

MILITARY SEA SERVICES MUSEUM, INC.



SEA SERVICES SCUTTLEBUTT

April 2016



John Cecil

A message from the President

Greetings,

Most of Sebring's winter guests (snow-birds) have departed for the far North. Consequently, we are already seeing the decline in visitors to the Museum that usually occurs during the summer months. This time of the year is an excellent time for groups of school children, scouts, etc. to visit the Museum. There is no charge for children 18 years and under. Active duty military are also admitted free.

Once again the Board of Directors expresses its sincere thank you to Bill Fincke and Gordon White our snow-birds who volunteer to stand duty at the Museum while in Sebring. Both Bill and Gordon are life members of the Museum. This was the sixth winter for Bill from Bethlehem, PA, and the second winter for Gordon from Mount Sydney, VA. Bud Farmer who previously was a snow-bird volunteer from Bassett VA is now a full time resident of Sebring and a year around volunteer. The Board also thanks Fred Carino and Mike Borders from Sebring. Fred travels quite a bit and sometimes works outside of Florida. But when he is in town, Fred stands duty in the Museum. Mike is kept busy as President of the local Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America. When he can make time, Mike comes to the Museum to familiarize himself with the numerous artifacts and he has volunteered to stand duty when he can. The Board of Directors also expresses its sincere thank you to Roy Fairfield who was a faithful year around volunteer from January 2014 until this past month when he moved to Wisconsin. Roy, a retired Navy cook, also prepared the Museum's monthly dinners while he was here. We wish Roy all the best up North while hoping he returns to Sebring when he finds the cold winters in Northern Wisconsin not to his liking. Bill, Gordon, Fred, and Mike provide welcome relief to me, Gene Kissner, and Bud Farmer who stand duty at the Museum year around. With few permanent local residents who volunteer to stand duty at the Museum, the Board is concerned about burn-out, so we thank God for men like Bill, Gordon, Fred and Mike.

John

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Hours of Operation
Open: Wednesday through Saturday
Noon to 4:00 p.m.
Web site: <http://milseasvcmuseum.org/>

Welcome Aboard New Members

On 9 March 2016, John and Janet Harbaugh became our newest life members. John is an Air Force veteran and a retired Hospital CEO. Janet is a retired Activity Director. John and Janet live in Sebring, FL.

On 28 March 2016, Skip and Cheryl Dent became annual members of the Museum. Skip is self-employed. Cheryl is retired. Skip and Cheryl live in Lake Placid, FL.

On 16 April 2016, James and Bobbie Wells became annual members of the Museum. James is a Navy Veteran and is retired from the Army National Guard. Bobbie is also retired. James and Bobbie live in Sebring in the winter months and in Corunna, IN during the summer.

A very hearty welcome aboard to our newest members! A sincere thank you to all our members for their continued support. Without member support, the Museum would not be able to pay its bills and would have to close the doors.

President Gives Talk

On 23 April 2016, Museum President John Cecil was the guest speaker at the Sebring Historical Society luncheon meeting. More than 50 people were in attendance. John spoke about the history of the Military Sea Services Museum and about future hopes for the Museum. John's talk was well received and numerous compliments were made.

Did You Know That

during World War II, the U.S. Navy produced six future U.S. Presidents. No U.S. President had served in the Navy until World War II when the Navy produced six future Presidents.

John F. Kennedy commanded a motor torpedo boat (PT-109) that was run over by a Japanese destroyer in the Solomon Islands; Lyndon B. Johnson was briefly stationed in New Zealand and Australia despite being a sitting member of Congress; Richard Nixon supervised air cargo operations; Gerald Ford served as an aircraft carrier's assistant navigator and was nearly swept overboard in a typhoon; Jimmy Carter attended the Naval Academy (and became a submariner after the war); and George H.W. Bush flew 58 combat missions, including one in which he was shot down over the Pacific Ocean. In fact, from 1961 to 1993, the only non-Navy man to become President of the United States was Ronald Reagan.

Museum Front Entrance Project

The front entrance to the Museum is nearly complete. The ramp and hand rails were recently completed and approved by the City of Sebring. The parking area was resurfaced on 29 April. The stripping of parking spots and installation of new parking signs should be completed by the end of the first week in May. After that, the front of the building will be landscaped. We are very hopeful that by mid-May the Museum will have a completed and very beautiful front entrance. The photo below was taken before the parking area was resurfaced.

The Navy, Marine and Coast Guard emblems on the right side of the entrance and the murals representing the Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard on the left side were done by muralist extraordinaire, Maureen Fulginiti. Maureen, many years past, painted the emblems and murals that were on the front of the building but got destroyed and painted over during the renovation. Some long time Museum members may remember that Maureen is the daughter of Howard and Dot Fleetwood. Howard was the Museum's first president.



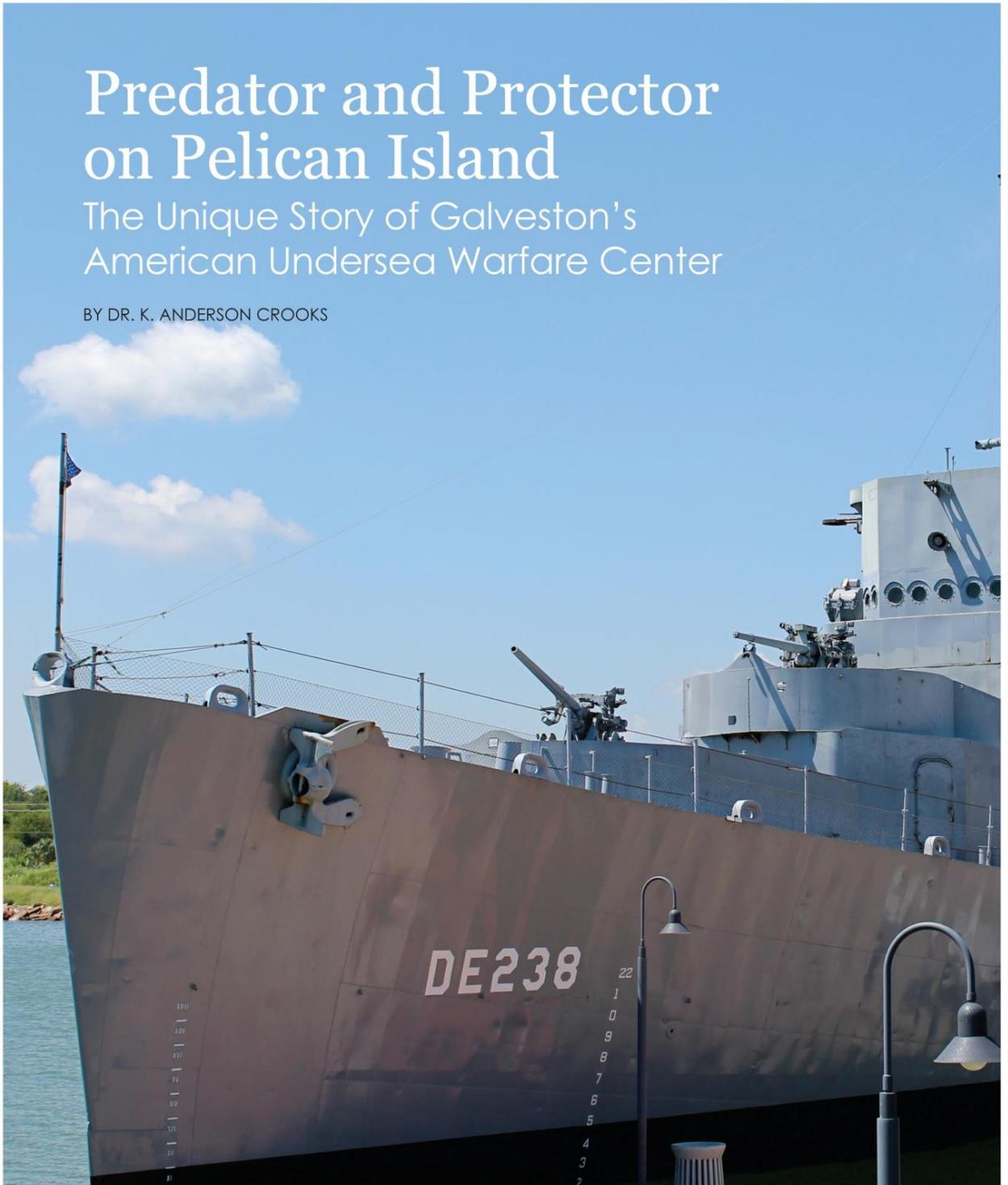
Stories Wanted

We would like to publish in the Scuttlebutt short stories of Navy, Marine, and Coast Guard personal experiences, and/or short stories of sea services historical events. We are sure there are plenty of stories out there that would be of interest to Scuttlebutt readers. Please email your stories to nvmargrd@gmail.com or mail to the Museum.

Predator and Protector on Pelican Island

The Unique Story of Galveston's
American Undersea Warfare Center

BY DR. K. ANDERSON CROOKS



USS STEWART,
DESTROYER ESCORT 238



The periscope of the Gato-class submarine, USS Cavalla, spun around as it broke the water surface. The submarine had been tracking a fleet of Japanese warships like an undersea predator and had finally worked itself into position ahead of a squadron of ships that the sonar room reported to be considerable in size. Lt. Commander Herman Kossler counted four vessels: “A large carrier with two cruisers ahead on the port bow and a destroyer about one thousand yards on the starboard beam.”

According to Kossler, the aircraft carrier was recovering its strike force of warbirds, with some thirty already clustered on its flight deck. This was the 30,000-ton Imperial Japanese Naval Ship Shokaku, the Empire’s most successful and deadly weapon.

The Shokaku was one of six carriers that had launched the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor and Hickam Air Base in Hawaii, on the “day of infamy” that plunged the United States into World War II.

Shokaku followed that with activities that resulted in the sinking of the USS Lexington at Coral Sea, the loss of the carrier HMS Hermes and two British cruisers in the Indian Ocean, the mortal wounding of famed Doolittle raider carrier USS Hornet in the Solomon Island campaign, and damage to the battleship USS South Dakota in the Battle of the Philippine Sea. Until this moment, the Shokaku had unleashed havoc while itself surviving both aerial and submarine attacks.

Ignoring the danger posed by the escorts, Kossler and the Cavalla launched the entire forward-load complement of six torpedoes at the Shokaku. Given that the attack was during the middle of the day, the action was audacious, but three or more of the torpedoes struck their mark and took down the Shokaku which plunged into the deep, bow first. The Cavalla’s daring was soon rewarded by three hours of at least 100 hull-pounding depth charges.

Surviving the ordeal, the Cavalla returned from its maiden wartime voyage to garner the Presidential Unit Citation and the acclaim of being the only U.S. submarine to avenge Pearl Harbor (the other IJN carriers of that strike force were eventually all lost to aerial attacks). After several other successful missions, the Imperial Japanese government issued a ceasefire.

But the Cavalla was not allowed to rest as

ISLAND HISTORY

Japanese bombers, who had apparently not received word, launched an unsuccessful attack on the Cavalla. Unscathed, the USS Cavalla joined the fleet that entered Tokyo Bay to witness the formal surrender and the end of World War II.

After the war, the USS Cavalla SS-244 was retired, then resurrected and converted from its standard submarine SS configuration into an early Cold-War sub-killer designation (SSK). It was refitted with an enhanced sensor array, which meant the loss of two of its forward torpedo tubes, as well as other equipment to extend its reach.

The USS Cavalla had become the true interim between the submersible vessels of WWII and the modern nuclear submarines, whose only limitations to staying underwater indefinitely were internal supplies of food. Reconverted to an auxiliary training vessel, the USS Cavalla was finally retired permanently and graciously donated by a grateful nation to the people of Texas to serve as a permanent memorial at Seawolf Park to the many submariners "still on patrol."

Leaning on a rail of his cargo ship ploughing through the frigid, hostile waves of the North Atlantic, Merchant Marine sailor Gene Balombini surveyed the compact escort vessel, the USS Stewart, corkscrewing into wave-top to wave-top. The small destroyer escort was already a veteran of several convoy runs and brushes with Nazi submarines and aircraft. Balombini, like all merchantmen, was glad for the company of this doughty little protector.

During nights of blackest ink, nothing better guarded the troops and cargo of the convoy than the Stewart and its companions. They were the shepherds of the flock, and in their hands rested not only the lives within the merchant ships, but the very preservation of the lifeblood to the British Isles and other allies.

The USS Stewart DE 238 was purpose-built to protect convoys from submerged predators, equipped with sensors and anti-submarine weapons such as depth charges (barrels packed with explosives and pressure-sensitive detonators) and small, anti-sub mortar-bombs projectiles innocuously called "hedgehogs." The Stewart and the rest of the Edsall-class destroyer escorts were unique in that they had Fairbanks Morse direct-reversible engines which allowed, according to retired Navy Chief Engineman Mac Christy, less overall weight and the opportunity to "hang" more equipment and ordnance on the already packed ship.

Built in the works at Houston and drydocked in Galveston for finishing modifications, the USS Stewart, named after the captain of the frigate USS Constitution ("Old Ironsides"), was Texas-made to honor the U.S. Navy's time-honored tradition of being a tough, fast ship, with full intention of going into harm's way.



All photos by Katharine Crooks except top Cavalla image, which is courtesy of pidragen.com



USS STEWART, DESTROYER ESCORT 238 SLEEPING QUARTERS



MEMORIAL AT SEAWOLF PARK

The USS Stewart became a craft of many duties and destinations. First serving in the Caribbean, it soon became attached to the Eastern seaboard fleet and even escorted President Roosevelt on the first leg of his trip to the ultimately crucial Tehran Conference, which laid out the final grand strategies of the Allied effort and post-war dimensions.

After successfully escorting numerous convoys through the gauntlet that was the North Atlantic, the Stewart was called to the Pacific. There as a now-grizzled veteran, it served principally to train both submariners and escorts on the skills necessary to conduct their specialties.

After the war, the USS Stewart was designated to the reserves and was home-ported along the US seaboard until finally decommissioned, and like the USS Cavalla it was donated to Seawolf Park as a major component of the American Undersea Warfare Center.

Today, anchored on land and overlooking scenic Galveston Bay, the USS Stewart provides visitors access to sea breezes on its bow and with them the sounds of bells and nautical commands from nearby freighters, bringing to mind the days when brave little ships would cast off all lines and set sail as duty demanded.

In September 2008, the USS Cavalla and the USS Stewart had their one voyage together, short as it was, when the massive sea surge of Hurricane Ike lifted both vessels once again and set them down where they rest today. Yet according to Center curator Dewayne Davis, all is not completely restful on the Cavalla as veteran submariners who have slept over in the Cavalla's crew bunk area have reported on several occasions a spirit who wakes them at precisely 3am to stand the early watch.

Today, the American Undersea Warfare Center is the only site in the United States that features together a Gato-class World War II submarine and Edsall-class destroyer escort, and the latter is the only surviving member of its class and only one of two destroyer escorts of any type remaining in this country.

Torpedo vs. depth charge. Stealth vs. speed. The stark contrasts that make any visit to the Center at Seawolf Park a truly unique experience.

Commenting on the success of Seawolf Park in attracting visitors, Park manager Russ Kuykendall noted the role of the ships as a main attraction along with Seawolf Park as a legendary fishing destination. Continued improvements within the vessels themselves have made special events, in-ship sleepovers, reunions, and school trips increasingly popular, with the park attracting more than \$1 million in revenue last year. Significant upgrades to the amenities, venues, and accessibility of Seawolf Park are also planned which will make a visit to Galveston's ships of valor even more attractive.

Those seeking to become a valued crew member of the Cavalla Historical Foundation, which helps maintain the vessels, can call 409.770.3196, or visit the American Undersea Warfare Center Facebook page for more information or to volunteer. gm

The Predator and Protector story reprinted with the permission of Mr. John Hall, Publisher of the Galveston Monthly Magazine/The Galveston Parrott.

Thank you John Cecil for providing this interesting article.

Anniversaries

1 April 1893. U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer rating established. Happy 122nd birthday Chiefs. Throughout the years, the Chiefs have been known at the backbone of the U.S. Navy.

15 April 1898. Spanish-American War began.

11 April 1900. Navy buys submarine Holland VI. - - - U.S. Navy Submarine Force born.

6 April 1917. U.S. enters World War I.

21 April 1918 German fighter ace Manfred von Richthofen, "The Red Baron," is shot down and killed at age 25 over Vaux-sur-Somme, France. He had 80 confirmed kills.

10 April 1942. Bataan Death March begins.

18 April 1942. The Doolittle Raiders, using B-25 bombers launched from the USS Hornet (CV-8) to strike Tokyo.

18 April 1943. U.S. Army P-38 fighter planes shoot down the airplane carrying Japanese Admiral Yamamoto over Bougainville.

7 April 1945. U.S. Navy carrier based planes sink the Japanese battleship Yamato as it heads for Okinawa.

30 April 1945. Adolf Hitler and Eva Braun commit suicide in a Berlin bunker as Soviet troops advance through the city.

3 April 1949. NATO founded.

10 April 1963. USS THRESHER (SSN 593) the worlds most advanced attack submarine of the time was lost in the Gulf of Maine during a post overhaul test dive. The entire 129 member crew was lost in the world's worst submarine disaster ever. This tragedy led directly to significant changes in the Navy's submarine safety programs that have kept the U.S. Navy submarines safe ever since.

15 April 1969. U.S. Navy EC-121 belonging to VQ-1 was shot down by two North Korean MIG-17s while on a reconnaissance mission over the Sea of Japan. The EC-121 crashed 90 nautical miles off the North Korean coast. All 31 Americans aboard were killed. The U.S. did not retaliate against North Korea other than a naval demonstration in the Sea of Japan a few days later and resumption of reconnaissance flights.

30 April 1975. Saigon fell to North Vietnamese troops. One day after the largest helicopter evacuation in history where 7000 Americans and South Vietnamese were evacuated.

12 April 1981. First U.S. space shuttle launched.

11 April 1991. Persian Gulf War official cease fire.

19 April 1995. Oklahoma City federal building bombed in a domestic terrorist attack by Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols. The attack killed 168 people and injured 680 others. McVeigh was executed 11 June 2001, Nichols was sentenced to life in prison.

Anniversaries continued

1 May 1898. Admiral Dewey's squadron destroys Spanish squadron in Manila Bay.

4-8 May 1942. Battle of the Coral Sea. U.S. Navy repels the Japanese. This helps save Australia and blocks the Japanese juggernaut in the Pacific.

13 May 1908. Navy Nurse Corps established.

7 May 1941. Bob Hope's first USO show, March Field Air Base, California.

7 May 1945. Unconditional surrender of all German forces signed.

8 May 1945. Victory in Europe (V-E Day) is declared.

10 May 1925. U.S. Coast Guard Band Established.

2 May 2011. U.S. Navy SEALs kill al-Qaeda terrorist leader Osama bin Laden.

21 May 2016. Armed Forces Day celebrated.

30 May 2016. Memorial Day observed.

Quotable Quotes

I contend that for a nation to try to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle.---Winston Churchill

The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants.
---Thomas Jefferson

It does not matter how slowly you go so long as you do not stop. ---Confucius

Of the four wars in my lifetime none came about because the U.S. was too strong.
---Ronald Reagan

The program we sell is hard, however, and we're looking for the best--that means academically, physically, mentally. We're not looking for the super jock. We're looking for the guy we can count on when the countin' counts. ---Master Chief Dennis Drady, U.S. Navy SEAL

You were born to excel. Permission Granted. ---U.S. Navy SEALs

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8 May 2016

To all Moms

A decorative graphic with the text "Happy Mother's Day" in a colorful, cursive font. The text is arranged in three lines: "Happy" on the top line, "Mother's" in the middle, and "Day" on the bottom. Each letter is a different color, creating a rainbow effect. The background is a light, textured grey with faint, scattered yellow and white dots.

Happy
Mother's
Day