



# USS Cusk Newsletter

## Winter 2019



*"Right ten degrees rudder! Take in two! All back one third! Watch your ears on deck!"*

**2019 Cusk Reunion in Little Rock:** After our poll in the last Cusk Newsletter, the votes were overwhelmingly in favor of a reunion in Little Rock, Arkansas. So our 2019 Cusk Reunion will be there. Steve "Willie" Wilson has graciously agreed to put it together for us. He did a terrific job in Richland, Washington and he has a great agenda planned for us.



The reunion will be from Sunday, 8 September to Friday, 13 September. We will have special rates of \$94 per night at the Wyndham Riverfront Hotel in downtown Little Rock. These rates are good for three days before and after our reunion. This a beautiful hotel located just a few blocks from the USS Razorback (SS-394) Museum and the Arkansas Inland Maritime Museum. Willie has arranged for us to have full access to the

Razorback while we are there as well as an onsite Hospitality Room. The Razorback is a Balao class boat built in Portsmouth. While she doesn't have a split cubicle or GM engines like the Cusk, she is otherwise very much like the Cusk inside with few exceptions. For example, Sonar is below the Control Room instead of the Mess Hall. Overall the boat is in excellent condition and very well maintained.



**Message from the Wyndham staff:** *The Wyndham Riverfront Little Rock is happy be the HOST HOTEL for the 2019 USS Cusk Reunion! Start your day off with a complimentary FULL HOT Breakfast buffet each morning starting at 6:30 AM. We also offer complimentary PARKING, WIFI, and a SHUTTLE to Downtown North Little Rock as well as the Little Rock Rivermarket area. The Wyndham Riverfront just updated the furniture in all of our sleeping rooms last fall. Additional amenities, REFRIGERATORS in ALL sleeping rooms, a newly updated exercise room and a staff that is known for their Customer Service! Don't forget about our two RESTAURANTS on property! The Riverfront Steakhouse and Benihana are on property with great service and 2 onsite BARS.*

Book online: <https://www.wyndhamhotels.com/groups/hr/uss-cusk> Offer Ends: August 19, 2019

Or Contact **Reservations at 501-907-4842**, e-mail your request to [lroach@wyndhamnlr.com](mailto:lroach@wyndhamnlr.com)

**And these comments from Willie:** "The \$94 rate is nice. All activities will be held at the Arkansas Inland Marine Museum (AIMM). I'm in the process of working with them right now to set up catering for the Banquet. I'll be getting that information out to you for dissemination ASAP. I've been in contact with some coordinators who had their reunions at the Razorback and, they couldn't say enough good things about the way the Staff at AIMM treated them. The Razorback is ours for the reunion. So, everyone will be receiving orders to "...report to USS Razorback (SS-394) between 8 and 9 September 2019..." and enjoy meeting and greeting Shipmates at a reunion to be conducted there. More to follow about tours available, etc. Please have Shipmates send their Registrations to Steve Wilson at **410 Basswood Avenue, Richland, WA, 99352-4041**.



Wyndham Hotel Riverfront Bar

They can also e-mail me at [subs566@gmail.com](mailto:subs566@gmail.com) and attach the info. I'll have all other pertinent money-related info out just as soon as I nail down tours, etc. The Banquet will be on Thursday, 12 September 2019 and, will probably be served Buffett Style. It's all good and it is coming together smoothly. That's why it's so nice working





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with people who have done this a couple hundred times. I'll be staying in touch. Best to Patrice and your family. -Willy Wilson - aka Steve"

### Tentative Reunion Agenda:

Sunday, 8 September - Hotel check in. USS Cusk Hospitality Room opens at 1500

Monday, 9 September - TBD Activities. Hospitality Room open from 0800 to 2200

Tuesday, 10 September - TBD Activities. Hospitality Room is open from 0800 to 2200

Wednesday, 11 September - TBD Activities. Hospitality Room is open from 0800 to 2200

Thursday, 12 September - TBD Activities. Hospitality Room is open from 0800 to 2200. 1830 Buffet style banquet in the hotel.

Friday, 13 September - Hotel checkout and Farewells. Hospitality Room closes at 1100

***(The estimated total price for banquet, hospitality room drinks and snacks, and all activities will be about \$100 per person. A 2019 Reunion Registration Form with final prices will be mailed and posted soon on the Cusk webpage.)***

**Great Quotes:** *"When I assumed command of the Pacific Fleet on 31 December 1941, our submarines were already operating against the enemy, the only units of the fleet that could come to grips with the Japanese for months to come. It was to the submarine force that I looked to carry the load. It is to the everlasting honor and glory of our submarine personnel that they never failed us in our days of great peril."*

*Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet*

### Sea Stories: "The Puppy" by Sam Lyons, EMCS(SS) 1953 to 1959

The Cusk went on a WestPac cruise (about) 1954. We visited several places, but on the last night of liberty in one of the Japanese ports, we were leaving and going to another location. One of the "Iron heads" from the After Engine Room came back aboard with a cute little pup. Of course the Skipper had warned all of us about bringing back anything that was unauthorized and this fit the bill. Both the enginemen and electricians kept mum about the pet for just long enough so that it couldn't be put ashore. So one of the officers found out about it and the Captain was fit to be tied. Anyway, to make a long story short, we were to keep it in the engineering spaces until we could off load it on the beach. Since the After Engine Room was so hot and noisy we wound up with it in the Maneuvering Room.

Well, what do you do with a dog at sea when it gets the call of nature? What we did was train the pup to stay in its box in Maneuvering Room until it wanted to take a dump or water the lilies. Then we would let the Engineman have it to pet and play with until after the call of nature. Then the pup would come to the hatch opening between Maneuvering and the After Engine Room and want to come back to us. When we pulled into port we gave it to one of the "bum boats" that used to come along side. It was a good thing that we did because it was coming down with the "mange".

**Remembering Eugene Gaito - by Nelson Greer:** Recently as I was strolling around the USS Bowfin Museum grounds at Pearl Harbor, I ran across a plaque listing the 300 plus crew members who served on her during the course of World War II. I barely glanced at it as I passed, but a name leaped out at me. Eugene Gaito. He was our Chief Engineman on the USS Tiru (SS-416), aboard from 1/24/66 to 10/15/67. I had known he served during WW II, but not on which boats. He was part of the commissioning crew of the USS Bowfin (SS-287) and he made all nine war patrols between August 1943 and July 1945, one of six crewmembers to do so.



Eugene Gaito

That '66-'67 WestPac trip we made with him on Tiru was memorable, to say the least. Gaito was a great chief, knew his shit, and gave us young, wild Machinist Mates and Enginemen plenty of slack if we did our jobs, and a royal ass chewing if he thought we didn't. He could make us laugh, too. On St. Patrick's Day 1967 he dyed his white beard green! He was called "Green Gene" for a while after that.







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Gaito was a golfer. While underway he would practice his putting in the Forward Engine Room. Some of the balls would drop down through the hatch in front of the distilling units. Us young squids would have to go down to the lower level and retrieve them. The ones we couldn't find floating in the bilge would absorb oil and get as big as softballs. A couple of times during Pearl Harbor local operations, ComSubPac Admiral Fluckey sent a helicopter to pick him up so they could go golfing. 'Alligator' Gaito must have been really good at that game.

About a month ago I was cleaning off my bookshelf and found something I had not read, "Bowfin" by Edwin P. Hoyt. I ran across Gaito's name on page 182. While in the midst of reading the book I watched the History Channel documentary "USS Bowfin - Pearl Harbor Avenger". About halfway through, this guy pops up on my TV screen. It was him, same round face, same curly hair (but black, not white as I remember). What a thrill it was to see him again, though a 20 some year younger version than the picture stored in my memory.

After so many intrusions in such a short time I felt he was saying to me, "Remind the world that I existed, served my country, lived, loved, laughed, and then died, as all men do." Or maybe something like that. So here it is, going out to some who remember him, and to others who I think may find something of interest in these few stories of his life and exploits. And to a couple of golfers.

He enlisted in the US Navy as a Motor Machinist Mate on March 7th, 1940. Besides Bowfin and Tiru, he rode the USS Bonita (SS-165) from 9/27/40 to 11/26/42, USS Queenfish (SS-393) in '47, USS Sea Dog (SS-401) in '48, USS Caiman (SS-323) from '52 to '56, and was Chief of The Boat on the USS Cusk (SS-348) between '60 and '62.

He lived in Ewa Beach, Hawaii, and died on 12/31/91, a day short of his 76th birthday. Born 1/01/16 in New York. Survivors listed in his obituary included a sister, five grandchildren, and eight great grandchildren. He is buried in Punchbowl National Cemetery, Section CT 1-B, Row 300, site 321. The next time I go to Punchbowl I'll pay him a visit and say hello. I am sending this out today, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019, because it has been 103 years since his birth. Happy Birthday, shipmate.

**False Tunny Claim:** You may have gotten one of these postcards about this book as I did. I do not know where this person got my home address and the fact that I served on the Cusk. Perhaps the USSVI is selling our information, but I don't know for sure. Regardless, that's not the most annoying part. This author is marketing his \$100 book about the Tunny as "The US Navy's First Guided Missile Submarine".

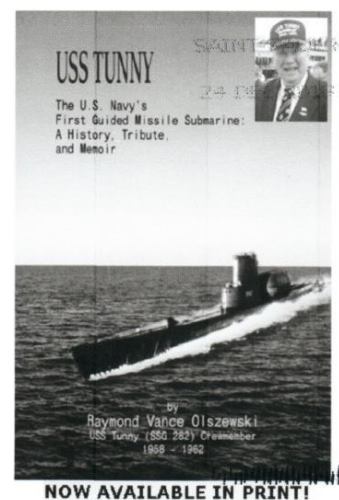
That claim is not just false, it is absurd! The Tunny launched the first Regulus Missile in July, 1953. By that date, the Cusk had launched almost 80 missiles, most of them guided, and these first launches were over six years before the Tunny's first launch.

I contacted the author about this error and he refused to admit or change the false claim. His first response was, "Well, the Tunny was the first 'operational' missile submarine, so we're both right."

What?!? I then told him the date of the Cusk's first missile launch and her first guided missile launch in early 1947, and her subsequent designation as SSG-348 in 1948 which made her the first 'operational missile submarine'. He then responded that, because I had not read his book, I had no right to criticize its title or content. Seriously?!?

Finally, I pointed out that, if he couldn't get the book's title correct, how could anyone have faith in the accuracy of its content? He has not responded to me since then.

The Cusk's missile launches not only made history, but they helped the Navy to understand the shortcomings and to minimize the high failure rate of the Loon Missile System. Consequently, development of the Regulus Missile System began almost immediately after the Cusk started launching Loons. But it would be almost six years later before the Tunny would launch that first Regulus. The Cusk's 77+ missile launches had a 53% success





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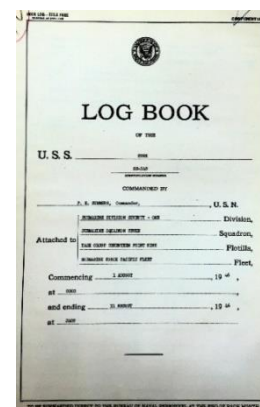
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rate compared to the Navy's earlier land-based 10% success rate. The work performed by the Cusk, her crew, and all of the people involved in the development of the Loon Missile System laid the groundwork for all submarine missile launch systems. Their combined efforts are the foundation of what became today's Navy's missile submarine force. Never in the history of man has such a powerful and lethal weapons system been developed, and the USS Cusk is where it all started. One would think that she would get proper, if not accurate credit for her contributions. But if you Google "Missile Submarine" or "First Missile Submarine", or even "First Guided Missile Submarine", you will find no mention of the Cusk. Wikipedia mentions that some submarines were designated SSG's, but makes no mention of the Cusk. Perhaps Greg Czech was right...I should have written a book.

If you are interested in Regulus history and the Cusk's role in it, Nick Spark developed an excellent (and accurate) documentary DVD about the Regulus program that is narrated by Roy Scheider. Nick talks about the Cusk in this documentary and it has video clips of the Cusk's first launches. Nick has been very helpful to me over the years with regard to Cusk history and he provided me with a lot of information about Project Derby and the Cusk's early days of Loon missile launches. I highly recommend his work. It's available on Amazon for just \$20. Just Google or search on Amazon for "Regulus: The First Nuclear Missile Submarines".

**From the Cusk's Deck Log:** Historical excerpts randomly selected from the Cusk's Deck Logs stored in our National Archives in Maryland. This first entry is from Saturday, 30 April 1960. On this day, the Cusk received her new commanding officer and departs on a dependent's cruise on the same day.



*08-12 moored as before. 0800 Mustered the crew at quarters. Absentees: None. 0805 Secured carrying the zero float. 0810 In accordance with BUPERS orders 12 2157Z Feb 1960 LCDR W. T. Mawhiney, USN, 486977 reported on board for duty as relief of commanding officer. 0837 Commenced preparations for getting underway. Stationed the Maneuvering Watch. 0850 Completed all preparations for getting underway. 0905 Mrs. Milne, wife of Asst. SECNAV, plus 25 civilian dependents of service personnel embarked for familiarization cruise. Draft Fwd: 16' 0", Aft: 17' 7". 0910 Underway in accordance with COMSUBGRU Pearl weekly OPSKED #17-60 of 16 April 1960. Captain on the Bridge, Navigator in the Conning Tower, OOD at the Conn. Steering various courses at various speeds standing out of Pearl Harbor. 0945 Secured the Maneuvering Watch. Set Course 154°, speed 13 knots. 0953 Entered international waters. 0956 c/c to 112°. 1007 submerged. 1038 Commenced snorkeling. 1056 Secured snorkeling. 1140 Surfaced on course 270°, speed 5 knots. 1143 c/s to 13 knots. 1144 Stationed the Maneuvering Watch, making preparations for entering port. c/c to 333°. 1152 Completed all preparations for entering port. Steering various courses at various speeds standing in Pearl Harbor. 1153 Entered inland waters. (Signed) C. L. Coleman, LT, USN*

Coming home...these next two morning entries mark the end of the Cusk's overseas service. The Cusk is coming home after almost eight months in WestPac. In Radio, Glen Campbell's new hit "Galveston" is playing, the showers are open, we have a sunny day and a following sea, and the crew's excitement is palpable. Ironically, we tied up to the USS Razorback when we got in, just as we will again at our September reunion.

*04-08 Underway as before. 0450 c/s to 12 knots. 0637 c/c to 088°. 0728 Completed a normal battery charge. 0730 c/s to 14 knots.*

*John L Troutman, LT, USN*

*12-16 Underway as before. 1200 c/c to 080°. 1207 c/s to 5 knots. 1209 c/c to 085°. 1233 c/s to 0 knots. 1235 c/s to 5 knots. 1246 Stationed the Maneuvering Watch, made all preparations for entering port, commenced steering various courses at various speeds to conform to the San Diego Harbor Channel. Captain is on the Bridge, Navigator is in the Conning Tower, OOD is at the Conn. 1317 passed Buoy #5 abeam to port 100 yds. Entered inland waters. 1353 moored starboard side to the port side of the USS Razorback (SS-394) at the Reserve Pier, U.S. Naval Training Center, San Diego, California in a nest of three ships with starboard mooring lines doubled. Ships in the nest from starboard to port are USS Perch (LPSS 313), USS Razorback and this ship.*







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*Ships present include various units of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, yard and district craft. Receiving miscellaneous services from the pier. SOPA is COMFIRSTFLT. 1354 secured the Maneuvering Watch.*

*D.A. Raymond, LT, USN*

**Eternal Patrol:** These are our shipmates who have departed on Eternal Patrol in the past year listed with most recent one first. Additional information, pictures and obituaries may be found on the Cusk Website.

Name & Rank	Served aboard Cusk	Departed
William "Mac" McKenzie, Jr., QM1(SS)	1952 - 1953	16 November 2018
Carl Robert "Mark" Markham, Jr., TM1(SS)	1952 - 1953	16 November 2018
Charles Harrison George, QM3(SS)	1948	26 October
Jack Richard Trommer, ET2(SS)	1961 - 1963	8 October 2018
Steve "The Codger" Rogers, EM3(SS)	1966 - 1969	Summer 2018
Ernest J "Zeke" Zellmer, LT	1946 - 1948 (Plankowner)	27 August 2018
William J Weisensee, LT	1965 - 1967	11 August 2018
William P Hrbacek, ETR2(SS)	1959 - 1963	17 July 2018
Hermenegildo B Ferrer, SD2(SS)	1967 - 1968	8 June 2018
James Gauthier, TMSN(SS)	1958 - 1959	13 April 2018

### SAILORS! REST YOU OARS!

**Thanks for the Cusk Newsletter Donations:** The first and hopefully only request for donations to support the Cusk Newsletter and webpage produced an amazing number of very generous responses. There are not enough words to adequately express my appreciation. Thank you so very much (especially you, Charlie Tinkle)! It's not likely I'll have to ask again for a very long time. In fact, so much was donated that I decided to use a portion of the funds to purchase two bricks commemorating the Cusk. These bricks were purchased at the Brevard Veteran's Museum here on Merritt Island, and at the U.S. Navy's Submarine Force Library and Museum in New London, Connecticut. These purchases are essentially donations to each museum as well. Both are double size bricks (8"x8") with the same wording. A picture of the Brevard brick here is shown here. The Navy's Submarine Museum informed me that, because of the cold Connecticut weather, the Cusk's brick will not be installed until this spring. As soon as it is installed, they will send me pictures and I'll post one here and on the Cusk website.



Commemorative brick at the Brevard Veteran's Museum

**Cusk Memorabilia to be transferred to U.S. Navy Submarine Force Museum:** As most of you know, I have been collecting artifacts, pictures, recordings, video, documentation and history of the Cusk since I began her webpage in 1998. Most of this memorabilia has been on display at the Brevard Veteran's Memorial and Museum on Merritt Island. Collecting and preserving so much of the Cusk's history has been a joy, and as far as I can tell, everything Cusk related that was available online, on eBay, and from shipmates has been collected. I'm sure there is still quite a bit more out there, but many shipmates simply do not want to part with anything. Like me, I hope they realize that whatever they have may disappear forever if steps are not taken to preserve it all. The Cusk Webpage, and now the Navy's Submarine Force Museum will be the only places where these priceless treasures will be stored.

My family has committed to keeping the Cusk webpage in perpetuity after I'm gone, and recently I contacted Mr. Steve Finnigan, curator of the Navy's Submarine Force Library and Museum in New London (where the Cusk was born). He has agreed to accept and preserve most of the Cusk memorabilia that I have collected. This museum is a much more appropriate and safe place for the Cusk's history to reside. Accordingly, Steve has also





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extended a request to all of you for your Cusk (or submarine related) donations. Below is an abbreviated list of what the museum would like to receive. Items in **red** print indicate what I will be sending to the museum.

**Ship's Items Wanted by the U.S. Navy's Submarine Museum:** Battle Flag, Launching Bow Banner,

Commissioning or Decommissioning Pennant, **Ensign, Jack, Ship's Bell, Builder's Plaque, Ship's Insignia/Patch/Plaque, Pieces of Ship's Hardware, Ship's issue ashtrays**, Silverware, Sponsor's Gift

**Personal Items:** **Medals and Campaign Ribbons**, Annapolis Class Ring, **"Dolphins", Photographic and Scrapbook Albums, ID Cards**, Dog Tags, **Crossing of Equator Certificates** relating to ship's service/commands.

Also, original art work, **watercolors**, prints, oil paintings,

**commemorative envelopes, coins, Deck Logs**, Navigation Charts,

Night Order Books and **Technical Manuals**. Personal Papers (letters, diaries) from service on are of great importance and are accepted at this museum.

Send your items to:

US Navy Submarine Force Museum

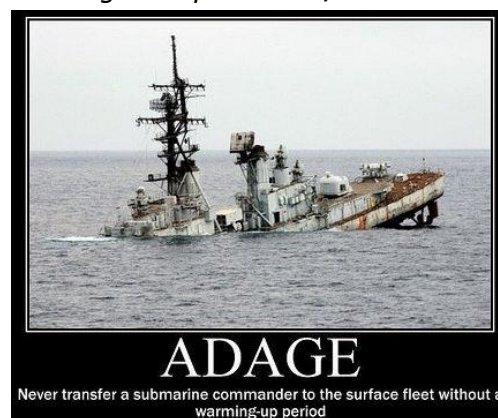
1 Crystal Lake Road

Naval Submarine Base New London

Groton, CT 06349-5571

Curator: [Stephen.finnigan@navy.mil](mailto:Stephen.finnigan@navy.mil)

You can also send any items directly to me. I'll photograph/copy everything I receive, post it on the Cusk Webpage, and then ship it on to Mr. Finnigan at the Submarine Museum.



**Do you miss those days on the Cusk? Here's how to revive some those great memories:**

1. Sleep on the shelf in your closet. Two to three hours after you fall asleep, have your wife come and shine a flashlight in your eyes, and mumble, "Sorry, wrong rack."
2. Repeat back everything anyone says to you.
3. Spend as much time as possible indoors and avoid sun light. Only view the world through the peep hole on your front door.
4. Sit in your car for six hours a day with your hands on the wheel and the motor running, but don't go anywhere.
5. Put diesel oil in your humidifier instead of water and set it to "High".
6. Watch only unknown movies with no major stars.
7. Do not wash your laundry at home. Pick the most crowded laundromat you can find.
8. Set your alarm clock to go off at random times during the night. When it goes off, jump out of bed and get dressed as fast as you can. Then run to your kitchen with the garden hose while wearing a scuba mask.
9. Once a month, take every major appliance completely apart and then put them back together.
10. Use 18 scoops of coffee per pot and allow it to sit for 5 or 6 hours before drinking.
11. Have a fluorescent lamp installed on the bottom of your coffee table and lie under it to read books.
12. At night, replace all light bulbs in the living room with red bulbs.
13. Buy all food in cases and line the floor with them.
14. Practice bathing with a quart of water.
15. Tell your kids to "Go find me a can of relative bearing grease and 100' of waterline."
16. Hire about 20 drunks to come into your house about 1:00 in the morning and start cooking.
17. Run a tube from your car's exhaust pipe into your living room, yell "Prepare to snorkel, one engine!", and start the car. You must breathe the fumes for one hour.

*Fair winds, following seas, and Green Board to all*

