



# Hooter Hilites



A Publication of the USS Sea Owl Association  
Web Site: <http://home.earthlink.net/~purtellr/index.html>

We still give a hoot!  
September 2003 Issue

## President's Message

Shipmates & 1st Mates,

Like the return of the swallows to Capistrano, we are again getting ready to gather for another reunion. This will be the Sea Owl Association's 5<sup>th</sup> reunion since forming as an Association in Hagerstown, MD, in 1998. The dates for this reunion are October 7<sup>th</sup> thru the 12<sup>th</sup>, 2003. By the time you receive this Newsletter, most everyone who is going to attend will have sent in his registration form. It is only too late to attend these reunions if you allow them to pass without being a part of the reunion itself. If you're sitting on the fence about attending, get off the fence and come to Mobile, Alabama, to join your shipmates. You won't regret it!

## Late Change in Mobile:

One change pertaining to the reunion is the Battleship Park is now going to charge each person for admission. This is a late change, since they originally told us that they would offer us FREE admission. Your Association officers have discussed this late change and have decided that the Sea Owl Association will still pick up the price for admission to the park plus the cost of the buffet picnic on Friday, October 10<sup>th</sup>, for all Sea Owl sailors and 1<sup>st</sup> mates. The admission tickets are good for the entire week that we will be there, plus you can enter the park as many times each day as you like. These tickets will be available from Tom Gilbert, Tom Moniz, John Leers or myself. Bill Brinkman will take care of getting tickets to the Sea Poacher sailors attending.

## Dues

Those shipmates that pay dues each year, your dues are due on November 1<sup>st</sup>. One way that I have recommended to some on remembering when to send in dues is to pay dues on Oct 31<sup>st</sup> or Halloween. John Leers has now made memberships cards that will show when you are paid up through. Some shipmates that are paid up more than 1 year will receive your membership cards with this Newsletter. Shipmates that mail your dues to John Leers will receive your membership cards by return mail from John.

Lifetime Memberships are the easiest way to pay dues. One deck gets it done for life. For example, \$10.00 per year for X number of years (3 years = \$30.00); \$100.00 for Lifetime Membership. I know and understand that there are a few shipmates that have paid Lifetime Memberships that are still waiting for your Lifetime Membership Certificates. Shipmates, I know that John Leers is working on these; he will get them out to you soon.

## Warren Hall's Memorial Service:

I know that Ken is covering this on the 40's page. But I just want to mention what a great honor it was for Ken & I to be a part of his memorial service. This Newsletter is being sent to Capt. Half's family.

*Douglas, Carole & Louise: Thank you!!!*

## Association Officers:

Shipmates, if you would like to take a more active role in the Sea Owl Association, the reunion is where you should be. We did not vote for officers at last year's reunion because there were no new candidates. If you would like to become an active member in this Association, officers are elected at the reunions, providing that there are shipmates interested in taking a position. If you think you can take a position in the Association, let's hear from you.

## From the Editor

Recently I have ordered a supply of 4 x 6 photo insert cards and have begun using the Walmart Photo Center on line to make 4 x 6 photo prints from digital files uploaded to their site. The cards come from Winthrop-Atkins Co. in Middleboro, MA and I have them in cream, chalk blue and willow green with matching envelopes. By ordering the cards in a quantity of 500+ and ordering prints from the Walmart Photo Center, I am able to offer these cards at \$1.00 each. So far, I am offering sets of five cards with photos of the National Submarine Memorial (East) and photos of the Massachusetts Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Worcester, MA in chalk blue and willow green colors respectively at \$1.50 each. The extra \$.50 will go to a fund for the maintenance of these memorials. I plan by the Mobile reunion to have sets of these with Sea Owl as the subject matter as well. I will also bring a supply of the National Submarine Memorial (East) cards with me for those wishing to purchase them there. For those not attending the reunion, I have included a description of the National Submarine Memorial (East) cards elsewhere in this newsletter along with information on how to order them by mail. Those attending the Mobile reunion can save themselves the postage and handling charge. Those who may wish to purchase cards and envelopes without photo inserts for personal use may do so at my cost per card.

Over the past several weeks computer viruses and worms seemed to have been running wild. Each day my e-mail box seems to contain several notices of undeliverable e-mails to addresses I never heard of referring to e-mails I never sent. These viruses and worms, it seems, can hijack your e-mail address from mailboxes on other computers and send out the e-mails and attachments which contain the virus or worm. Hopefully, this latest one will die out soon. If not, I may just have to discontinue my current e-mail address and start using the alternate address indicated below, [OakhamGraphics@aol.com](mailto:OakhamGraphics@aol.com). My sincere sympathy to anyone whose computer may have become infected by this latest malicious worm or virus. I hope they throw the book at the person responsible for spreading it.

Please send "Hooter Hilites" suggestions, comments, etc. to:

Ken Johnson  
P.O. Box 561  
Oakham, MA 01068  
e-Mail: [JAMGraphic@aol.com](mailto:JAMGraphic@aol.com) or [OakhamGraphics@aol.com](mailto:OakhamGraphics@aol.com)

## **Barracuda 945**

By Patrick Robinson  
Book review by Ken Johnson

This book is the latest by Patrick Robinson. Starting out with his “Nimitz Class”, I have read all of the submarine books by Patrick Robinson, “Kilo Class”; “H.M.S. Unseen”; “The Shark Mutiny” and “U.S.S. Seawolf”. If you are unfamiliar with Patrick Robinson’s books, you are missing out on one of the best submarine adventure writers currently publishing.

Through the first hundred or so pages of Barracuda 945 you start to wonder what it has to do with submarines. Just what does a former British SAS officer, Major Ray Kerman, turned Islamic terrorist and Hamas general, Ravi Rashood, have to do with a Russian nuclear submarine? We follow him through a series of brilliantly executed missions in his new role seemingly far removed from anything to do with submarines. Then the plot evolves as he meets with Iranian Navy officials and high government officials. The bold plan he proposes involves Iran purchasing two Soviet nuclear submarines indirectly through China and using them to raid West Coast U. S. targets. The cash starved Russian Navy and Chinese government agree to terms on not one but two Sierra I submarines, idle due to lack of the funds to operate them. The clandestine plan is to exploit the vulnerability of the “Great Satan” by cruise missile attack from a covert nuclear submarine, disrupt the flow of oil to the West Coast from Alaska and make the U. S. dependent on newly negotiated oil contracts between the China, Iran and Saudi Arabia. I am not going to give away the details. I do not want to spoil the plot for you.

General Rashood’s rival is a man you will know if you have read the other Patrick Robinson novels mentioned above, tough National Security Advisor Vadm Arnold Morgan. Both manage to survive to face each other again in some future confrontation though you may find General Rashood’s escape in this book a bit of a stretch.

As with his earlier books, and with some of Clancy’s novels, the plot of this book is frighteningly believable. A nuclear, cruise missile armed submarine in the hands of Islamic terrorists would truly be a menace. As the recent blackout of much of the East Coast and the disruption of a pipeline in Arizona clearly shows, such events cause serious economic disruption to a highly mechanized and networked society such as ours.

As with his other novels, Robinson has used British Admiral Sir John Woodward, a former Royal Navy SSN CO and Flag Officer (Submarines) as a technical advisor. This is a good read and I for one would love to see one of his Robinson’s books made into a motion picture soon.

### **Galley Stirrings**

*(In the spirit of our upcoming reunion in Mobile, Alabama, we looked on the Internet for a representative recipe to offer this month and found following. This is a featured recipe of the Bay Breeze Bed & Breakfast in Fairhope, Alabama. It is very good!)*

### **Lower Alabama Breakfast Pie**

3 eggs  
½ cup milk  
½ teaspoon salt  
pepper to taste  
3 cups frozen shredded potatoes  
5 tablespoons melted butter  
1 cup finely chopped cooked ham  
1 packed cup shredded sharp cheese  
½ cup finely chopped onions

½ cup chopped green peppers  
¼ cup diced, drained pimento

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F.

Thaw potatoes between layers of paper towels to remove excess moisture. Press potatoes into bottom and up the sides of an ungreased 9 inch pie plate and drizzle with melted butter.

Bake this crust for 25 minutes or until lightly browned and set aside to cool. Reduce oven temperature to 375.

Mix together the eggs, milk, salt and pepper. In the crust, layer from the bottom up the ham, onion, peppers, pimento and cheese. Cover with the egg/milk mixture. Bake for 35–40 minutes or until set. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving.

### **Perch Revisited**

by Ken Johnson

In the last issue I included an article about the loss of the USS Perch for which your Sea Owl Association sponsored a lost boat brick for the Avery Point Lighthouse Society. It seems that this article contained a few inaccurate statements which I would like to correct here. In this article, I stated that Warren I. Atkeison, TM2 was among the Perch crew members who did not survive the war and imprisonment by the Japanese during the war. This is not correct. Shortly after publication I received an e-mail from a Bill Atkeison of Semmes, Alabama stating the following: “Warren Ingram Atkeison is my father’s brother. Warren is incorrectly listed as Killed in Captivity in the dust-up with the Japanese after his Boat, *USS Perch (SS176)*, was sunk.

Warren was liberated from a Japanese prison/mine at Makassar, island of Sulawesi (Celebes Islands), Indonesia, in August, 1945. After recuperating from this ordeal, Warren went on to complete 22 years in the Navy retiring as Chief Torpedomans Mate. He lived in Miami and Orlando, FL, then moved to Hot Springs Arkansas where he lived for the last twenty years of his life before passing away at home on March 27, 2001.

He was a life member of Fleet Reserve Assn and life member of American Ex-Prisoners of War.”

In response I sent Bill the following, “My information came from a NAVPERS publication from 1949 about U. S. submarine losses in WW II. There are other sources as well on the Internet that list him as having died as a POW, possibly from the same source, which seemed to confirm the information. Next time I am in Groton, CT I will check the “Wall of Honor” at the National Submarine Memorial (East) to see if he is listed there as well.

After once reading a newspaper article, I believe Mark Twain once said something like, “Reports of my death are greatly exaggerated.” It just goes to show, you can’t believe everything you read.”

(Warren Atkeison is NOT listed on the “Wall of Honor” at Groton.) After sending copies of the newsletter to known, living survivors of the Perch, I received a letter from Turk Turner, one of a handful of still living Perch survivors.

Turk confirmed that Charles N. Brown, MM1; Philip J. Dewes, PhM; Houston E. Edwards, EMC; Frank E. McCreary, MM1 and Robert A. Wilson, FC1 died in a Japanese prison camp. In addition, Turk listed A. K. Newsome, CMM as a sixth crewman who died in prison camp. Turk also confirmed that the majority of Perch survivors were held at Makassar, Celebes Dutch East Indies.

John Greco, TM1 and Robert W. Osborne, S1, mentioned in the last newsletter as having died in prison, apparently survived the war as well. I am glad to have the opportunity to set the record straight.

## Mobile Reunion, October 7-12, 2003

For those of you who may not have signed on for the Mobile reunion, as Roy said earlier, it is not too late. To quote Yogi Berra, "It's not over until it's over".

For those who do attend the Mobile reunion, be sure and visit the Lower Alabama Vietnam Veterans Memorial located right there in Battleship Park. Bill Atkeison was very instrumental in its design and construction as were other members of his Vietnam veterans organization. From the pictures he has sent, it is quite an impressive site. We have invited Bill to attend our reunion activities and look forward to seeing him at Mobile.

## National Submarine Memorial (East) Cards

These are photo insert cards with selected 4 x 6 inch photos of the National Submarine Memorial (East) at Groton, CT. The cards are light blue and come with matching envelopes. Each card has a brief description of the photo on the back. The inside of the card is blank. The photos are by Ken Johnson, your Hooter Hilites editor and member of the US Submarine Veterans Groton Base.



These cards are offered by Ken dba Oakham Graphics at \$7.50 per set of 5 cards with 1 card of each view. For each card sold, \$.50 (\$2.50 for each set of 5 cards) is contributed to the USSVI Groton Base into a fund for maintaining this memorial or to other submarine related causes. This memorial honors the 52 U. S. Navy submarines lost during World War II and the 3,617 submariners still on "eternal patrol" who served aboard them

during World War II.

You may order these cards by e-mail or snail mail. Please allow 10 days for delivery. If ordering for shipment by mail, please add \$1.50 for postage and handling. Send orders to:

Oakham Graphics  
P.O. Box 561  
Oakham, MA 01068  
or you may order by e-mail from [OakhamGraphics@aol.com](mailto:OakhamGraphics@aol.com)

## USS Providence Day

By Ken Johnson

On Saturday, 6 September I had the great pleasure of assisting in a special day at the Russian Sub Museum in Providence to honor a very special group of modern submariners, the crew of the present USS Providence (SSN 719). This Los Angeles Class attack sub is just the latest in a series of Navy ships named USS Providence. It began with the Revolutionary War sloop Providence, a replica of which, shown here, sails the Narragansett Bay today. Representatives of the WW II vintage Navy cruiser, Providence were also represented at the ceremony.



The brow canvas of the city's present day namesake was prominently displayed on the pier at Collier Point Park in front of this relic of the Cold War. It reads, "I wish to have no connection with any ship that does not sail fast for I intend to go in harm's way". These are the words of John

Paul Jones as once Commanding Officer of the sloop Providence.

In terms of the modern Navy, these words are particularly applicable to the SSN 719 whose mission is to "go in harm's way" in defense of our nation. In addition to its recent participation in Operation Iraqi Freedom, the USS Providence was among the first to launch a salvo of Tomahawk cruise missiles against Afghanistan in October 2001 in retaliation for the attacks of September 11, 2001.

It was the USS Providence that hosted New London Day reporter, Bob Hamilton in March when he rode her during Operation Iraqi



Freedom and who later wrote an excellent article in the New London Day about the experience. (Reprints of this article were available and I managed to secure several.)

This day was an opportunity for the city to honor the crew and family members with a special ceremony. Shown here is the Mayor presenting the keys to the city to Cdr Jonathan Kan, CO of the USS Providence, with the Providence COB looking on.

For the crew members of a modern, Tomahawk cruise missile armed nuclear submarine, the Russian Juliett cruise missile sub must have seemed very primitive. For me, to have a chance to meet so many of the crew of one of our latest and most modern attack submarines was a great honor.

After sundown, Providence put on one of its spectacular Waterfire shows. It was a picture perfect ending to a picture perfect day. Having been born in Providence and attended high school and college there in the late '50s and early '60s, I am amazed in the transformation this now beautiful city has made in recent years.

## Sailors Rest Your Oars

We have learned since the last newsletter of the passing of these shipmates:

Warren Hall, CDR - CO 45-48 - June 28  
Herman (Butch) Ludwig, MM 45-46 - July 15

We extend our deepest sympathy to family and friends of these our departed shipmates. In honor of our last World War II Commanding Officer, Warren Hall, the '40s page of this newsletter is dedicated to his memory.

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### Sea Owl Association Officers are:

**President** - Roy Purtell, 4 Garden Court, Troy, NY 12180-1307, (518) 272-8614, e-mail [purtellr@earthlink.net](mailto:purtellr@earthlink.net)

**Vice-President/Historian** - Tom Moniz, 8765 Carlisle Ave., Sacramento, CA 95828, (916) 682-9306, e-mail [tmoniz@lanset.com](mailto:tmoniz@lanset.com)

**Secretary/Treasurer** - John Leers, 1453 Marty Drive, Reynoldsburg, OH 43068 - 2425, (614) 866-3707, e-mail [John405@aol.com](mailto:John405@aol.com)

**Storekeeper** - Ed Welch, 33 Waco Court, Groton, CT 06340-4719, (860) 446-9104, e-mail [erwelch@comcast.net](mailto:erwelch@comcast.net)

**Newsletter Editor** - Ken Johnson, P.O. Box 561, Oakham, MA 01068 (508) 882-3738, e-mail [JAMGraphic@aol.com](mailto:JAMGraphic@aol.com) or [OakhamGraphics@aol.com](mailto:OakhamGraphics@aol.com)



# The 40's

September 2003 Issue



## Captain Warren Collamore Hall

By Ken Johnson

On June 28, 2003 Capt Warren Hall departed on "eternal patrol" from his last port in Merced, California. Roy and I were honored to attend a memorial service for family and friends of Capt Hall in Buffalo, NY on August 2<sup>nd</sup>. Afterward we got to meet his son and two daughters and others who knew him. This service was followed on Monday, August 4<sup>th</sup> with a burial service at the U. S. Naval Academy in Annapolis.



Capt Hall was Sea Owl's second commanding officer and led her on her third war patrol in 1945. He was also the longest serving of all Sea Owl CO's, having served in this capacity from April 1945 to March 1948.

Warren Hall came to Sea Owl as a well seasoned war patrol veteran, having first served aboard S-18, Sunfish and Spot. Capt Hall served as Executive Officer of Spot. Sea Owl's

third war patrol was Capt Hall's eleventh and he was awarded the Legion of Merit for it. In addition to the Legion of Merit, Capt Hall was awarded two Silver Stars and two Bronze Stars for wartime service.

Those who have viewed the video tape excerpts of films made during the Sea Owl's third war patrol have seen examples of the action and operations of Sea Owl under his command. Through this we have been able to share some of the action including the rescue of six downed Navy aviators or "zoomies". We have not been able to locate or get information about the aviators rescued by Sea Owl during this patrol. We are pretty sure that none went on to become President of the United States or father of a President, but whatever they accomplished later in their lives, they certainly owed a debt of gratitude to Capt Hall and the crew of Sea Owl.

On his departure from Sea Owl in 1948, Capt Hall assumed duties as Inspector-Instructor Naval Reserve activities in San Pedro, CA followed by two years as Submarine Operations Officer on the ASW staff of Carrier Division 17.

In 1953 - 54 he served as Executive Officer and Deputy Director of the Office of Naval Research Special Devices Center. Among other

accomplishments, he planned, negotiated and developed a \$3-1/2 million Universal Submarine Trainer at the Submarine School in New London.

In 1955 Capt Hall served as Executive officer of the cruiser, Helena. Later he commanded the ammunition ship USS Nitro.

From 1956 to 1958 as Chief of Staff at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, he was instrumental in redesigning the waterfront and organizing the Academy's "fleet" of sailing vessels. An avid sailing enthusiast, while at the Naval Academy he trained midshipmen in the art of sailing and also participated in racing the numerous classes of sailing craft in the Academy sailing fleet.

From 1960 - 62 as Assistant Chief of Staff, Service Force, Atlantic, Capt Hall contributed in great measure to improvements in the readiness of this command. Much of his post-submarine duty career was devoted to improving the logistic support for the operating forces.

Capt Hall's last duty assignment was as Commanding Officer and General Manager of the U. S. Naval Weapons Station at Seal Beach, CA. He served in this capacity from 1962 to 1966.

Capt Hall retired from active duty in August 1966 after along and distinguished career. Following his retirement from the Navy, Capt Hall went on to work as an Industrial Engineer for North American Rockwell in support of the research submersible Beaver. In 1969 he formed his own diving services company. From 1970 to 1971 he was President of the American Electric Car Company. From 1972 to 1974 he formed a diving partnership with several former Navy divers and from 1975 to 1977 was a Marine Consultant for the State of California involved with coastal boundary litigation.

Over the years, Capt Hall was also active in the Boy Scouts of America and United Way as well as other service activities. Truly he led an active and rewarding life.

Capt Hall is survived by two daughters, Carole Hall Whitehill and Louise Kriner, and a son, Douglas.

Finally, representing those who served under him as Commanding Officer, these words came from Shipmate Don Hewett, EM 45-46. "As a junior enlisted man and lookout on the Sea Owl during the last months of WW II, I well remember the long hours that Capt Hall spent on the bridge or in the conning tower. He always acted in a bold and confident manner even in trying times. I remember two situations especially. One where we started sighting floating mines late in the evening and another when one of our aircraft was starting a bombing run on us. In both situations he acted calmly. Under Capt Hall we inflicted damage on the Japs as well as the rescue of six downed American airmen. Needless to say he brought us home. May he rest in peace."

We are sure that many other shipmates who served with him share our respect for our last remaining wartime CO.



# The 50's

September 2003 Issue



## Sonar and ASW During the '50s

By Howland Owl

*Howland Owl was allegedly a Sonarman who served aboard the Sea Owl during the 50's. We welcome his contribution and look forward to more in future issues.*

With the advent of submarine warfare and its impact on Allied forces and supply lines in WWII, the need for timely detection of undersea threats was made a high priority in Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) during the post-war period. As technology of the time progressed, it was recognized that shore-based monitoring stations were the answer to the problem since they could be made basically impervious to destruction, foul weather, and ambient self-generated noise.

The 50s and 60s witnessed the birth, early childhood, development, and growth of undersea surveillance, originally called the Sound Surveillance System (SOSUS). To understand how SOSUS works requires an understanding of what affects the velocity of sound in seawater. The speed of sound increases with temperature and pressure in water. Water temperature decreases with depth as water pressure increases. This creates a channel at between 800 and 1300 meters deep where sound waves tend to be focused and travel long distances. This channel is sometimes referred to as the Sound Fixing And Ranging (SOFAR) channel. SOSUS provided deep-water long-range detection capability by locating listening arrays in this channel and using this phenomenon. SOSUS enjoyed tremendous success during the Cold War tracking submarines by their faint acoustic signals. Low frequency sound, such as that generated by snorkeling submarines, travels for long distances in seawater. Sea mammals such as whales also generate low frequency sounds and use the SOFAR channel to communicate over great distances.

SOSUS consists of high-gain long fixed arrays in the deep ocean basins. Starting in the early 1950s, the Atlantic and Pacific oceans were put under the vigilance of SOSUS, with long acoustic sensors (hydrophones) installed across the ocean bottom at key locations. Over the years, SOSUS has transitioned from single-beam paper displays to computer-based workstations for acoustic data analysis. By the end of FY 1998, the Shore Signal Information Processing Segment (SSIPS) and Surveillance Direction System (SDS) had been installed at all shore facilities, giving SOSUS a common equipment configuration and significantly reducing system infrastructure support costs.

With the development of quieter submarines and counter-tactics to evade SOSUS, newer technologies have been implemented over the years to "keep up with the threat". Faster processors, higher capacity storage devices, and "cleaner code" has enabled the advancement of the art of locating undersea threats. Currently, the Integrated Undersea Surveillance System (IUSS) uses these advancements in the Fixed Surveillance System (FSS), Fixed Distributed System (FDS), and the Advanced Deployable System (ADS).

Shore based SOSUS Arrays have played a lesser role in ASW in recent years. In the event of a resurgence in the global submarine threat, however, this worldwide network of fixed undersea systems such as the Sound Surveillance System (SOSUS) are a critical asset. In recent years SOSUS has also been a boon to marine biologists as recorded sounds of marine life from the SOSUS network became available for their study.

Along with the development of shore based listening stations, the development of the submarine as a mobile platform to detect and attack other submarines also evolved during the '50s. It was clear that in order to contain Soviet naval forces there was a great need to deploy picket lines of NATO submarines at certain "choke points" around the USSR. The Navy had asked EDO Corporation to analyze captured German sonar equipment from WW II. This analysis led to the development of the BQR-4 sonar in the late 1940's. Three small SSKs – Barracuda (SSK-1), Bass (SSK-2), and Bonita (SSK-3) – were built around the large BQR-4 array. These small SSKs were intended to be a standard design that could be mass produced in large numbers. SSK submarines were to lie in wait on enemy transit routes, listening for snorkeling Russian submarines and surface transits. The target's diesels would allow the SSK to detect their presence. In the event of hostilities, the American SSKs would ambush Soviet submarines leaving their ports, when they would be at their noisiest, snorkeling at high speed to make good the long distance. Listening with the submarine on battery, these arrays gave then unheard of detection ranges against snorkeling submarines. The phenomenon of convergence zones, a complex subject beyond the scope of this article, were a factor in this. Simply stated, convergence zones are areas where sound is refracted or bent back toward the surface, reflected back again, etc. The result is that every 30 miles or so passive, low frequency sound can be detected by sensitive sonar arrays.

But the SSKs were hampered by their slow speed and resulting inability to close a target quickly. Thus they were restricted to use in barrier patrols in conjunction with ASW aircraft. Further restricting their utility, the need to snorkel periodically limited their ability to operate in far-forward areas. As a result, only three were ever built. Starting with the USS Cavalla, BQR-4 sonar arrays began to be installed aboard regular fleet boats which were larger and had greater endurance and speed capability than the SSKs. In 1955 the USS Sea Owl, having earlier been given a Fleet Snorkel conversion, was chosen to receive the BQR-4 sonar and much of her operation during the late '50s were NATO barrier patrol exercises.

The BQR-4 sonar was essentially analog in nature and depended in great measure on the listening skill and training of a human operator. The advent of powerful, high speed computers in recent years sonar means much of the analysis is now performed by digital analysis of signals. Still while a modern day sonar operator has many more of these powerful tools to assist him in doing his job, there is still no substitute for a good set of ears, experience and training.



# The 60's

September 2003 Issue



## War Games

By Ken Johnson

A year ago when I began my Sunday duties as docent at the Russian Sub Museum in Providence, RI it occurred to me that in the Spring of 1965 Sea Owl participated in an exercise called CANUS SLAMEX in which we simulated an attack on the U. S. mainland by a submarine such as this Juliett class sub. This, as the first part of its name indicates, was a joint Canadian and U. S. Navy exercise. Our mission was to penetrate ASW defenses from 800 miles offshore and get within 100 miles of the coast where we were to surface and simulate the launch of cruise missiles.

I remember this exercise particularly vividly because I was on the bridge when we got caught. Rick Shannon was our Commanding Officer and he decided that we would run full on four on the surface at night without lights to try and get as far in toward our objective as possible in the shortest time. As Officer of the Deck, I had orders to monitor ECM signals and dive immediately if there was a risk of detection. All seemed to be going well until around 2300. We had been picking up intermittent, weak radar signals, but nothing that seemed to indicate we had been detected.

Suddenly from directly astern it seemed as though the sun had risen in the middle of the night! We were illuminated by a million plus candlepower searchlight of a Canadian Argus ASW aircraft which then passed directly overhead. We were caught!

## Trials of a Submarine Junior Officer

By Ken Johnson

On December 29, 1962 I reported aboard Sea Owl as an Ensign right out of Submarine School. Prior to this, my only sea time had been as a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class NROTC Midshipman aboard a destroyer for six weeks during the summer of 1958 and as a 1<sup>st</sup> Class NROTC Midshipman for six weeks aboard the USS Randolph, an ASW carrier, during the summer of 1960.

As is typically the case with junior officers, my first duty was as Commissary Officer, a job which was not very difficult because of men like Robert "Moose" Money, an excellent cook. Sea Owl was preparing at the time to depart on a Springboard exercise and would spend the best part of the winter in the warm Caribbean vs. the cold North Atlantic. I could certainly live with that prospect!

In the book, "Big Red", Douglas Waller writes that a junior officer reporting aboard a Trident submarine is referred to as a "Nub" or Non Useful Body. I don't recall ever being called a Nub, but I do recall a nickname of "The Tortoise" which, as I recall, came from a tendency to withdraw into my "shell" and wait until trouble went away (which it usually didn't).

As Commissary Officer, one of the first things you learn is that you need to prepare a weekly menu and submit it to the Captain via the XO. Once approved by the Captain, you need to stick to the menu and cannot change it without approval. Also, if the Captain wants

something on the menu, you really need to do whatever is necessary to, as Capt Picard would say, "make it so". On this particular Springboard trip, we would be carrying our Squadron Commander. Capt McKechnie wanted to impress him with the quality of our food on board by serving a special meal of Shrimp Curry with Baked Alaska for dessert. Okay, I didn't know if there was a submarine recipe card for either, but "Moose" rose to the challenge and he somehow managed to produce both. To this day I don't know how he managed to make Baked Alaska in a submarine galley, but he did.

Now, as you know, everyone aboard a submarine eats the same food. Some may eat it differently than others. This was evident when it came time to serve Shrimp Curry in the After Battery. Curry dishes are usually served with a variety of condiments, chopped egg, onion, something called chutney, etc. which are meant to be sprinkled over the curry dish. To say that Shrimp Curry was not a hit in the After Battery is an understatement. As I recall, it quickly became known by names like "Shrimp Dysentery" or even worse and the crew proceeded to make sandwiches out of the various condiments. As Commissary Officer, I am sure I was referred to by names probably best left forgotten. I almost felt that my life might be endangered by entering the Crew's Mess and it was many years before I would even go near any meal with curry in it. Today I enjoy it occasionally.

Sometimes those recipe cards can be a life saver, though even "Moose" could never come up with a recipe to make ration dense cabbage resemble something other than silage. I recall the time when we had Cottage Pudding for dessert. When the Steward set down a plate with white cake and chocolate sauce over it in front of the XO, Bob Mack, he "invited" me to join him in his stateroom to explain the unauthorized change in the menu. Fortunately, I was able to produce the recipe card. Another time I recall a Sunday in port when Baltimore Steak was on the menu and the Duty Officer invited a guest aboard for a steak dinner. Baltimore Steak happens to be liver and onions. Remember that when you go to Baltimore!

In addition to being the SLJO (S\*\*ty Little Jobs Officer), I also had titles like CMO (Coke Machine Officer) and MFVMO (Multi Flavor Vending Machine Officer). In those days, Sea Owl had a Coke machine in Hogan's Alley and I was responsible for keeping it filled with syrup, etc. I tried various flavors of syrups from time to time, thus the MFVMO title. I understand that after I left the Sea Owl in 1965 the machine was removed shortly thereafter. What the crew might have been mixing with the whatever came from this machine, I probably shouldn't ask. Most likely, however, it became a home for numerous roaches in time and needed to go.

Finally, we made a trip to Charlottown, Prince Edward Island in August of 1963. Capt McKechnie, on learning that I had spent 4 years in college on the NROTC Drill Team, had me organize a marching unit to participate in the parade. There is a picture of us in this parade on the Sea Owl web site. I am still amazed that everyone is in step! Later we "performed" again in Portland, ME.