters for 1944 and 1945 provided by Shipmate Bill Brinkman have been in piecing together this information. For those of you who may not know, Bill typed these lists for Sea Owl and Se Poacher from microfilm lists obtained from Navy archives.

Recently I received by mail a copy of this artist's rendering of the memorial as it will appear when completed on the mall between the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial. I have framed and hung this print on the wall in my home. In a sense, this belongs, in part, to each of you who have sent me a photograph and the \$10.00



to add it to your entry, since the print is an acknowledgement of having contributed \$100 or more to the memorial. As a result, those of you who did will find a print of this photo included with your newsletter for you to keep.

As a reminder, Registry entries can be viewed on line at the following URL www.wwiimemorial.com along with others that have been entered. Again, you cannot edit the entry directly, as I must do it through my established account. If you would still like to add a photo to your entry, you can send it to me along with a check for \$10.00, which is the fee for uploading a photograph. I do not know of any deadline for adding entries or adding photographs to existing entries.



The 50's

March 2004 Issue



Fuddy Duddy Buddy

By Dick Boyle, LT (jg) 53-56

(Editor's note: This article is reprinted with permission from the January 2004 issue of THE SUBMARINE REVIEW, a quarterly publication of the Naval Submarine League, P.O. Box 1146, Annandale, VA, 22003.)

Being a movie officer in trouble is not easily forgotten. In the old days, an EMFN at the Movie Exchange could put our skipper on report for torn sprocket holes. Loss of a reel or an entire film brought forth thoughts of a cell at Leavenworth.

I was new on SEA OWL on a Mediterranean deployment in 1954. As movie officer, I knew the number of films we loaded for the trip, but it never entered my mind to check the contents of each container.

Mississippi Gambler was being shown underway, and when reel 3 was put on the projector, instead of a continuation of the featured film, we found a cartoon entitled *Fuddy Duddy Buddy*. It turned out that reel 3 was made up entirely of short cartoons spliced together. We searched every film container on board, but could not come up with reel 3.

Sometime later (and my memory is not up to speed), we sent a message from Commanding Officer SEA OWL to COMSIXTHFLT which read something like: "Does anyone have reel 3 of *Mississippi Gambler*? Will swap *Fuddy Duddy Buddy* for it." Nothing came of this plea for help.

Upon return to home port, I approached the Movie Exchange in somewhat of a state of anxiety. After relating our problem, the EMFN at the counter said something like: "Gee, we've been looking for that reel of cartoons for months. Reel 3 of *Mississippi Gambler* is right over here on the shelf."

Hurricane Gracie

By Bill Brinkman, FN 59-60

In 1959, while stationed on the USS Sea Owl SS405, we were conducting a big NATO Exercise Fishhook off Bermuda. The Exercise was cancelled due to the development of Hurricane Gracie. We were attempting to avoid its course as we headed back to New London. But if we went left, Hurricane Gracie went left.

We were in heavy seas on the surface going directly into the prevailing waves. We eliminated one lookout on the bridge and instead had one lookout (me) and one Conning Officer strapped to the bridge with chains and belts and wearing foul weather gear. The Officer was 5 feet 2 inches tall which was the minimum height allowed for submarine duty. He was on the port (left) side and I was on the starboard (right) side. To give you an idea of how rough the Atlantic Ocean was, we had a US Navy Destroyer one mile away from us on our starboard side. Normally, you can see about 20 miles. The ocean was so rough, that I only saw the destroyer once every 30 minutes as we both would be on top of equal height waves. Now that's rough!

Another measure of roughness is that of the crew of 100, only 10 of us were not seasick. Other crew members were offering me \$100 to stand their 4 hour watch so that they could stay in their bunks.

Another measure of roughness is how many crew members begged you to shoot them!

So, as we were on the bridge, we rolled 50 degrees to the port side. We were standing only 7 feet above the nominal waterline, and I looked down and saw the whole Atlantic Ocean rising up! With my 6 foot height and standing on my tippy-toes, arching my back, and tilting my head back, I was able to keep only my lips out of the water. While gulping down the precious air, I saw the poor Officer completely underwater for about 30 seconds. Mercifully, the sub started rolling back to my side, elevating the Officer as the ocean drained away.

This Officer then asked me if I knew what to do if he was washed overboard. Normally, we would steam ahead, make a 180 turn, and go back for him. But in these heavy waves, turning would capsize us and kill all 100 men and, of course, lose the ship.

I told him these facts, and that besides throwing him a life preserver, that all we would do is wave "Good Bye" to him! So he then called the Captain and received permission for us to go below, dog down the Conning tower hatch, and do our lookout duties on the periscopes (remaining on the surface).

Many have wondered, why didn't we submerge? Well, the rough seas last longer than we can stay down. If we had to make an emergency surface (fire for example), then we could surface 90 degrees to the prevailing seas and capsize. So all things considered, our diesel sub was safer on the surface.

During this ten days of rough seas, we experienced a most amazing event. We ended up in the Eye of Hurricane Gracie!

It was wonderful. It was as though we were in a huge soup bowl 20 miles in diameter. We were in the 20 mile flat part of the ocean with extremely smooth water, as smooth as a still lake, and all around the 20 mile diameter was a rim of water 50 feet high! In the 20-mile eye, the sky was perfectly blue. But extending all the way up above the 50 foot water wall was the swirling black cloud, which you could not see through.

A most un-pleasant side effect of the extremely smooth water of the eye of the hurricane was that the 90 seasick sailors recovered. Their color came back from green to normal, their cockiness returned, and they ate. Unfortunately, the brief one hour in the eye actually is the 1/2 way point of our rocking and rolling. The poor lads got even sicker when we were back in the 50 foot waves!

While on wheat harvest in Kingfisher, Oklahoma in June 1964, I experienced another amazing sight. It had rained overnight but was dry and clear the next morning.

The sight we saw could not be believed. Because of the rain, the Oklahoma red clay road was the brightest red you ever saw; the few trees were the brightest green; the waving wheat was the brightest gold color, and the sky was the brightest blue you ever saw. If you were to see a painting of the colors we saw, you would say that the painting wasn't realistic. Even a bunch of hired wheat harvesters were awe-struck at the sight.



The 60's

March 2004 Issue



Portsmouth Naval Shipyard

By Ken Johnson

Recently I came across a site on the Internet which lists National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmarks. Of particular interest was the presence on the list of the Portsmouth-Kittery Naval Shipbuilding Activity, aka Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. In March 1975 the American Society of Mechanical Engineers honored this facility as the "Site of the Pioneer 18th – 19th Century Fully Integrated Shipbuilding Operation for Building United States Warships Since 1774", granting it the status of a National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark. The information on this site contains much information about the early history of this facility and is interesting reading for anyone interested in the historic background of Sea Owl's "birthplace". This area could, in fact, be considered the place where the Revolutionary War really began with the capture of Fort William and Mary by Colonists in December 1774. Some of the powder captured from this fort was later used at Lexington and Concord and in the Battle of Bunker Hill.

Even before 1774, in fact as early as 1690, this area was an important site of shipbuilding activity and for a time provided nearly all of the great masts for the Royal Navy's ships of the line. Portsmouth's first contribution to the fledgling Continental Navy was the 32 gun frigate, Raleigh. Perhaps a more famous product, however, was the second ship built there, the 18 gun sloop Ranger which was under the command of John Paul Jones. Next came the America, a 74 gun ship of the line, at that time the heaviest ship ever built on this continent.

In 1800 this activity became known as the "Navy Yard" and was known by this name until September 14, 1945 when it became a component of the U. S. Naval Base, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Following disestablishment of the Naval Base in December 1962, it became known as Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. Today it remains an important U. S. Navy support and overhaul facility for our modern nuclear submarines. It also supports the USS Constitution.

Between 1917 and 1971, Portsmouth produced a total of 134 Navy submarines, 10 of them nuclear. It has managed to survive many military base closings over the years and has seen its share of many successes and tragedies. Let's hope that it manages to continue to serve and carry on the rich tradition represented by its early history.

Incidentally, yet another National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark can be found just a few miles away, the USS Albacore, the revolutionary test bed for modern submarine hull design, built at and operated from Portsmouth Naval Shipyard during her 19 year career.

Memories of Baltimore

By Ken Johnson

The selection of Baltimore as the site of our next Sea Owl reunion brings back memories of one of my first adventures in the Baltimore area. Back in the early 60's, when I first came aboard Sea Owl, I had a 1957 Saab. I acquired this from my mother who had purchased it new. During a trip from Rhode Island to Virginia to visit my sister, I was driving with my parents in this car and when we entered the Baltimore Harbor Tunnel the gas pedal linkage parted and we

coasted to a stop right in the middle of the tunnel. Traffic was halted and a Jeep raced in from the end of the tunnel to investigate. They pushed us out of the tunnel and we pulled over to the side after exiting the tunnel into a service turnout. On opening the hood and investigating, I discovered the problem and looked for a way to repair it. We were parked next to a fire truck and the only thing I could find was a wire that attached the inspection tag to a fire extinguisher on the truck. I "borrowed" this wire, wired the linkage together and we went on our way, later replacing the defective part. I often wonder what would happen today. Would the White House be notified and an "orange alert" be declared by the Department of Homeland Security because of a potential terrorist threat to the Baltimore Harbor Tunnel?

This 1957 Saab has a later Sea Owl connection. I eventually sold this car to Leonard "Frog" Marcoux, an Electrician's Mate on Sea Owl. As an officer, I should have known better than to enter into a financial deal with an enlisted crew member, but did it anyway. Frog later blew the engine on a trip to Vermont and thought I had cheated him. To this day I think he holds it against me. What really happened I may never know. The 1957 Saab was a rather unique automobile in that it had a three cylinder, two cycle engine. You had to pour a quart of oil into the gas tank each time you filled up. This was the only source of lubrication. If you forgot to add the oil, well you had a real problem. Two cycle engines in cars was an idea that never caught on, partly due to auto emission control laws and partly because a car trailing blue smoke was not considered a good sign.

Yet Another Car Story

By Ken Johnson

This one has to do with a certain Triumph TR-3 which was owned by our Executive Officer, Andy Anderson. The TR-3 was a car I always admired and aspired to own someday. It was early 1965 and we were in the shipyard in Philadelphia for a battery renewal. Andy was going back to New London one weekend, leaving his TR-3 behind. He graciously consented to my request to borrow his car for the weekend and I was looking forward to having the opportunity to tool around town in style.

One slight problem caused a change in plan. When I got in, there was a strong smell of gas. On investigation, I discovered that the bottom of the gas tank, which on the TR-3 was right behind the seat, was rotted out and leaking gas. This was a potential death trap!

What to do? The answer was to be found in a damage control kit that had some epoxy resin and glass cloth. I removed the gas tank and applied the epoxy "patch" to the bottom of the tank, essentially replacing the tank bottom, then reinstalled the gas tank. Of course, by now the weekend was over and it had not been spent as I had planned. It was, instead, a good exercise in damage control.

More Stories Please!

Let's keep those sea stories coming, shipmates! I know they are out there waiting to be told. E-mail or "snail mail" your stories to Roy Purtell or Ken Johnson. If you are too bashful to put your byline on it, "Howland Owl" is always willing to take credit for your stories.