

# The Klaxon

Newsletter of the Submarine Force Library and Museum Association

Groton, CT

Winter 2009

## "We're all ears"

### Oral History Collections at the Submarine Force Museum

This article was first run in the winter 2006 issue of the *Klaxon* and is reprinted here in an updated version. We are encouraging the recording of oral histories for posterity's sake. Cold Warriors do it now while your memory is fresh; in 50 years the world will be clamoring for clear histories of that important era.

One day a small package arrived at the Museum addressed to the attention of the Archives. Upon opening it was revealed to contain a carefully wrapped audiocassette tape containing nearly an hour of recorded memories of a World War II submarine officer, Morris Landon. This tape was a welcome edition to a small but growing collection of unique historical records at the Submarine Force Museum known as Oral History.

#### The Sea Story as Naval History

When many people think about history, they picture dusty books and fading documents housed in formal and imposing institutions. But, in fact, history is all around us, in the living memories of our own families and people we work with. When it comes down to it a great deal of what we know of past generations and people's daily activities cannot be uncovered merely from reading books or official reports. Rather, it can only be revealed to us through stories, interviews, and spoken dialogue, or what is known as oral history. Oral



*Read Slade Cutter's oral history transcript to get the inside line on how Cutter and other USS POMPANO (SS-181) officers ended up jailed after a joy ride in a "borrowed" car upon return from war patrol in June 1942; or how CHINFO held up production of the movie "The Caine Mutiny" for two years because he was overly concerned about its reflection on the Navy until the CNO finally overrode him stating, "This guy Queeg is a screwball. But what the hell, I've known lots of screwballs in the Navy in my time. I don't see where it's going to do any harm;" just two of the little known stories preserved in this unique form of Naval history.*

(continued on page 3)



## From the Desk of the President

By the time this issue of the Klaxon reaches your mailboxes we should be starting to thaw and will be looking forward to spring. We are hopeful that, despite the current economic climate, folks will turn out in large numbers to visit the museum as the weather warms up.

We continue to seek artifacts and papers of historical significance to the US Submarine Force to add to the museum collection. The main article in this issue titled "We're all ears" Oral History Collections at the Submarine Force Museum, written by archivist Wendy Gulley, is a reprint that originally appeared in the winter 2006 issue of the Klaxon. The article provides *some insight* on the small but, hopefully, growing collection of Oral History at the

museum.

March 2009 will mark the 3rd anniversary of the Docent Program. Now, as when we first started the program, we need enthusiastic volunteers to man the watch and help welcome visitors to the museum. No experience is necessary. We will provide all required training.

Speaking of training, the museum has hired an education specialist who starts at the museum on March 16. This is really exciting news! A viable education program is a key component of the museum ultimately attaining accreditation which is one of our long term goals. Accreditation will help us provide a more enriching experience for museum visitors and, importantly, will also improve our chances of obtaining financial grants.

I want to take a moment to thank all of you for your support of the Submarine Force Library & Museum Associa-

tion throughout the past year. Indeed many of you have been faithfully supporting the museum for many, many years. The Donor Registry for 2008 will be mailed very soon. As always, we try to provide an accurate listing of all who have contributed to the museum; if we have made any errors, please let us know. We want to properly recognize all of our donors.

We will hold the annual Submarine Force Library & Museum Association Meeting on Friday, May 15, 2009. All members are invited and we hope to see many of you at the annual meeting. As is our tradition, there will be a reception following the meeting; a time to renew old friendships and perhaps make some new ones. Remember, this is your museum; please come visit often and bring your friends.

David M. Goebel

## From the Desk of the Museum Director



Two long standing goals of the museum have been the Docent Program and the Education Program. The Docent program is approaching its third anniversary, continues to thrive and now supports the museum six days per week. Last November we held a modest Docent appreciation reception to thank our "extended family" of volunteers for their continued support and enthusiasm. We are working hard to ensure that this relationship continues to mature and look forward to many more such recognition events in the years to come.

I am happy to report with this issue

of the *Klaxon* that we have also reached a major milestone with the Education Program. After years of effort to obtain funding, we have finally been able to hire an education specialist as part of the full time staff at the museum. This person brings years of experience to the job and the eagerness to ramp up our embryonic education program. We will provide a full article on the education specialist in the next issue of the *Klaxon*.

As a part of our effort to improve, update and modernize museum exhibits, we have just put in to place a new submarine model in the City beneath the Sea exhibit space. This new 688i cut away scale model is the product of over one year's effort in construction, is a significant quality improvement over the model

it replaced and is a welcome addition to the museum.

Lastly, many of you may have heard, Submarine NR-1, the Navy's only nuclear powered deep diving oceanographic research submarine, was inactivated in November 2008 after nearly 40 years service. We are attempting to obtain all or a part of this submarine as a permanent exhibit at the Submarine Force Library & Museum. It will be a long process as NR-1 is not scheduled to be dismantled at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard until 2015. However, in the meantime we hope to obtain the sail and fairwater planes sometime later this year and will place it on display as an interim NR-1 exhibit. More to follow on that.

LCDR Greg Caskey

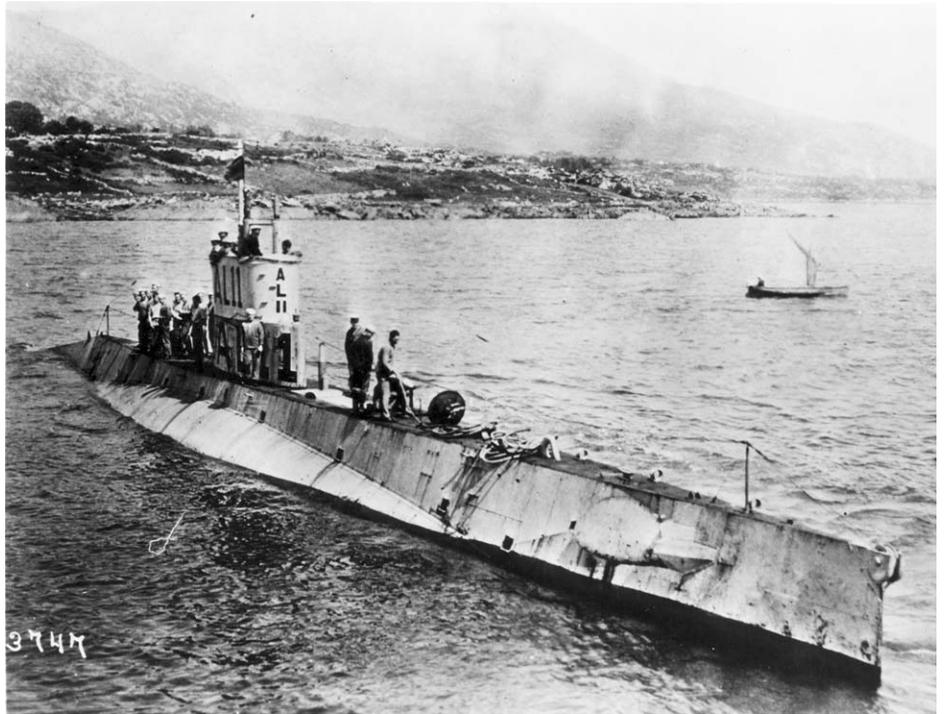
# "We're all ears"

(continued from page 1)

history is a method of gathering and preserving historical information through recorded interviews with participants in past events and past ways of life. It is both the oldest type of historical inquiry and one of the most modern, initiated with tape recorders in the 1940's. And, if you stop and think about it, oral history has long been an integral part of the Navy. The verbal lessons a new sailor receives from his Sea Daddy and, yes, even the many sea stories he will hear along the way have long been an essential means of preserving the experience of past actions, battles, and events, and of imparting the experience to young sailors. Oral history, be it formal or informal, offers a chance to pass on the lessons of Navy life.

Today, more and more naval historians and individuals interested in naval history are turning to field of Oral History in order to supplement the official record with "the human element." As anyone who has visited the Submarine Library to read a copy of his boat's war patrol report knows, the official record only goes so far in telling the story of what happened on patrol. Oral history tapes, such as the one received of Mr. Landon recounting for us his experiences on a fleet boat in World War II, help fill in the gaps by providing us personal insights and anecdotes that would never find their way into an official patrol report.

Oral history has the ability to capture and preserve information that may not otherwise be saved. For instance, virtually every one reading this *Klaxon* is probably aware of the historical fact that Mrs. Mamie Eisenhower, wife of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, christened and was the ship's sponsor of the world's first nuclear submarine USS NAUTILUS. But, if it weren't for the oral history provided by Captain Slade Cutter, a top submarine skipper of World War II and a prominent staff officer at SUBLANT in the mid-1950s, how many of us would know that President Eisenhower actually became angered



*Listen to World War I submariner Walter Scott's Taped interview and find out first hand how the crew of USS L-11 subsisted mainly on macaroni and cheese while on patrol, along with many other long forgotten details of life on our earliest submarines.*

at one point at the idea that his wife was chosen to sponsor the submarine NAUTILUS?

In reviewing the printed transcript of Captain Cutter's oral history interview housed at the Submarine Force Museum we see the story unfold in the days preceding the launch of NAUTILUS in January 1954, when a series of articles began to appear in *Time*, and *The Washington Post* that unfavorably "leaked" NAUTILUS' relatively poor military capabilities, in comparison with World War II fleet boats, as a means of discrediting the nuclear submarine. As Captain Cutter tells it:

*"A fellow by the name of John Finney, who was a by-liner for The New York Times and assigned to the Pentagon and he was a JG in WWII, an awfully nice fellow. And I had the press desk in the Office of Naval Information. John and I became good friends, and one day he came in - this was in December before the NAUTILUS was launched—and he*

*said, "Slade, we ought to put this NAUTILUS in perspective." So he asked me some questions, all of which were answered by the fact sheet that we had.*

*"How fast does the NAUTILUS go?" "More than 20 knots." Her speed was 23.*

*"Depth?"*

*"More than 400 feet." Her depth was 750 feet.*

*"How many torpedo tubes?"*

*"Four."*

*"How many torpedo tubes in World War II submarines?"*

*"Ten."*

*"How many periscopes?"*

*"One."*

*"How many periscopes in World War II submarines?"*

*"Two"*

*Comparing the two, you know. Well, he had all that information, but he had to have a Navy spokes-*

(continued on page 4)

# "We're all ears"

(continued from page 3)

man. So he asked me these questions, and I was the Navy spokesman. Well, I didn't think much about it. The morning of somewhere around the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> of January, I went down to get the morning paper, The Washington Post, and right on the bottom of the front page, the bottom half in a column that long: "A Submarine Held Unfit for Battle Now." Well, I told my wife, "This is going to be a long day." This was a Monday morning, there wasn't much news, I suppose, over the weekend, and so they published this damn thing. And I knew there was going to be trouble. Boy, and it sure was.

And the whole thing that caused all the trouble was that Mrs. Eisenhower was the sponsor, and so the President called Secretary Wilson at 7:00 that morning "What do you mean by asking my wife to sponsor this test vehicle?" You know, they were putting off the NAUTILUS as the answer to all of our problems, and it was. But it was never intended to be a combatant ship. It was just to develop the potential of nuclear submarines, which it did. And so the fat got in the fire.

Eventually, Captain Cutter and Secretary of Defense Charlie Wilson (whom Cutter recalls "I got to know real well" over this incident) were able to smooth the President's ruffled feathers and assure him that his wife would indeed be sponsoring a truly revolutionary vessel. Ironically, as we now know and Captain Cutter's oral history reminds us, NAUTILUS turned out to be quite a capable combatant, serving 25 years in the fleet, her underwater speed and endurance far outweighing the number of periscopes and torpedo tubes!

Not only do oral histories help us fill in gaps in the official records they provide us something even more intangible. They fulfill a need deep inside us to actually hear the voices of our predecessors describing their experience of walking the paths we now walk. Thanks to the collection of oral histories available at the Submarine Force Museum today's submariner can actu-

ally sit down and hear the voices of submariners who have gone before them including the voice of a submariner that once reverberated up and down the passageways of the submarine USS L-11. Both Walter Scott and his boat L-11 were active participants in the First World War. Within two days of enlisting in the Navy in 1917 Walter found himself reporting aboard L-11. Shortly thereafter in December of 1917 Walter and the L-11, designed strictly for coastal defense, departed Boston on a dangerous trans-Atlantic crossing to join Submarine Division 5 in anti-submarine patrols off the British Isles. His oral history is the story of an 18 year old's adjustment to submarine life and his two-year adventure (as he fondly recalls his submarine duty).

## Partners with "the big guys"

Every sailor has a story or two to tell about their experience, which is unique to them. Some, like Walter Scott, may have been involved in momentous historical events like the First or Second World War, but many others haven't. In the half-century following WWII the Navy and the Submarine Force in particular have seen dramatic events and experienced spectacular technological changes that will be studied by historians for years to come. Thousands of sailors, including many readers of the *Klaxon* participated in those events. Each has a story to tell. Even members of the notoriously "Silent" U.S. Submarine Service have something to offer the oral historian in the form of insights into the culture of the Submarine Force and the spirit and perspective of the time in which they served.

The Oral History collection at the Submarine Force Museum contains an assortment of audio and video interviews with USS SQUALUS survivors, Leonard de Medeiros, Juston (Judd) Bland, and Allen (Carl) Bryson; members of the prize crew

of U-505, captured at sea during WWII, Scripps Oceanographer and creator of the "Spiess" Ranging Technique, Dr. Fred Spiess; a Christmas interview with NAUTILUS Captain William Anderson conducted by none other than Bing Crosby; as well as several interviews with WWII submarine veterans. In addition to the taped interviews in its collection, the Submarine Force Museum also has on file typed, indexed transcripts of interviews conducted by the Naval Institute with many of the significant personalities in U.S. Submarine Force history. Included are the captains of several WWII submarines; Arctic Marine Environmental Laboratory Director, Dr. Waldo K. Lyon; Medal of Honor recipient Lawson P. Ramage; leaders in the Polaris Missile program, and the Submarine Force Library & Museum Association's very own VADM Joe Williams, Jr. and ADM Harold E. Shear.

Recently the Submarine Force Museum joined the Library of Congress as a partner in their popular "Veteran's History Project." This project, underway since 2000, has the goal of "creating a lasting legacy of recorded interviews and other documents chronicling veterans' and other citizens' wartime experiences and how those experiences affected their lives and America itself." As a partner in this project copies of any oral histories collected by the Submarine Force Museum will be sent to the Library of Congress where they will be added to the national collection of personal histories on audio and video media as well as letters, diaries, maps, photographs and home movies.

Visit the Veteran's History Project web site at [www.loc.gov/folklife/vets](http://www.loc.gov/folklife/vets) to learn more about this exciting project. Then give some consideration to recording your own oral history for donation to the Submarine Force Museum - Library of Congress collections. (A how-to guide is available through the web site)

# Notice of Annual Meeting

The 36th Annual Meeting of the Submarine Force Library and Museum Association will take place on Friday, May 15, 2009 at the Museum. The museum doors will open at 5:00 p.m. and the meeting will commence at 5:45 p.m. Nautilus will be open for tours until 7:00 p.m. A reception will follow the short business meeting from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. All members in good standing are invited to attend and to bring a spouse or one guest.

Election of Association Officers for 2009 will be held during the short business meeting. Any member in good standing may submit nominations for the offices of President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. Each nomination must identify the office for which the individual is being nominated and must include a written statement from the nominee indicating that he/she consents and will accept the nomination and serve if elected. Nominations will close 72 hours prior to the commencement of the Annual Meeting. Submit nominations to CAPT Arne C. Johnson USN (Ret), 186 Jerry Browne Rd, #1043, Mystic, CT 06355-3052.

# Museum Store On Line

You can shop at the Submarine Force Library & Museum Store from the comfort of your home. Go to [www.submarinemuseum.org](http://www.submarinemuseum.org) and click on "Shop our online store". Or, you can go to [www.ussNAUTILUS.org](http://www.ussNAUTILUS.org) and click on "Museum Store". Visa, Mastercard, Discover and American Express cards are all accepted. Remember, profits from the store go to help support your museum.

Check out the site and tell us what you think. If there are items you want but do not see there contact our store manager at [museumstore@submarinemuseum.org](mailto:museumstore@submarinemuseum.org) and let her know.

## Klaxon Credit

Newsletters and other publications are welcome to copy and reprint anything appearing in *The Klaxon*. When using *The Klaxon* material, editors are requested to include the following credit line: "From *The Klaxon*, Submarine Force Library and Museum Association, Groton, CT"

Enclosed is my donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the  
**SUBMARINE FORCE LIBRARY & MUSEUM ASSOCIATION, INC.**  
for membership as follows: 091

*~Your Donation is Tax Deductible~*

Annual - Individual  
\$35.00 Annually

Life-Individual  
\$250.00 Minimum

Sustaining  
(Any amount over \$1,000.00  
annually-organizations/corporations)

Patch \$4.00  
(Available to Members Only)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Street or P.O. Box

\_\_\_\_\_  
City State Zip

Mail to:  
**Submarine Force Library  
& Museum Association, Inc.**  
Box 501 Naval Submarine Base New London  
Groton, CT 06349

# Reunions

If you have a submarine reunion coming up and would like it mentioned in *The Klaxon*, please send us the particulars. We will include as much information as space allows. We will only publish information on submarine reunions.

## USS SAM RAYBURN (SSBN-635)

Apr 26- Apr 30, 2009

Location: Fredericksburg, TX

Contact: Doc Rushing  
16269 My Road  
Miles, TX 76862

Phone: 325.468.2213

Email: 635@HullNumber.com

## USS TUSK (SS-426)

October 2 - October 4, 109

Location: Groton, CT

Contact: Dexter Holaday  
59 Sylvan St.  
Noank, CT 06340

Phone: 860.536.6586

Email: SS-426@HullNumber.com

# Wanted: New Members

If you received a complimentary copy of *The Klaxon*, why not consider becoming a member of the Association and join the growing numbers who are "Helping to Preserve Our Proud Submarine Heritage?" Use the form provided in this issue to join.

The Association supports the Museum and NAUTILUS by providing funds for displays and other projects when such funding is not available from appropriated funds. Income for the Association is provided by membership dues, donations and museum store profits.

Donations, which are always appreciated, are also tax-deductible.

## SUBMARINE FORCE LIBRARY & MUSEUM ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE BOARD

- RADM David M. Goebel, USN (Ret)  
*President*
- CAPT Raymond D. Woolrich, USN (Ret)  
*Vice President*
- CAPT John Porter, USN (Ret)  
*Secretary*
- EMC (SS) David W. Fowler, USN (Ret)  
*Treasurer*
- CAPT Mark S. Ginda, USN  
*Navy Liaison*
- CDR Frank J. Cima, USN (Ret)
- RADM Millard S. Firebaugh, USN (Ret)
- CDR David R. Hinkle, USN (Ret)
- CAPT Arne C. Johnson, USN (Ret)
- RADM John B. Padgett III USN (Ret)
- CDR Anthony J. Quatroche, USN (Ret)
- VADM Joe Williams, Jr., USN (Ret) Emeritus

## SUBMARINE FORCE LIBRARY & MUSEUM ASSOCIATION STAFF

- CAPT Michael G. Riegel, USN (Ret)  
*Executive Director*  
[director@submarinemuseum.org](mailto:director@submarinemuseum.org)
- Michelle Mencer  
*Office Administrator*  
[michelle.mencer@SFLMA.org](mailto:michelle.mencer@SFLMA.org)
- Claudette M. Rivard  
*Bookkeeper*  
[claudette.rivard@SFLMA.org](mailto:claudette.rivard@SFLMA.org)
- Karen Cudzilo  
*Museum Store Manager*  
[museumstore@submarinemuseum.org](mailto:museumstore@submarinemuseum.org)
- Phone: 860.448.0893
- Fax: 860.405.0568



Non-Profit Organization  
 U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
 Gales Ferry, CT 06335-9998  
 Permit No. 51

Submarine Force Library  
 and Museum Association  
 Box 501  
 NAVSUBASE New London  
 Groton, CT 06349-5000  
 Forwarding Service Requested