



USS Cusk Newsletter

Commemorative Black & White Edition

July 2015

Was the Cusk a Hybrid? The Cusk was a Balao Class boat built at Electric Boat/General Dynamics in Groton Connecticut, right? Or was she really a hybrid version of a newer class of U.S. Submarines? At the time the Cusk's keel was laid, the latest version of fleet submarines being developed was the Tench Class. The first, *USS Tench (SS-417)*, was commissioned on 6 October 1944. A total of 25 Tench boats were completed with 23 built at Portsmouth, 1 in Boston, and 1 at EB. Their hull numbers were 417 to 424 and 435 to 525. Tench Class boats had several significant improvements over previous classes of Gato and Balao including conversion of the #7 Main Ballast Tank (MBT) to a fuel tank or storage area, relocating #1 MBT from under the Forward Torpedo Room and rerouting its vent risers outside the hull (which eliminated a flood risk and made room for 4 more torpedoes), upgrading the pressure hull construction to thicker, high tensile steel to improve stability and test depth, and they made several other improvements in propulsion, shears, deck guns, etc.

Note that on the "1944" page of the Cusk Website (www.uscusk.com/1944.htm) there are "Covers", i.e., postcard souvenirs verifying both the initial laying of the Cusk's keel on 25 May 1944, and a second re-laying of the keel on 2 December 1944. Assuming that a substantial amount of work had already been completed on the first Cusk between these time periods, the obvious question is, why did they start over 6 months later? A logistics issue? Flawed construction? More research is needed, but the probable answer is because the Navy decided that much of the new Tench Class technology could, and should be reengineered into the Cusk. The timing is more than coincidental because the Navy did not make its final decision on the Tench Class boat improvements until the spring of 1944, just as construction was beginning on the Cusk. The modifications of #1 and #7 MBTs, and the change to thicker high tensile steel in the pressure hull might have mandated a different keel. Hence, there were possibly two USS Cusks, the first of which would have been scrapped or recycled after the second, greatly improved version was started. Since not all Tench Class improvements were incorporated into the Cusk, she was classified as Balao, although technically, it may have been correct to classify her as a hybrid or prototype of the Tench Class. Again, more research is required for verification, and obviously, if anyone has any additional/other information, it will be very much appreciated.

Do you know the Cusk's Test Depth? An obviously good qualification question which, no doubt we all remember...412 feet, right? No, actually, the Cusk's test depth was 650 feet thanks to her thicker, high tensile steel pressure hull. The reason the Navy set the depth at 412 feet was because the engineers who designed the hull were concerned that the trim pumps would not perform adequately below 412 feet.

Address Changes & Returned Mail: Following my last mailing about the 2016 Cusk Reunion, several letters were returned as "Unable to Forward" or "No Such Number". We would like to stay in touch with these shipmates and will appreciate any updated information or addresses you may have. Your current home and email addresses are also very important, so please help me stay up to date. Mail was recently returned for the following persons:

Buck Buchanan - Wando, SC
Lawrence Gallagher - Maryville, TN
Robert Gordon - University Place, WA
John Hayden - Austin, TX
Michael O Johnston - Tucson, AZ
Darrell Nickerson - Parker, CO

Irwin Bruce Pierson - Bremerton, WA
James E Richard - Virginia Beach, VA
Frank Schrope - Las Vegas, NV
Steve "Willie" Wilson - West Richard, WA
Joseph Zamaria - Massillon, OH

Cusk Newsletters & Email: If you are receiving unwanted Cusk related mail or email and wish to be deleted from my distribution list(s), please let me know. My apologies if any previous such request has not been honored yet. I am constantly researching and documenting almost 900 Cusk crewmembers and the Cusk's 24½ years of service, as well as the Cusk's webpage, Eternal Patrol notifications, reunions, and several other items, and I'm behind schedule on all of it. If I have failed on any of your requests, mail or otherwise, please accept my apology, and remind me again.





Recent received notices of Eternal Patrol:

I don't always get notified when a shipmate goes on Eternal Patrol, which is why some of these notices are late. The most recent notifications we have received are as follows:

Name	Departed	Served aboard Cusk
Clyde V Kirk II, F1/ST (MMOM)	28 February 2014	1945 to 1946
Ray M Peckenpaugh, EN3(SS)	4 November 2014	1945 to 1949
Craig "Barkel" Padgen, EM2(SS)	5 December 2014	1962 to 1964
Richard Gary Tucker, MMCM(SS)	31 December 2014	1960 to 1962
James Hume, TM1(SS)	15 January 2015	1956 to 1960
James E Walker, EM3c(SS)	2 February 2015	1946
Leo P Kunkel, EN1(SS)	18 February 2015	45 to 48 & 52 to 58
Earl R "Dick" White	May, 2015	1949 - 1950

Additional information, obituaries, and pictures (if available) are posted on the Cusk's website. Click on the "Eternal Patrol" page or enter www.usscusk.com/Eternal.htm.

Noteworthy Cusk Crewmembers: Here is some interesting scuttlebutt about some of our shipmates before and after they served aboard the Cusk.

Paul G "Swish" Saunders – Swish served as COB on the Cusk between 1946 and 1950. He was highly regarded as one of the most decorated of all enlisted submarine veterans. He was part of the team that made the only assault by US military forces on the island of Japan during World War II. During that raid, his team destroyed a 16-car train on a coastal railway with an explosive charge that used a micro switch placed under the rails to trigger the explosion. He also distinguished himself while serving on board the *USS Barb (SS-220)* where he made all twelve of *Barb's* war patrols, five in the Atlantic and seven in the Pacific. Swish is also featured in the book, "Thunder Below" written by Admiral Eugene B Fluckey.

Eugene P "Dennis" Wilkinson – He served as XO on the Cusk from 1948 to 1949. He was later selected as the first Commanding Officer of the *USS Nautilus (SSN-571)*, the world's first nuclear submarine. In 1961, Admiral Rickover selected him to serve as the first Commanding Officer of the *USS Long Beach (CGN-9)*, America's first nuclear surface ship, and finally in 1980, he was chosen as the first President and CEO of the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations.

Ernest J "Zeke" Zellmer – Prior to serving as the Cusk's first engineering officer, Zeke served aboard the *USS Cavalla (SS-244)* when, on her maiden voyage, she sank the Japanese carrier *Shokaku*. This was the same carrier that had led the attack on Pearl harbor just 3½ years earlier. I asked Zeke one time over lunch if the Japanese got very mad when they hit the carrier and he replied, "Oh, they were upset!" As soon as they hit the *Shokaku*, the *Cavalla* was attacked by three Japanese destroyers and a total of 105 depth charges. Amazingly, the *Cavalla* only suffered minor damage from one of the destroyers. After the war, Zeke transferred to the Navy Reserves where he retired as a Captain. During his post war years he worked for the CIA and was the project lead's deputy on "Project Azorian" and the specially built ship, *Glomar Explorer* that salvaged part of the Russian submarine *K-129* in 1974. I recommend that you Google "Zeke Zellmer" for some YouTube interviews and some other very interesting information about his accomplishments.

William J "Guber" Weisensee – Bill qualified as an enlisted man prior to his serving aboard the Cusk from 1965 to 1967 as a Lieutenant. He was still wearing his silver dolphins when he first came aboard but shortly afterwards he earned his gold fish. Guber left the Cusk in 1967 going on to become one of the first LDOs in Naval history to attain the rank of Captain. Among his many commands, he was XO and subsequently commanding officer of the Naval Submarine School.





Earl Lee "Eleek" Krabill – Prominent quartermaster and highly skilled master of the "sling" with which he struck terror in the hearts of many seagulls, one pelican, and some Nereus personnel, Lee qualified and served on the Cusk during her last two years of service. During the Cusk's final WestPac, he is alleged to have voluntarily drank his dolphins on three different occasions. Lee is currently serving as the Commander of the USSVI Barb Base in Cape Coral, Florida.

Norman G "Norm" Lanouette – Quartermaster and highly experienced UDT diver, Norm came aboard the Cusk in November, 1958 and qualified in 1959. He left the Cusk in February, 1961 after being selected to serve aboard the *USS Thresher (SSN-593)*. He went down with the crew of the Thresher on 10 April 1963.

Charles B Momsen, Jr. – LCDR Momsen was Captain of the Cusk from 1951 to 1953. In 1964, Captain Momsen was presented the "Legion of Merit" award for his work in antisubmarine warfare. He was personally responsible for the Navy's Deep Research Vehicle Program which led to the construction of the ALVIN (DSV-2). The Alvin made over 4,400 dives some of which included exploration of the wreck of the RMS Titanic. Mr. Momsen is the son of Charles "Swede" Momsen, the Naval pioneer in submarine rescue who invented the "Momsen Lung" underwater escape device, and who directed the rescue of the *USS Squalus (SS-192)* in May, 1939.

Cusk 2016 Reunion: One person has asked why our 2016 Cusk Reunion is in April instead of September. Apologies if that has caused any inconvenience, and the reason is simple...cruise prices are lower, September is very hot in Florida, and most importantly, our hurricane season peaks on 10 September - not a good time to be at sea. So apologies to those who preferred or expected a September reunion. Related to this, we will have a meeting scheduled aboard ship at 1400 on Thursday, 28 April 2016 to plan the 2018 reunion. The dates and location chosen for the 2018 Reunion will be determined by the 2018 volunteer(s).

Cruise Reservations – Deposit Deadline is 17 July: Please remember that the deadline for our reunion cruise reservations is fast approaching. Carol has gotten us another extension on this deadline, but after this date, all remaining cabins will be sold to the public on a first come, first serve basis. If you are still undecided or if you have declined but may change your mind later, it still may be possible to get a cabin, possibly as late as next April, but the odds on one being available will decline progressively between now and then. Please don't miss this unique chance of going to sea with us. Carol's number is **(800) 910-9291**. She can help you with everything cruise related, including cruise insurance which runs \$150 for two persons. Also remember that your deposit and all advance payments for the cruise are fully refundable up until 45 days prior to the sailing date, i.e., until 12 February 2016. After that date, refund amounts decline by about 25% every two weeks.

Cruise Price Errors: Apologies for the errors and confusion caused by the incorrect prices on the "Sailing Orders" that I mailed and posted online recently. It is a long story which involves a misunderstanding with Royal Caribbean, but regardless, the correct, all-inclusive, 2-person cabin prices are as follows: Inside cabin - \$857.04; Outside cabin w/large window - \$937.04; Outside cabin w/balcony - \$1,763.04; Mini-Suite - \$2,273.00. All in all, a great bargain for 4 days and 4 nights of lodging, food, and entertainment for two people. Also, the sailing date is Monday, 25 April 2016, not September. (Seven different people reviewed that flyer and not one caught the 'September' error.)

Welcome Reception, Tours & Banquet: These events occur just prior to our cruise and I am handling all of the related reservations, expenses, etc. The \$60 per person charge is for drinks and snacks for the Saturday afternoon Welcome Reception, bus rental, driver, drinks and snacks for the tours, and for the cost of the Sunday catered banquet, which includes facility rental and cleanup, appetizers, dinner, dessert, soft drinks, beer and wine. Please feel free to contact me anytime by phone: (321) 213-3567, email: usscusk@att.net, or postal mail: Tom Roseland, 1635 Sea Shell Drive, Merritt Island, FL 32952 for any questions, requests, etc. There is no rush on paying for these





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pre-cruise events, but it will help me with planning if you send payment soon. Don't forget your "Cusk Reunion rate" hotel reservations at the Cocoa Beach Days Inn: (800) 245-5225 or (321) 784-2550, or the Cocoa Beach Best Western: (800) 962-0028 or (321) 783-7621. Both hotels are beachside, adjacent to each other, and the Best Western is oceanfront. Both hotels have free hot breakfasts and provide free parking during the cruise, which alone is a \$15 to \$18 savings per day.

Possible Tour Itinerary Change: Regretfully I must tell you that as of last week, I have been advised by the Air Force that (temporarily) I cannot bring any guests onto Cape Canaveral AFS as currently planned for our tour. USAF Space Command has just elevated base access and control to "DEFCON Bravo" due an elevated terror threat. Hopefully this condition will change, and my apologies for being a little political, but given the current administration's weakness on terrorism, it is unlikely that this new restriction will be downgraded soon, and probably not by next April. If it isn't, we will have a 'Plan B' ready. Meanwhile I am monitoring the situation closely and I have several reliable contacts at CCAFS keeping me apprised. A final decision cannot be made until mid-March of next year, but you may be assured that I will make every effort to keep the tour on our agenda as planned. And do not be concerned about any refunds regardless of what we end up doing for our pre-cruise on-shore activities. A full refund is guaranteed up to and including the day of the events.

Who's Coming to the Reunion? To date we have 21 cabins reserved on the cruise and 41 people officially signed up, with 4 more probables, at least for the on-shore activities. The list includes:

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| Les "Grapes" & Dorothy Atchison | Richard & Mary Baylon | Don "Starbuck" & Becky Birch |
| Mabel Bradley | Dave "The Walrus" Duerr | Larry & Judy Franklin |
| Roger & Nancy Gile | Ron & Darlene Gile | Chuck Harner |
| Susan Heilman | Don "Colorado" & Dee Horton | Bill & Mary Hrbacek |
| James & Joan Hughes | Jim "Sparks" & Nelda Johnson | Lee "Eleek" & Joni Krabill |
| Jim "Sheriff" & Suzanne Mallery | Bob "Trebor" & Janet Nelson | Gino "Aces" & Editha Rillamas |
| Tom "Bump" & Patrice Roseland | Dennis "Birdman" & Chris Schultz | Ron & Alice Shook |
| John "Harvard" Troutman | Dick & Teresa Wagstaff | Gary "Hood" & Sandra Wood |
| Larry & Darlene Wood | Zeke & Beverly Zellmer | |

A personal note: He probably will not want me to say anything, but Zeke Zellmer moved up near Jacksonville recently and during his move, he fell and broke some vertebrae in his back. Since then he has undergone multiple surgeries and is currently wheelchair bound. He seems in pretty good spirits though and is hopeful that he will eventually get out of the wheelchair and be well enough for him and Beverly to come to our reunion next year. Please keep him in your prayers and thoughts. If you would like to send good wishes, his address is 4312 Fleet Landing Blvd., Atlantic Beach, Florida 32233. His email isn't working yet but I have his cell number if needed. I'm sure he would appreciate good wishes for his continued improving health.

Cusk Newsletter Donations: Just an FYI but most importantly, a sincere heartfelt "Thank You!" to those of you who have made donations to the Cusk Newsletter over the years. Because of you, we have never needed to solicit donations or charge anything for the Cusk Newsletter. Pursuant to that, this is not a request, but is just for your information. I often receive inquiries from shipmates and sometimes from their wives asking if they can send something to help cover the costs. The answer is "sure". Just send it to me at my home address, but please do not feel as though you need to. We have plenty of funds on hand now to keep the newsletter going for a while, as well as enough to produce and distribute "The Cusk Story" slideshow DVD that I am still working on. (Soon! It will be finished soon!) I keep careful track of all donations and expenditures in a separate bank account, and if it starts running low, I will not hesitate to ask for help. Until then, we're good, and thank you all again so very much for your donations in the past.

Tom

