



Hooter Hilites

A Publication of the USS Sea Owl Association

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

We still give a hoot!

June 2006 Issue



Shipmates & 1st mates

President's Message

2006 Reunion

As described in the March newsletter, our next reunion will take place in Charleston, SC. Shipmates Walt Deal and Jerry Farr who both live and work in the area have done a great job organizing and planning this reunion. The dates for this reunion are Oct 29 – Nov 2, 2006 and you will find a registration form included with this newsletter. It is important that you fill it out and return it at your earliest convenience. The Ramada Hotel Charleston, formerly the Clarion Hotel Charleston International Airport, will be our headquarters for this reunion. At this time they do not have a web site of their own. To make reservations, call them at (843) 572-2200. This is the same phone number as the former Clarion hotel and is shown on the registration form. Inform the desk clerk that you are with the USS Sea Owl Association. Room rates are \$74.00 per day, plus taxes. This room rate is available should shipmates want to arrive early or stay after reunion. It is important that you make your reservations before August 15th to ensure that you get this room rate. Our hospitality room will be at the Ramada Hotel. In it we will have soda, beer & chips available.

These dates coincide well with the SubVets of WWII memorial service held each year in St. Marys, GA, which is held during the first week of November. This would be to accommodate those shipmates that travel east from the west coast. Events for this reunion are as shown on the registration form. They include

On Monday, October 30th is a scheduled a tour of the CSS Hunley Museum. On Tuesday, October 31st we will visit Patriot's Point Naval and Maritime Museum. Patriot's Point is home to the USS Clamagore along with the aircraft carrier Yorktown, the destroyer Laffey, and the Coast Guard Cutter Ingham. Also at Patriot's Point is the sail, fairwater planes and top of the rudder of the USS Lewis and Clark (SSBN644) as a Cold War Submarine Memorial. On Tuesday evening we have a Luau Dinner with entertainment.

On Wednesday we have scheduled a bus tour of Charleston and a dinner banquet in the evening followed by a business meeting.

Joining us at this reunion will be the USS Medregal (SS 480) which will be having their first reunion. We look forward to sharing many events with them.

Again, please complete and send the enclosed registration form to John Leers as soon as possible and contact the Ramada Inn before August 15th to ensure that you get the special Sea Owl Association room rate.

Groton Picnic:

Again this year, the Sea Owl Association continued its tradition of having a picnic in June at Groton. This is an additional opportunity for shipmates to get together which many who live in the Northeast area take advantage of. The winner of the drawing for the Bose

Wave Music radio was Jeanne Grilli, First mate of Jim Grilli (MM 62-63).



The weather looked questionable at first, but by picnic time the rain had ceased. As always, Ed Welch and his family did an outstanding job with the food and no one left hungry.

Those shipmates attending are shown in the below photograph.



Kneeling l. to r. John Barnes MM 64-66, Mike Polhemus SO 56-57, Jack Empie EN 62-64 66-69, Greg Hankin QM 67-68, Jim Grilli MM 62-63, Roy Purtell TM 66-69, Ken Johnson LT(jg) 63-65, Frank Kenyon ST 68-69
Standing l. to r. Henry Fulkoski EN 68-69, John Bergren ST 52-53, Bob D'Amico SN 68-69, Jerry Farr QM 62-64, Harry Siska EN 68-69, John Salerno SO 52-55, Peter Bailey QM 54-56, Clyde Turner EN 64-66, Jim Madigan FT 68-69, John Warn LT 63-64, Bill Chapman Hm 59-61, Mike (Maysonet) Jansen TM 59-62, Ed Welch CS 68-69

2007 Reunion:

As of now, our 2007 reunion will still be in St. Marys, GA, home of Kings Bay Submarine base. The reunion will take place during the 1st week of November, which is also the same time of the SubVets of WWII memorial service, held each year at this site.

Shipmate Howie Stein (IC 59-61) will be working on a 5-day cruise that departs from Jacksonville, FL, a short drive from St. Marys, GA. We hope to have more details about this at the Charleston reunion.

From the Editor

As always a newsletter would not be complete if we were not to remind everyone to pay their dues. Again, the two digits or letters following your name on the mailing label to indicate your dues status according to our records. To review, if there is a "LM" on your mailing label, you are a Life Member and you never have to pay dues again. A "06" would mean you are paid up through October 2006, etc. If you are overdue or "dink", but still within a year of being paid up, you will continue to get the newsletter with a note reminding you to pay your dues before October 31st or you will no longer receive the newsletter by mail.

I am always looking for interesting stories and articles to publish in the newsletter that would be of interest to shipmates. If you have sea stories, unusual hobbies, stories of trips you have taken or any other material you think would be of interest to your Sea owl shipmates, please send them on to me.

The 43rd International Submariners Congress

by Ken Johnson

The official 43rd International Submariners Congress was held in Moscow, Russian Federation from May 22 to May 25. It was followed by an unofficial International Submariners Meeting May 26 to May 28 at St. Petersburg, Russian Federation planned by the St. Petersburg Submariners Club. Since 2006 is the 100th anniversary year for the Russian submarine fleet, this was huge "birthday party" and celebration which was attended by 300 delegates representing 18 different nations.

The U. S. delegation numbered 41 and our number included retired Admiral Bruce DeMars, USN who headed the U. S. Navy's Nuclear Power Program from 1988 to 1996 when he retired after 43 years service. Admiral DeMars is now Chairman of the Board of the Naval Submarine League.

First day events in Moscow included a tour of the Moscow Kremlin and a beautiful submarine memorial service at the spectacular Cathedral of Christ the Savior. This church was originally built in the 1800s over a period of 44 years to celebrate the victory over Napoleon in the War of 1812. It was blown up by the Bolsheviks in 1931 and plans were to replace it with a huge building and statue of Lenin. World War II intervened and the building and statue were never built. For a period of time the site was occupied by a public swimming pool. In 1995 construction began on the present structure and it took just 5 years to complete. It is now the central headquarters of the Russian Orthodox church. The evening of the first day was an evening of song and dance entertainment with songs and dancing representing the participating nations.

On the second day we visited the Central Museum of the Great Patriotic War and witnessed a precision drill performance by an elite unit and band before entering the museum for a tour. This large and impressive memorial dedicated to the memory of World War II is also new in that its construction began in 1996. Within it in the Hall of Honor room are inscribed on the walls the names of all Heroes of the Soviet Union from World War II. Also recorded here in books and in a computer data base are all 27 million names of the Soviet people who died in World War II. In a large exhibition hall was a special exhibit celebrating the 100 year history of the Russian submarine fleet. As part of this exhibit were 111 scale models of Russian submarine designs, part of the personal collection of Andrey

Artyushin, a wealthy Moscow businessman. Andrey's collection has a scale model of every Russian submarine design ever built.



This is his model of a Project 641 (NATO "Foxtrot") diesel-electric submarine. A total of 60 Foxtrot class submarines were built for the Soviet Navy between 1958 and 1983 and two of these are museum boats in California at this time.

On our last day in Moscow, we attended the dedication ceremony and grand opening of a new submarine museum consisting of the Project 641B (NATO "Tango") diesel-electric submarine B-369. Those attending the 43rd International Submariner Congress were, in fact, the first visitors to tour this museum.

To give you some idea of how unique this trip was, this is the way we traveled from one event to the next in Moscow. We traveled in a



convoy of six buses with a police escort and with retired Fleet Admiral Chernavin in the lead car. Here we are headed along the Kremlin wall with the Moscow River on the left, headed for the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in the distance. This photograph was taken through the front window of our bus which was the first in line. Here the traffic is relatively light compared to most of our trips between events.

I showed slides of my trip to Moscow and St. Petersburg following the Groton Motor Inn dinner the night before the Groton Picnic. For those who did not make this event, many of the slides are now on line on my web site and I have put a link on the home page of the

web site for International Submariners Association/USA which I do as webmaster. Its URL is: <http://www.isausa.org> for those who may be interested. I showed these same slides just prior to the June 5th Groton Base meeting.

Following the Moscow event, an International Submariners Meeting was held at St. Petersburg, Russian Federation from May 26 – 28. This was organized by the St. Petersburg Submariners Club. Most but not all who attended the Moscow event also attended the St. Petersburg event as well.

Events of the first day in St. Petersburg consisted of a river cruise to Kronstadt and luncheon aboard a catamaran river cruise ship.

May 27th, our second day in St. Petersburg, was the birthday of the city. We started the day with a tour of the Central Naval Museum followed by a tour of the cruiser “Aurora”, then had lunch with the cadets at the Nakimov Naval Academy across the street from the “Aurora”. In the evening we took a dinner cruise on the Neva River and watched the fireworks display, celebrating the city’s birthday.

On the final day of the program at St. Petersburg we were taken to the cemetery where the memorial to the “Kursk” is located and we witnessed a special memorial service there. This memorial includes the final resting place of 32 of the 118 men lost on “Kursk” when it sank on August 12, 2000. This was followed by a visit to the St. Nicholas Cathedral for a memorial service to lost submariners.

Many have asked me how I found out about the Moscow and St. Petersburg events and what future events like this are planned. As a Life Member of the International Submariners Association/USA, I receive information about these Congresses by email and from our Secretary/Treasurer, Fred Wagner. Annual membership dues for the ISA/USA are \$5.00 and Life Memberships are available for \$25.00.

Next year’s International Submariners Congress is scheduled for Cherbourg, France from September 7 – 9, 2007 with optional trips to Mont St Michel, the Normandy beaches and Paris following the formal, scheduled congress. Details as available will be published on <http://www.isausa.org>, the official web site of the International Submariners Association/USA.

Book Review: “Silent Steel” by Stephen Johnson

Review by Ken Johnson

This book is a painstakingly researched account of the last days of the USS Scorpion. While the author reaches no definite conclusion as to how the Scorpion was lost, he does explore in detail several theories and pretty much leaves it up to the reader to decide.

The author conducted extensive interviews with family members and former Scorpion crew members. He also was very sensitive about publishing the book unless the family members approved. The result is a book which is an excellent tribute to the 99 men lost on Scorpion in 1968 and a snapshot view of life aboard a first line fast attack SSN in the 1960’s.



I had the pleasure of meeting the author during a book signing at the Submarine Force Library and Museum and to chat with him during a visit he made to the Museum the day before the book signing when I was on docent duty there. I was very impressed with the sincerity and concern for the feelings of family members which he showed in writing this book. If you like this book, let the author know. He is interested in hearing from readers.

Submarine Force Museum Docent Duty

By Ken Johnson

I began doing two days a month docent duty at the Submarine Force Museum in Groton back in March. This has been an interesting and very rewarding experience and an opportunity to meet many of the people who visit the Museum and to help them learn about the “silent service” and its contribution to the defense of our country. It is also an opportunity to do some USSVI and Naval Submarine League membership recruiting for those who may not be familiar with the benefits of membership in these organizations.

At this time, docent coverage has been extended to four days a week, Friday through Monday, and docent “watches” are four hours each, usually shared by two docents. I have found chatting with my fellow docents while on “watch” to be as interesting as meeting the public.

There is a note pad there for use by docents in making suggestions as to how the Museum can improve. In response to a suggestion that was made by one of the docents, for example, I made up a short “scavenger hunt” with pictures of different things in the Museum and questions that kids could fill out and learn a little history.

If you live in the Groton area and are interested in giving it a try, you can contact Gary Schmidt who is the person who does the docent scheduling. Gary’s email address is: c560cpt@aol.com.

If you feel you don’t know enough about the museum to be a docent there, you needn’t worry. They have published an excellent “Docent Manual” which tells you just about everything you need to know.

Sailors Rest Your Oars

One of the saddest parts of doing the newsletter is always the listing of those shipmates who have departed on “eternal patrol” since the last issue. Since the last newsletter we have learned of the loss of the following shipmates:

Herb Cherrier, CO 66-68 - March 29, 2006

Bill Whitelaw, LT(jg) 54-56 – April 8, 2006

Peter Baggs, QMSN 58-60 - June 1, 2006

We extend our deepest sympathy to the families and friends of our departed shipmates.

*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.*

(Please see the special tribute to Captain Cherrier on page 6 of this newsletter.)

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

June 2006 Issue



Lt. Ernie Plantz Receives Bronze Star

By Ken Johnson

On Friday, June 30, 2006 I had the pleasure of attending a Basic Enlisted Submarine School graduation ceremony and to see Ernie Plantz properly be awarded the Bronze Star he earned in World War II as a member of the crew of USS Perch..



Here Ernie and his wife, Caroline inspect the certificate after it was awarded to him by Admiral Kinney who was the speaker at the graduation ceremony. Seated with Ernie and Caroline were fifteen other members of his family who also attended the ceremony.

In the audience also were 5 or 6 other World War II submarine veterans including Carl Bryson, last living USS Squalus survivor and several members of USSVI Groton Base.

I am very familiar with Ernie's story as he was the first oral history interview I did for submission to the Library of Congress Veterans Oral History Project when I visited him at his home in Gales Ferry last October. Ernie spent 40 months as a Japanese POW after the crew of Perch surrendered and very nearly died in captivity due to the combined effects of dysentery and pneumonia.

In 1997 he was unceremoniously mailed his Bronze Star award. The Navy finally did it properly on June 30, 2006. It was specially appropriate for this to have been done at a Submarine School graduation ceremony since Ernie's last tour of duty was as head of the Electrical Department at the Submarine School.

In November 2005, Ernie was selected as one of 10 veterans to be inducted into the Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame. This was the first group to be selected for this honor and a ceremony was held at the Connecticut State House on Veterans Day. Selection for this honor is based on community service after service in the military and the group included former President George Bush who is a native of Connecticut. Ernie was very active in the Lions Club as well as various local Ledyard town government activities since his retirement from the Navy.

Somebody Older than Lamar!

By Ken Johnson



One of the members of the U. S. delegation in Moscow and St. Petersburg was a 95 year old submarine veteran, "Panama Jack" Stephenson. He was the "star" of the U. S. delegation and all who met him and learned his age were amazed by his stamina. Jack walked just about everywhere we went, but wore slippers on his feet instead of shoes most places to prevent his feet from swelling.

Jack Stephenson joined the U. S. Navy in 1934 and his first rate was SailMaker 3rd Class. In 1937 Jack had to change his rate to Boatswain's Mate when the Navy abolished the rate of SailMaker. He qualified in submarines in 1939 and served as COB on three boats during World War II, making a total of eleven war patrols, four in the Atlantic and seven in the Pacific.

I spent much time with Jack during both the Moscow and the St. Petersburg events and got to hear a few of his stories. One story for example, was when Jack told me he knew Hyman Rickover, but not because he was part of the nuclear power program. Jack knew Rickover as his Commanding Officer on the USS Finch (AM-9) on station in China in 1937!

Unfortunately, I was not able to video tape an interview with him on this trip because I had forgotten to bring the power supply cable for my camcorder and could not recharge the batteries once they were depleted.

Apparently Jack still drives. In fact, I learned since returning that Jack recently bought a new Kia with a 100,000 mile, or 10 year warranty and intends to outlive the warranty. He has outlived two wives and worn out four pacemakers so far.

I have invited Jack to our reunion in Charleston this October. He lives in Myrtle Beach, SC which is only about 110 miles from Charleston. I hope to video tape an oral history interview with him and will be sure I am prepared. I am sure he has plenty of stories left to tell because I have only heard a few of them.



The 50's

June 2006 Issue



Cruise Missile Development During the '50s

By Ken Johnson

The 1950's saw both the United States and Soviet Union working on development of a cruise missile that could be launched from a submarine. The U. S. Navy began experiments in February 1947 with an adaptation of the German V-1 design known as the Loon was successfully launched from the USS CUSK(SS 348). The flying bomb was stored in a watertight hanger on the deck of the submarine, and assembled and launched by solid rocket boosters while the submarine was on the surface. It was tracked by radar and controlled by radio.



While the tests with the Loon missile proved that a cruise missile could be launched from a surfaced submarine, the Loon proved not to be a viable design. Chance-Vought Aircraft developed a design which proved more serviceable and design became known as the Regulus. USS Tunny (SS 282) was converted to carry the Regulus missile, she was reclassified SSG-282 and served as a Regulus-missile submarine for nearly 12 years. Regulus I was first launched at sea in March 1953 by the converted USS Tunny (SSG-282), which could house two of them in a pressurized hangar. The missile boasted a range of about 500 nm.

Conversion of a WW II Fleet boat to a guided missile submarine (SSG) consisted of deck-mounting a large, pressurized, cylindrical hangars, some 15 feet in diameter, just abaft the sail, with a collapsible ramp extending aft. The hangar could accommodate two Regulus I missiles in a rotating ring arrangement. The Regulus missiles were checked out with the submarine was still submerged by entering the hangar through an access trunk, but launching required the submarine to surface and manhandle the weapon onto the rails before it could be fired. The boat would then have to remain at least at periscope depth to guide the missile to the radar horizon and interim guidance could be provided.

In the late '50s three submarines were built specifically designed to carry the Regulus missile in a large hangar built into the forward deck. These were the USS Grayback (SSG 574), USS Growler

(SSG 577) and the nuclear submarine USS Halibut (SSGN 587). These were built and equipped to carry the Regulus I and a more advanced version, the Regulus II. The U. S. Navy's Regulus missile patrols ended in 1964 at about the same time that the Regulus II was ready for deployment.



The USS Growler, shown above, is now a part of the Intrepid Air and Sea Museum in New York City.

The Soviet Navy also was busy during the '50s developing cruise missiles. Some of their earliest submarines adapted to launch cruise missiles were variations of the Whiskey class submarines. Between 1958 and 1960 six Whiskey class submarines were converted to what became known as the "Whiskey twin cylinder" configuration shown here. One of these, the "S-80", sank in January 1961 while snorkeling in the Barents Sea as a result of icing of the snorkel head valve and its subsequent failure to close with the loss of all 68 aboard. (This boat was salvaged in 1969 and an investigation determined the reason for its loss.)



Later Whiskey class variants known as "Long Bin" modifications involved elongation of the sail with the capability of carrying four missiles stored at an angle permitting direct launch from the tubes. Unlike the Regulus submarines, the Russian launch system did not require handling of the missiles on deck prior to launch. Six of the "Long Bin" variants were built.



The 60's

June 2006 Issue



Another Commanding Officer Departs on Eternal Patrol

Herbert Alvado Cherrier II died on Wednesday, March 29, 2006 at Indian River Memorial Hospital in Vero Beach, Florida. He was born February 20, 1928 in Brooklyn, New York and moved to Vero Beach in 1983. Herb Cherrier served as Commanding Officer of USS Sea Owl from June 1966 to June 1968.



Captain Cherrier served 32 years in the United States Navy. He was a veteran of the Korean War and Division Commander of a fleet of submarines at the Submarine Base in New London, Connecticut. He also served as Director of the Center for War Gaming at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. Captain Cherrier is survived by his wife of 54 years, Elizabeth, and their 4 children, Kathleen Cherrier

of Umatilla, Florida; Linda Geer of Willimantic, Connecticut; Herbert Cherrier III of Mansfield Center, Connecticut and Jennifer Cherrier of Tallahassee, Florida. He is also survived by his brother Richard Sanders of Barefoot Bay, Florida; eleven grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. A Memorial Mass was held at St. Helen's Church in Vero Beach on Friday, March 31, 2006.

Sea Owl Invades Kremlin

By Ken Johnson



The USS Sea Owl was well represented at the 43rd International Submariners Congress in Moscow and at the informal International Submariners Meeting in St. Petersburg that followed. Here are Don Gregg (QM2 62-64) and his wife, Betty, myself and Doug Jensen (MM 62-64) shown in the Moscow Kremlin in front of the Tsar's Cannon.

Later aboard the river cruise catamaran boat, "Szafir", on our first day in St. Petersburg, my shipmates helped me celebrate my 67th birthday while enroute to Kronstadt for a brief tour.



No, I didn't drink ALL of those shots of hot pepper vodka in front of me. I had help, especially from Doug Jensen.

Later we toured the Central Naval Museum and the historic cruiser, "Aurora", which is a part of this museum.



Here shipmate Doug Jensen and "Panama Jack" Stephenson stand by the "Aurora" after our tour.

Sea Owl was certainly well represented in both Moscow and St. Petersburg during this event. No other submarine could claim to have three shipmates attending who actually served together while on active duty. While at times it seemed that getting Visas for this trip was a hassle, I know we all enjoyed the trip very much and the opportunity to meet submariners who we once faced as adversaries as well as others who we operated with as allies. We also acquired a taste for vodka while we joined our hosts in celebrating the 100th anniversary of their submarine fleet.