



USS Cusk Newsletter

Summer 2019



"Prepare to surface, four engines. Prepare to surface, four engines!"
"Prepare to surface, four engines, Maneuvering aye!"

2019 Cusk Reunion in Little Rock: Your orders are in and you are hereby ordered to report to the USS Razorback (SS-394) NLT Sunday afternoon, 8 September 2019. (Please note that we are currently experiencing a shortage of paint chippers so please bring your own.) Our reunion will be underway on Sunday, 8 September to Friday, 13 September. We have special USS Cusk hotel rates of \$94 per night at the Wyndham Riverfront Hotel in downtown Little Rock. It is a beautiful hotel located just a few blocks from the USS Razorback (SS-394) Museum and the Arkansas Inland Maritime Museum. You will be treated to a complimentary full hot breakfast buffet in the hotel each morning. The hotel also has complimentary parking, free WIFI, and there is a shuttle to both Downtown North Little Rock and the Little Rock Rivermarket shopping area. All of the hotel's rooms have updated furniture, refrigerator, and there is a new exercise room.

Cusk Reunion attendees will have full access to the Razorback while there as well as an onsite Hospitality Room. You will really enjoy the walk down memory lane while aboard the Razorback. She is very well preserved and very much like the Cusk inside and out with few exceptions. The Wyndham staff, representatives of the Razorback and Museum, and the City of Little Rock are renowned for their hospitality, and their enthusiasm for hosting military, especially submarine reunions. Combined with Willy's exceptional organizational and planning skills, we are assured of a great time. All contact information, hotel reservation options and your Cusk 2019 Reunion Registration Form is on the last page of this newsletter. We hope you will complete the form and send it in as soon as possible. And don't forget to include your meal choices for the Thursday night buffet dinner. The registration form is also available in .pdf format and can be printed from the Cusk website at <http://www.uscusk.com/2019%20Reunion.htm> or the Cusk's homepage at <http://www.uscusk.com>.

Sea Stories: "The USS Cusk is reported lost, believed sunk!" by Neil Briggs, RM1(SS) 1966 to 1969

"...Your question about Bangkok got this ole salt's heart racing among other things. Being the leading radioman, I was involved first hand with this 7th Fleet exercise. Now we are talking 1967 and I believe the exercise was "Operation Sea Dog". As usual we were the bad guy. The last day of the exercise, I seem to recall that the Aussie ship finished their portion with us and they cut us loose. All attention turned to Bangkok. The messages directed us to transit up the Bangkok River and moor starboard side to, and we would be greeted there. So we broke off and commenced transiting on the surface. All the usual exercise message traffic came in and there was no reason to believe we couldn't continue. It would have been mid to

early afternoon and we got an alert to incoming FLASH traffic. All eyes were on the printer. "Standby for flash traffic, Submarine Miss, Sub Sunk" was the subject from COMSEVENTHFLT. I remember announcing to the Bridge that we were receiving flash traffic and I think Sandy Whittaker left to tell the Captain (Don Killian) or he might have already been on the Bridge. At any rate, the message started printing and 7th Fleet had stopped the entire exercise and declared in the message "SUB Miss Sub Sunk" which is the key word for all vessels. It went on to declare that the USS CUSK had failed to check in and was suspected of being lost. Now any sailor has had an "Awe Shit!" moment. And I am here to tell you, this was one. I tore the message off and hauled ass for the Captain. In all the exercise messages there was never any message directing us to check in. But, the Captain told me to get on any circuit and report our position and that we were OK! Seems to me that a P3 aircraft buzzed us and we got on 121.5 MHz and told them who we were and they said they would report it.

We transited up the Bangkok River and tied up at this pier which was out in middle of nowhere. The locals had food/beer and of course hostesses. We were catered too quite well right there and I remember some of our shipmates sleeping in the superstructure."





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Famous/Noteworthy Cusk Crewmembers: The Cusk accomplished several “firsts” in her 24+ years of service, and she had several noteworthy members of her crew. Zeke Zellmer, the Cusk’s first engineering officer was aboard the USS Cavalla (SS-244) when she sank the Japanese carrier Shokaku in the Philippine Sea. The Shokaku was one of the carriers that attacked Pearl Harbor on that fateful December day. Zeke later worked for the CIA where he was project manager on “Project Azorian” aboard Howard Hughes’ Glomar Explorer where they recovered a portion of the Soviet Submarine K-129.

Another noteworthy crewmember was CDR Charles Momsen, Jr., fifth CO of the Cusk and son of Vice Admiral Charles Momsen who invented the submarine escape device called the “Momsen Lung”.

Plankowner and COB, Paul Golden “Swish” Saunders, was possibly the most decorated submarine sailor in Navy history. Swish received fifteen awards and medals including two Silver Stars and a Bronze Star plus his Dolphins and Combat Patrol pins. He was part of the team from the USS Barb that destroyed a 16-car Japanese train, which turned out to be the only land action taken by the U.S. against Japan in World War II. Be sure to watch this ‘must see’ YouTube video about the attack - <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/videos/category/history/this-us-sub-launched-an-attack-on-a-japan/>

LCDR Eugene Wilkinson served as XO aboard the Cusk in 1947 and 1948. He later went on to be selected as the first commanding officer of the USS Nautilus (SSN-571).

William Weisensee traded his silver dolphins for a gold pair while serving as a Lieutenant onboard the Cusk from 1965 to 1967. “Guber” later went on to become the first LDO in the U.S. Navy to attain the rank of Captain.

Norm Lanouette, quartermaster and UDT diver, left the Cusk in 1961 to serve aboard the USS Thresher (SSN-593). Norm was aboard the Thresher when they perished on 10 April 1963.

And thanks to Neil Briggs, we have discovered another Cusk crewmember that may have been the first and only submarine crewmember in the U.S. Navy to earn a Purple Heart during the Vietnam War. Neil had just been assigned as COB on the USS Alabama (SSBN-731) Blue Crew and he relays the story as follows:

“...My first day at the Offcrew Building at Bangor Washington went as usual with my meeting with the XO, and my new CO, Captain Beard. He advised me that since I was only an E-8, he would be working to have me reassigned because he deserved and rated an E-9. He was a senior Captain. I thanked him for the feedback and told him that I would give him 100% even as an E-8. It would be a month later and he came yelling down the passageway, “I got my E-9!” and threw the Selection Board Results at me. I was selected.

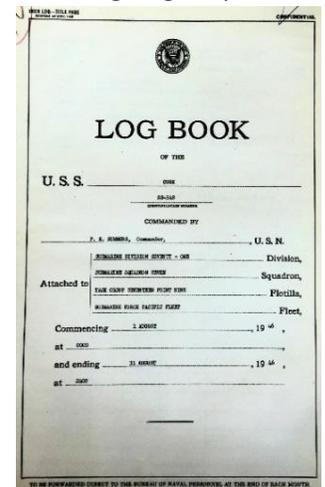
After meeting with the CO, I went into the COB’s office and introduced myself to the Old Cob. We went through the usual niceties and after a while got to talking about our pasts. I noticed that he wore a Purple Heart ribbon on his uniform and I asked him how he got it. He said that he got it serving in Vietnam on the Cusk. I took a double take. I explained to him about my time on Cusk. He said that his battle station was as a 50 caliber gunner on the afterdeck of Cusk and he was up there this one time and he was hit by a bullet coming from shore. I explained to him that my station was supposed to be that gun above the After Battery. We both chuckled about this and I had a new respect for not ever having to go topside. Coincidences are unique and have more meaning when put in the context of the military.”

From the Cusk’s Deck Log: These are historical excerpts randomly selected from the Cusk’s Deck Logs that are stored in our National Archives in Maryland. These entries document the Cusk’s last journey across the Pacific.

As a Sonar Technician, my surface duty station was operating the ship’s Radar in the Conning Tower. One day when we were somewhere between Pearl Harbor and Yokosuka, Japan, I picked up a large contact over the horizon at more than 40,000 yards (20+ nautical miles). It was a U.S. Navy carrier and the only reason our radar could pick it up at that distance was because of its massive size. I reported the contact to the Bridge and as I opened the Radar Log Book to make the entry for this contact, I saw that the most recent entry had been made 8 days before. I was stunned to realize that we had not encountered a single vessel in over a week! I couldn’t help but think about part of that poem by Winfred Ernest Garrison, “Oh God, thy sea is so great, and my boat is so small!”

The Cusk’s final venture across the Pacific began on Monday morning, 9 September 1968.

08-12 moored as before. 1000 Mustered the crew at Quarters; No unauthorized absentees. 1030 Stationed the Maneuvering Watch. Captain is on the Bridge, Navigator is in the Conning Tower. 1102 Underway in accordance with





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COMSUBPAC Quarterly Employment Schedule. Commenced maneuvering on various courses at various speeds to conform to the main ship channel while standing out of San Diego, Cal. 1126 Entered waters governed by international rules of the road. Secured the Maneuvering Watch. 1134 with Buoy #1 S.D. abeam to starboard, set course 270°; set speed 12 knots. 1140 Changed speed to 14 knots. (Signed) C. J. Johnson, LT, USN

Eight days later on Tuesday morning, 17 September 1968, we could see the lights of Pearl Harbor on the horizon. 08-12 Underway as before. 0800 Mustered the crew on stations. Absentees, none. 0834 Stationed the Maneuvering Watch, completed all preparations for entering port. The Captain is on the Bridge, the Navigator in the Conn, maneuvering at various courses at various speeds to conform to the Pearl Harbor Channel. 0901 Entered inland waters. 0943 Maneuvering to go alongside the pier. 0954 Moored portside to Pier S-8, U.S. Naval Submarine Base, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Ships present include various units of the U. S. Pacific Fleet, harbor and district craft. SOPA is CINCPACFLT. 0959 Secured the Maneuvering Watch. 1030 Mustered the crew at Quarters, absentees, none. (Signed) D. A. Raymond, LT, USN

Three days later, refueled and resupplied, including having taken on the last fresh milk we would taste for a very long time, we set sail for Yokosuka, Japan. The date is Friday, 20 September 1968.

08-12 Moored as before. 0800 Held Quarters for Muster and inspection, absentees: none. 0830 Stationed the Maneuvering Watch, made all preparations for getting underway. 0901 Underway in accordance with COMSUBPAC Quarterly Employment Schedule steering various courses at various speed to conform to the channel. Captain is on the Bridge. Navigator is in the Conning Tower, OOD is at the Conn. 0929 Set course 173° speed 9 knots. 0930 Changed course to 167°. 0931 Changed course to 162°. 0932 Changed speed to 10 knots. 0933 Changed course to 156°. 0934 Passed Buoy #1 abeam to starboard 100 yards. Changed course to 154°. 0941 Secured the Maneuvering Watch. 0942 Retarded all clocks one hour to conform with +11X time zone. 0847 Changed course to 217°. 0848 Changed speed to 14 knots. 0901 Changed speed to 12 knots. 0911 Changed course to 270°. 1043 Changed speed to 14 knots. 1059 Changed course to 272°. (Signed) J.S. Reef, LT, USN

14 days after leaving Pearl Harbor, it is now Friday morning, 3 October 1968. The showers have been open for several hours and visions of the Starlight Bar, Hotsie Baths, Josans, and Asahi Beer dance in our heads.

08-24 Underway as before. 0805 Met all requirements for a normal battery charge. 0810 Changed course to 338°. 0814 Stationed the Maneuvering Watch and made all preparations for entering port. Commenced steering various courses at various speed to conform to the channel. 0933 Moored starboard side to portside of USS Razorback (SS-394) in a nest of three submarines at Berth One, Ship Repair Facility, U.S. Naval Base, Yokosuka, Japan, with standard mooring lines doubled. Ships present include various units of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, yard and harbor craft. SOPA is COMSERVGRU Three on USS Ajax (AR-6). (Signed) J.L. Troutman, LT, USN

Eternal Patrol: Listed below are our shipmates who departed on Eternal Patrol in the past year (most recent first). Additional information, pictures and obituaries (where available) may be found at www.usscusk.com/Eternal.htm.

Name & Rank	Served aboard Cusk	Departed
Louis Edward Gamer, SN(SS)	1948 to 1951	12 February 2019
Rufino P Ibarra, SK2(SS)	1965	11 February 2019
Edward Clinton Terney, YNC(SS)	1963 to 1964	16 January 2019
Carl Robert "Mark" Markham, Jr., TM1(SS)	1952 to 1953	18 November 2018
William "Mac" McKenzie, Jr., LT	1952 to 1953	16 November 2018
Charles Harrison George, QM3(SS)	1948	26 October 2018
Joseph Talago, Jr., LTJG	1950	12 October 2018
Jack Richard Trommer, ET2(SS)	1961 to 1963	8 October 2018
Wesley Monroe Shrum, TMSA(SS)	1945 to 1946 (Plankowner)	21 September 2018
Norman J Carkeek, EN3(SS)	1949 to 1951	2 September 2018
Steve "The Codger" Rogers, EM3(SS)	1966 to 1969	Summer 2018
Ernest J "Zeke" Zellmer, LT	1946 - 1948 (Plankowner)	27 August 2018
William Lee Hodnett, RMC(SS)	1950 to 1951	27 August 2018
William J Weisensee, LT	1965 to 1967	11 August 2018

SAILORS! REST YOU OARS!





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Update: Cusk Memorabilia transferred to U.S. Navy Submarine Museum: Two large boxes of USS Cusk memorabilia were shipped to the U.S. Navy Submarine Force Library and Museum in late April. These boxes contained several items collected over the years including a brass phone directory plate, torpedo data plate, large brass USS Cusk ashtray, Collision Alarm actuator, Relative Bearing ring from the Cusk's #1 Scope, original Ship's Builder's Plaque, Deep Depth Gauge from Sonar, "Liberty Expires" clock face that was used to cover the Deep Depth Gauge in the Control Room, "Missile Center" sign from the lower hatch in the Mess Hall, and other various brass plates and artifacts from the Cusk.

Soon to be shipped is another large box containing hundreds of pictures, documents, posters, patches, brochures, messages and other memorabilia from the Cusk's past. All of this information takes time to compile and ship as I have to scan or photograph each item before sending it to New London. This way we will always have a digital copy of everything available for viewing on the Cusk's Webpage. Again it must be emphasized how important it is to document and preserve every single scrap of information relating to the Cusk and her history. I again ask and plead with you to please send me any similar item, either on short term loan to me, or as a donation to the National Museum. I will scan or photograph all items for the Cusk Webpage, and then, according to your wishes, either return it to you, or send it on to the Museum.

And as a reminder, my family has committed to keeping the Cusk webpage online in perpetuity after I've departed on Eternal Patrol. So rest assured that the Cusk's history, her artifacts and memorabilia will remain online for generations.

2019 Cusk Reunion, September 8 to 13, Little Rock, Arkansas: Your Reunion Registration Form is below. We hope you will join us and send your registration in soon. Remember that our special hotel room rates expire 19 August 2019. Steve "Willy" Wilson (1967 to 1969) is coordinating all of the arrangements and activities, and we already know that he does a great reunion!

Reunion Itinerary and Activities: An a La Carte list of daily options will be included in your reunion package at check-in. There is a Metro Street Car available in Little Rock that will get us to most of the interesting sites.

Sunday, September 8:

1500 to 1800 - Check-in at the Wyndham Riverfront Hotel

1600 to 2200 - Meet in Cusk Hospitality Room for reunification (Sea stories). Decide on next day's activities.

Monday - Thursday, September 9 to 12 Daily Activities:

0630 to 0930 - Breakfast in Wyndham Dining Room

1030 - Meet in hotel lobby for group tours, museum visits, shopping, etc.

1000 - 2200 - Drinks and snacks available in the Cusk Hospitality Room

Thursday, September 12:

1800 - Buffet Dinner catered by Two Sisters Restaurant on the Razorback Barge

Friday, September 13:

0630 to 0930 - Breakfast in the Wyndham Dining Room

1100 - Farewells and Checkout

Reservations & Payment Form

Name: _____ Spouse: _____ Total # attending: _____

Family/Friends attending: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Cell #: _____ Email: _____ Years onboard Cusk: _____ to _____

Reunion Costs (Dinner, Hospitality Room, etc.): # _____ x \$85.00 each + Donation (optional) _____ = **Total Enclosed: \$ _____**

(Please consider including a donation to the Arkansas Inland Maritime Museum with your Reunion fees. Thanks!)

Meal choice(s): Stuffed Pork Loin _____ Spinach Stuffed Chicken _____ Chicken in Mushroom Sherry Sauce _____ Glazed Ham _____

Make checks payable to "Steve Wilson" and mail to:

USS Cusk 2019 Reunion, c/o Steve Wilson, 410 Basswood Ave, Richland, Washington 99352-4041

Or you can email Steve with your information at subs566@gmail.com and make your payment via PayPal.

Make your hotel reservations online at: www.wyndhamhotels.com/group/hr/uss-cusk or call the hotel directly at **(855) 313-8524**. Willy's email is subs566@gmail.com and the email for our hotel contact is lroach@wyndhamnrl.com

