



USS Cusk SSG 348 Newsletter

Volume II Issue 4

January 2008

This is the last newsletter before the reunion. Be sure to get your registration form mailed. As you know, the Cusk Reunion is 15-18 May 2008 at the

Holiday Inn, Mt. Pleasant, SC.

The form must be completed by 15 February 2008 to take advantage of the rates.

Here is the Cusk Reunion Registration form:

USS Cusk (SS 348) 2008 Reunion Registration

Name: _____

Guest/Spouse: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip : _____

Phone: _____ E-mail _____

Years On Board: (i.e., '75 - 78'): _____

Lodging: Thurs _____; Fri _____; Sat _____

Extra nights: (\$99) Wednesday: _____; Sunday: _____ (subject to availability)

Requests: King: ____; Two Doubles: ____; Smoking: ____; Non-smoking: ____

Thursday:

Optional Charleston Harbor Dinner Cruise (Estimated Cost \$52.40 per person)

1815 - 2200, Leaves from Patriots Point; Number: _____ (you will be invoiced in April)

Major Credit Card (Required for Holiday Inn Reservation only)

Type: _____, CC# _____

Exp Date: _____; Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____

Reunion Fee (\$110 pp) payable to "Shellback Cruises"

Mail to Shellback Cruises, 2131 Westrivers Road, Charleston, SC 29412



USS Cusk (SS-348) Reunion May 15 - 18, 2008 Charleston, South Carolina

Reunion HQ: Holiday Inn, Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina

Room Rates: **Thursday \$99, Friday/Saturday \$129** plus tax

Reunion Fee: \$110 per person

Includes: Hospitality Suite, Charleston Tour, BBQ
Dinner on Friday, Banquet on Saturday

Optional: Thursday Charleston Harbor Dinner Cruise

Reunion Web: www.shellbackcruises.com/ss348.htm

Contact:

Rusty Pickett, ECC *Shellback Cruises*

2131 Westrivers Road, Charleston, SC 29412

Toll Free: 1-888-497-2227, E-mail: scruise@bellsouth.net

*All registration and hotel arrangements must be made through
Shellback Cruises to receive the group rate!*

For Your Information

Subject: The American Bluejacket's White Hat

by Bob 'Dex' Armstrong

The old trusty raghat was the worldwide symbol of what we were. It was the hallmark of the cocky, light-hearted American bluejacket. The good guys of the sea, slayers of iron monsters and evil naval power dragons. The men who poured forth from naval warships flying the internationally recognized symbol of freedom to ratchet up the pace of life in sleepy seaports.

The telltale symbol of the American sailor was the hat. It was traditionally worn in a variety of ways. Over one eye. Parked above the bridge of the nose. Cocked to one side or worn perched on the back of the head. This total lack of uniformity was taken by the Navy's appointed nannies, the United States Marine Corps, as a nose-thumbing gesture directed at good order, discipline and the foundations of civilized society. The United States Marine Corps has difficulty understanding that there are men in our armed forces who are not totally enamored with dressing up like an organ grinder monkey, marching in step and singing a hymn about spending eternity pulling some kind of watch on the streets of paradise. His 'screw it all' attitude is the hallmark of American sailors. Or let's say, "It used to be."

So do yourself a favor. Rent the video "Sand Pebbles" with Steve McQueen or "The Last Detail" with Jack Nicholson and take a good look at the way an American white hat should be worn. Better yet, watch the entire "Victory at Sea" series and look at the way the greatest generation wore their hats. Let's call it 'war-winner' style. What idiot jaybird came up with that toilet hopper look of the present day white hat? You know the one, the perfectly round bidet bowl with the rolled lip? It looks stupid. Looks like someone threaded his head and screwed a porcelain birdbath on the bastard.

The Navy's elite honor guard looks silly with their perfectly symmetrical tankless toilet hats. Honor Guards are mostly composed of shore duty ballet-trained show ponies. They wear braided tassels on their shoulders that represent nothing but the fact that

they have learned dance step routines and rifle tricks like baton twirlers. It doesn't have a damn thing to do with seagoing sailing. They are certainly not a model for emulation by saltwater bluejackets.

Who was responsible for this travesty, this senseless dickering with one of the finest national symbols of a justifiable proud naval force? When is naval leadership going to quit monkeying in the world of silly fashion statement and get the hell back to saltwater sailing? It is an unfortunate fact that the decisions involving the raghats uniform and the imposition of unwanted unnecessary change are officers, who never wore the white hat long enough to form the affection for it that we did. And lace pantied fashion designers whose only connection with sea service or the military is hawking senseless unnecessary change at the expense of tradition founded in blood sacrifice. This, shipmates, is a crying bloody shame, a sad commentary on present day leadership who spend one helluva lot of their time wondering about morale.

If some ranking admiral with influence and a set of deepwater cajones, would send out a directive to the effect that the days of Betty Crocker bowl bluejacket headgear had come to 'all stop' and that the naval establishment would be returning to the World War II winner look, he would become an overnight hero.

Mr. Admiral, sir, do it soon. Authorize wings in the hats again. Not only authorize it, gahdammit, encourage it. It would be a very meaningful gift to your sailors. At some point this spring around Memorial Day, the nation is scheduled to dedicate the World War II Memorial. The United States Naval Ceremonial Guard will be present at many of the festivities. Make them look like real sailors and not like clueless, fresh out of boot camp shore duty jaybirds. I have been to a number of ceremonial functions where these hybrid almost weird folks appear. They look like choreographed circus ponies wearing those silly, stupid looking ceramic spittoon bonnets.

Always some old barnacle encrusted veteran seadog whispers under his breath, "What in the hell is that, and where in God's name did they come up with those gahdam clown hats?" Admiral, allow sailors the freedom to imitate and follow the traditions of previous generations of sailors. We're not Grenadier guards, Rockettes, the Copenhagen Ballet. We're

sailors United States Navy.

I'll bet that every time Admiral Arleigh Burke looks down from his cloud conning bridge in Paradise and gets a load of those baptismal font hats, he damn near launches his lunch.

The powers that be in our naval hierarchy, have had to cut down, reduce and eliminate much of what was once the heart and core of our naval establishment. Parts and components that once had 'Made in the USA' stamped all over them are no longer available within the continental limits of the USA. We have become very 'overseas' dependent. At one point, we were informed that the Army's fashion statement desk-bound fashion generals had decided to put the entire Army in black beanies made in Red China. Red China, the outfit that poured over the Yalu River and slaughtered Americans. The folks who supplied our enemies weapons in the Vietnam War. The folks that still supply our enemies weapons, medium and long range missiles, intelligence and sophisticated training. If the short memory monkeys who force uniform change had had their way, our entire Army would be sporting black beanies made by Communist slave labor. Beat that.

Force manpower levels require the extortion payment of recruitment, reenlistment and specialty retention bribes that amount to tens of thousands of dollars. Sad, when you think that all the bastards promised us, was tough training, rough duty and the opportunity to earn Dolphins, if we could measure up. If we were good enough. Man enough. Nobody tucked any wampum in our jumper pockets or kissed us in the vicinity of our bellbottom gussets.

Give'em back their white hats with the wings. Return to the days when the fleet turned a blind eye to the eccentricities of individual expression. The days when our sailors were the happy-go-lucky lads of a single naval force. When raghats worn at cocky angles told the less fortunate of the planet that the rollicking American bluejackets had dropped anchor or put their lines over. And, that the sealanes of the world were safe and secure. They were kept so, by those wonderful men who wore their headgear with a decided list and sporting wings.

----- **Remembering Submarine Bars**

by Bob 'Dex' Armstrong

Submariners always stuck together. They worked and played as a crew and they gravitated to places where they could be with fellow submariners in locations where people who could tolerate the obnoxious conduct, impure verbiage and rollicking nonsense that was the standard by which smokeboat submariners were measured... Their hallmark, so to speak.

The submarine bar was unlike other naval watering holes and dens of iniquity inhabited by seagoing elements. It had to meet strict standards to be in compliance with the acceptable requirement for a boatsailor beer-swilling dump.

Loudmouth Barmaid

The first and foremost requirement was a crusty old gal serving suds. She had to be able to wrestle King Kong to parade rest... Be able to balance a tray with one hand, knock bluejackets out of the way with the other hand and skillfully navigate through a roomful of milling around drunks. On slow nights, she had to be the kind of gal who would give you a back scratch with a fly swatter handle or put her foot on the table so you could admire her new ankle bracelet some ET brought her back on a Med run.

A good barmaid had to be able to whisper sweet nothings in your ear like, "Sailor, your thirteen button flap is twelve buttons short of a green board." And, "Buy a pack of Clorets and chew up the whole thing before you get within heave range of any gal you ever want to see again." And... "Hey animals, I know we have a crowd tonight, but if any of you guys find the head facilities fully occupied and start pissing down the floor drain, you're gonna find yourself scrubbing the deck with your white hats!"

They had to be able to admire great tattoos, look at pictures of ugly bucktooth kids and smile... Be able to help haul drunks to cabs and comfort 19-year-olds who had lost someone close to them. They could look at your ship's identification shoulder tab and tell you the names of COBs back to the time you were a Cub Scout.

If you came in after a late night battery charge and fell asleep with a half-eaten Slim-Jim in your hand, they tucked your peacoat around you... Put out the cigarette you left burning in the ashtray and replaced the warm draft you left sitting on the table with a cold one when you woke up... Why? Simply, because they were one of the few people on the face of the earth that knew what you did, and appreciated what you were doing.

And if you treated them like a decent human being and didn't drive'em nuts by playing songs they hated on the juke box... They would lean over the back of the booth and park their soft warm tits on your neck

when they sat two Rolling Rocks in front of you. Imported table-wipe down guy and glass washer, trash dumper, deck swabber and paper towel replacement officer.

The guy had to have baggy tweed pants and a gold tooth... And a grin like a 1950 Buick... And a name like "Ramon," "Juan," "Pedro" or "Tico." He had to smoke unfiltered Luckies, Camels or Raliegths. He wiped the tables down with a sour washrag that smelled like a skunk diaper and said "How are choo navee mans tonight?"

He was the indispensable man... The guy with credentials that allowed him to borrow Slim-Jims, Beer Nuts and pickled hard boiled eggs from other beer joints when they ran out where he worked.

The Establishment Itself

The place had to have walls covered with ships plaques, many of which had made the trip up the river to the scrap yard, ten years before you enlisted... The walls had squadron pennants and a hundred or more old yellowed photographs of fellows named "Buster," "Chicago," "S-Boat Barney," "Chief Boiler Maker," "Malone," "Honshu Harry," Jackson, and Capt. Slade Cutter.

It had to have the obligatory Michelob, Pabst Blue Ribbon and "Beer Nuts sold here" neon signs... An eight-ball mystery beer tap handle and signs reading: "Your mother does not work here so clean away your gahdam trash." "Hands off the barmaid." "Don't throw butts in urinal." "Barmaid's word final in settling bets." "Take your fights out in the alley." "Owner reserves the right to waltz your worthless ass out to the sidewalk."

"Shipmates are responsible for riding herd on their boat's drunks."

Typical signage found in classy establishments catering to sophisticated clientele.

You had to have a juke box built along the lines of a Sherman tank loaded with Hank Williams, Mother Maybelle Carter, Johnny Horton, Johnny Cash and twenty other crooning goobers nobody ever heard of. The damn thing has to have "La Bamba," Herb Alpert's "Lonely Bull" and Johnny Cash's "Don't take your guns to town" in memory of Norfolk's bar-

maid goddess, Thelma. If Thelma is within a 12-mile radius of where any of those three recordings can be found on a juke box, it is wise to have a stack of life insurance applications within reach of the coin slot.

The furniture in a real good submarine bar had to be made from coal mine shoring lumber and was not fully acceptable until it had 600 cigarette burns and your boat's hull numbers carved into it.

The bar had to have a brass foot rail and at least six Slim-Jim containers, an oversized glass cookie jar full of Beer-Nuts, a jar of pickled hard boiled eggs that could produce rectal gas emissions that could shut down a sorority party, and big glass containers full of something called pickled pigs feet and Polish sausage. Only drunk Chiefs and starving Ethiopians ate pickled pigs feet and unless the last three feet of your colon had been manufactured by Midas... You didn't want to get anywhere near the Polish napalm dogs.

No submariner's bar was complete without a couple of hundred faded boat pictures and a "Shut the hell, up" sign taped on the mirror behind the bar... And several rather tasteless nekkit lady pictures. The pool table felt had to have at least three strategic rips as a result of drunken competitors... And balls that looked as if a gorilla baby had teethed on the sonuvabitches.

Submarine bars were home, but they were also establishments where 19-year-old kids received an education available nowhere else on earth. You learned how to "tell" and "listen" to sea stories... You learned about sex at \$25.00 a lesson from professional ladies who taught you things your high school biology teacher didn't know were anatomically possible. You learned how to make a two cushion shot and how to toss down a beer and shot... Known as a "depth charge."

We were young... A helluva long way from home. We were pulling down slave wages for twenty-four hour a day, seven days a-week availability and loving the life we lived. We didn't know it at the time, but our association with the men we served with, forged us into the men we became. And a lot of that association took place in submarine bars where we shared the stories accumulated in our up to then, short lives... We learned about women and that life could be tough on a gal.

While many of our classmates were attending college, we were getting an education slicing through North Atlantic black water... Running deep and plowing holes below the surface and rubbing shoulders with some of the finest men we would ever know in bars our mothers wouldn't have approved of.

Bars that would live in our memories forever.

FUNNIES

Recently, while going through an airport during one of his many trips, President Bush encountered a man with long gray hair and beard, wearing a white robe and sandals, holding a staff. President Bush went up to the man and said, "Has anyone told you that you look like Moses?" The man didn't answer. He just kept staring straight ahead.

The president said, "Moses!" in a loud voice. The man just stared ahead, never acknowledging the president.

The president pulled a Secret Service agent aside and, pointing to the robed man, asked him, "Am I crazy or does that man not look like Moses to you? The Secret Service agent looked at the man and agreed.

"Well," said the president, "every time I say his name, he ignores me and stares straight ahead, refusing to speak. Watch!" Again the president yelled, "Moses!" and again the man ignored him.

The Secret Service agent went up to the man in the white robe and whispered, "You look just like Moses. Are you Moses?"

The man leaned over and whispered back, "Shhhh! Yes, I am Moses. The last time I talked to a bush, I spent 40 years wandering in the desert and ended up leading my people to the only spot in the entire Middle East with no oil."

Just in case you are having a rough day, here is a stress management technique recommended in all the latest psychological journals. The funny thing is that it really does work and will make you smile.

1. Picture yourself lying on your belly on a warm rock that hangs out over a crystal clear stream.
2. Picture yourself with both your hands dangling in the cool running water.
3. Birds are sweetly singing in the cool mountain air.
4. No one knows your secret place.
5. You are in total seclusion from that hectic place called the world.
6. The soothing sound of a gentle waterfall fills the air with a cascade of serenity.
7. The water is so crystal clear that you can easily make out the face of the person you are holding underwater.

See? It really does work. You're smiling already.



It was a small town and a patrolman was making his evening rounds. As he was checking a used car lot, he came upon two little old ladies sitting in a used car! He stopped and asked them why they were sitting there in the car. Were they trying to steal it?

'Heavens no, we bought it.'

'Then why don't you drive it away.'

'We can't drive'

'Then why did you buy it?'

'We were told that that if we bought a used car here we'd get screwed ----- so we're just waiting.'

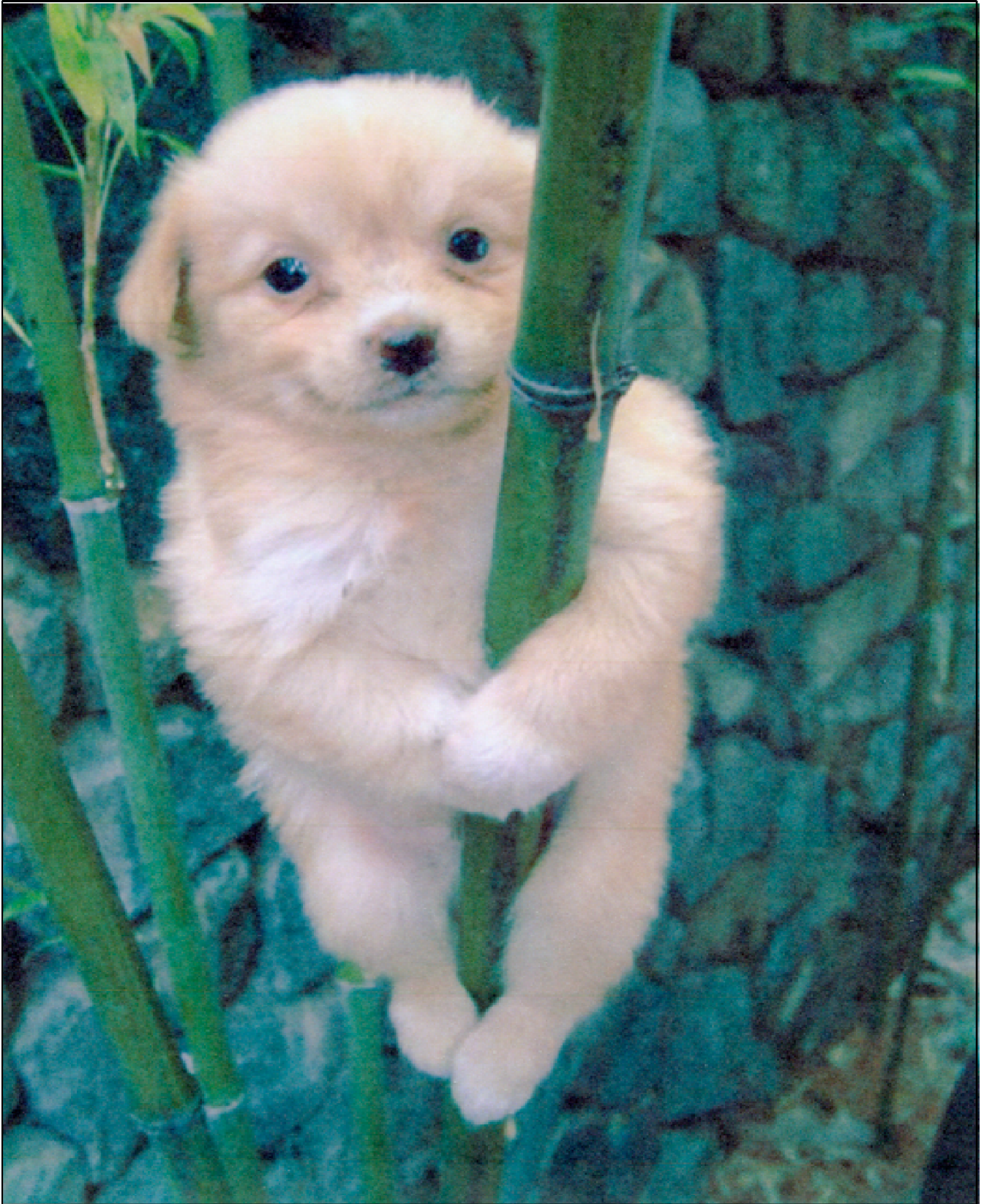
DAD AT THE MALL

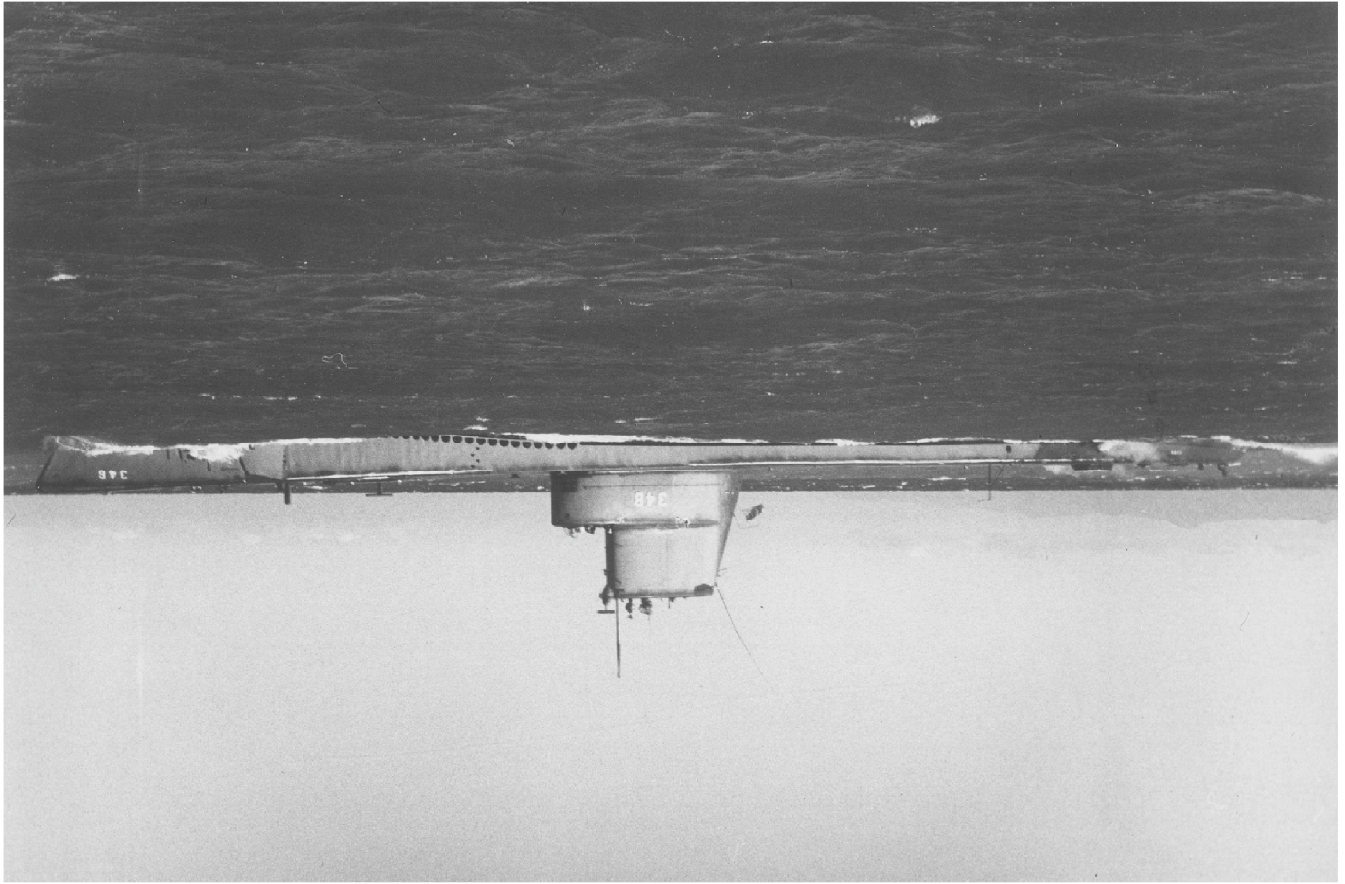
I took my dad to the mall the other day to buy some new shoes. We decided to grab a bite at the food court. I noticed he was watching a teenager sitting next to him. The teenager had spiked hair in all different colors: green, red, orange, and blue. My dad kept staring at him. The teenager would look and find him staring every time.

When the teenager had enough, he sarcastically asked, 'What's the matter old man, never done anything wild in your life?'

Knowing my dad, I quickly swallowed my food so that I would not choke on his response; knowing he would have a good one. And in classic style he did not bat an eye in his response, 'Got drunk once and had sex with a peacock. I was just wondering if you were my son?'

Beautiful Blonde Pole Dancer





**USS Cusk SSG 348
Newsletter**



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