

# Reunions

Please Visit the  
*Grand Opening!*  
Of Our New Online Store

We have been working diligently to create a new Online Store and were happy to see its opening in December 2011!

The new store will offer us new opportunities to keep you informed on new product, current stock status, as well as feature special items on occasion. We are still in the process of photographing and adding our current offerings – so please remember to check back for new items.

*Browse...*the store and see what we have to offer.

*Suggestions...*feel free to make suggestions to let us know what you'd like to see!  
[store.submarinemuseum.com](http://store.submarinemuseum.com)

## USS Sunfish SSN649 and SS281

June 27 - July 1, 2012  
New London Plaza Hotel  
35 Governor Winthrop Boulevard  
New London, CT 06320  
Phone: (860) 443-7000  
Contact: Joe Martin  
828-284-0057  
828-284-4262  
josephmartin649@gmail.com  
sunfish649@gmail.com

## USS Casimir Pulaski (SSBN-633)

July 26-28, 2012  
Location: Eugene, Oregon  
Contact: Don Murphy  
Web: [www.usscasimirpulaski.com](http://www.usscasimirpulaski.com)  
Phone: (321) 727-7981  
Email: [jdm4791@juno.com](mailto:jdm4791@juno.com)



Submarine Force Library and Museum Association  
PO Box 501, Naval Submarine Base  
Groton, CT 06349-5501



Fall  
Donor  
Appeal

Our Fall Donor Appeal went out via mail earlier this month. It references some of the wonderful things that have happened at The Museum, many of which we've highlighted in The Klaxon.

But we need your continued support to make all this continue to happen. Our donors make a positive impact on the success of the Museum. Please send your donation of \$50, \$100, \$110, \$250 — or whatever amount you can share. We welcome your gift, whatever the size and all donors will be listed in the 2011 Donor Registry and recognized on our website.

Send your donations via mail to:  
Submarine Force Library & Museum Association  
Box 501 • US Naval Submarine Base  
Groton, Connecticut 06349  
or donate online at: [ussnautilus.org](http://ussnautilus.org)

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fall 2011

# THE KLAXON

Submarine Force Library & Museum Association • [ussnautilus.org](http://ussnautilus.org)



## From the Desk of the President

The busy season is over, Thanksgiving is past, and Christmas and the New Year (2012 already!) are upon us. Where has the time gone? 2011 has been an eventful year weather-wise, what with a tropical storm during our busiest time of year and a freak fall snow storm amongst other less notable events. The weather, coupled with at least a perception that the economy is not as robust as we would like, has worked to reduce the number of visitors we would expect at the museum. To date, we are off about 8 percent in the number of visitors compared to last year.

Our **Educational Outreach Programs** continue to be strong. This year we conducted 74 events and reached approximately 15,000 children through our educational outreach events. They continue to be popular events in the community and we are grateful to our Educational Director, Liz Murphy, and her enlisted helpers.

In honor of the **10th Anniversary of 9/11**, volunteers listed the names of those who perished and have lost their lives in The War on Terror on enormous banners. Over 9,000 names were written and these banners serve as a fitting tribute. Following their display in the museum the banners were donated to Tribute WTC 9/11 in New York City. (see story to the right)

**Facebook** remains a hugely popular form of social interaction and the Submarine Force Museum Facebook fan page continues to grow, now with over 6,300 fans. The museum posts a daily article titled "Today in Submarine Force History," a short write up about interesting happenings in submarine force history. These articles have been extremely well received. We have included in this issue of the Klaxon the Top 5 articles for 2011 based upon reader response.

Finally, after months of effort on the part of our web designer and the museum store manager, the new museum online store is up and running. Please visit the store at [www.ussnautilus.org](http://www.ussnautilus.org) and click on **Grand Opening** to see the new store. Tell us what you think; we would be interested to hear what items you would like to see in the store that we may not currently offer.

We are still looking for email addresses so we can send our **electronic newsletter PING** to all our members. To date, we have email addresses for less than half our members so we're asking for your help in this area; if you would like to receive PING please make sure we have an accurate, up to date email address. Send your email address to [director@submarinemuseum.org](mailto:director@submarinemuseum.org) and say you would like to be placed on the PING mailing list.

Please stop by and visit your museum whenever you are in the area and bring your friends.

*DMG*

David M. Goebel, RADM USN (Ret)



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9/11 Banners

After more than a month on display in the Museum, the two banners we created to commemorate the tenth anniversary of 9/11 have gone to their new, permanent home at the **Tribute WTC Visitor Center** in New York City, just across the street from the sixteen-acre site where the World Trade Center towers used to stand and where the new towers are under construction.

The Center, in the words of its mission statement, "offers visitors to the World Trade Center site a place where they can connect with people from the September 11<sup>th</sup> community. Through walking tours, exhibits and programs, the Tribute WTC Visitor Center offers 'Person to Person History,' linking visitors who want to understand and appreciate these historic events with those who experienced them."

The Museum's Education Specialist and two Sailors hand delivered the banners to the center on 29 November and were able to tour the exhibits with Tribute WTC's curator, Meriam Lobel. It was an incredible experience and we hope to send more Sailors to tour the center and the memorial across the street sometime next spring.

If you are interested in visiting, more information about the Center can be found at [tributewtc.org](http://tributewtc.org). The banners will be on display periodically; we will post dates and times on our website and Facebook page.

**THANK YOU** ....Earlier this year, the Submarine Force Library & Museum Association received a generous grant of \$25,000 from Exelon Corporation. The grant was made in honor of Admiral Bruce DeMars, USN (Ret) who had served on the board of Exelon for over 14 years and retired at

the end of 2010. Admiral DeMars is a life member of the Submarine Force Library & Museum Association and is a strong supporter of the museum. Thank you to Exelon Corporation and thank you Admiral DeMars for your support of our museum.



On a daily basis dedicated members of the Nautilus crew/museum staff post a short note on the museum Facebook page titled “TODAY IN SUBMARINE FORCE HISTORY”. This has proven to be very popular with our Facebook fans and followers. We thought Klaxon readers, particularly those not plugged into Facebook, might enjoy seeing some of these postings. So for this issue of the Klaxon we are including the “TOP FIVE OF TODAY IN SUBMARINE FORCE HISTORY” for your reading enjoyment.”



On **3 August 1958**, USS NAUTILUS (SSN-571) became the first vessel to reach the geographic North Pole. Her historic voyage, code-named “Operation Sunshine,” is one of the great stories of the U.S. Submarine Force. NAUTILUS was the first nuclear-powered vessel in the world. Previously, all submarines had had to surface frequently to charge the batteries used for propulsion while submerged. Nuclear power allowed NAUTILUS to remain submerged for weeks. This would prove invaluable during her voyage to the North Pole. In the summer of 1958, the United States Navy initiated “Operation Sunshine.” To most, the mission was billed as an anti-submarine warfare exercise in the South Pacific. However, the name was deliberately misleading, designed to divert attention from CDR William Anderson and the NAUTILUS’s voyage to the North Pole. Following the spectacular, and televised, failure of the Vanguard TV3 rocket in December 1957, the decision was made to keep Operation Sunshine secret until its successful completion. On 19 June 1958, NAUTILUS entered the Chuchki Sea on her way to the North Pole. She was soon turned back by deep draft ice in those shallow waters and was forced to return to Pearl Harbor to wait for more favorable conditions. By 23 July, NAUTILUS had the conditions her crew was waiting for. She set sail northward once again and submerged in the Barrow Sea Valley on 1 August. Submarine navigation, already difficult, was especially hazardous while operating under the Arctic sheet. Above 85 degrees of latitude both magnetic and gyroscopic compasses became inaccurate. There was a risk that the submarine would become disoriented and be forced to surface. The threat was so great that CDR Anderson considered using the sub’s torpedoes to blow a hole in the ice so NAUTILUS could surface. At times NAUTILUS was operating with as little as ten feet between the submarine and the crushing ice. Finally, on 3 August, all the planning and daring actions of the NAUTILUS crew came to fruition. At 2315 EDST, USS NAUTILUS became the first vessel in history to reach the geographic North Pole. NAUTILUS spent another 96 hours under the ice as she completed the famous “Northwest Passage” and surfaced again northeast of Greenland. Her historic message, “NAUTILUS Ninety, North” provided a much-needed boost to American morale. While in port at the Isle of Portland, England, NAUTILUS was presented the Presidential Unit Citation by U.S. Ambassador J.H. Whitney. This was the first award of the U.S. military’s highest unit decoration in peacetime.



Operating on her seventh war patrol, USS SUNFISH (SS-281) emerged from a low fog bank early in the day on **5 July 1944**, sighting the coast of Kamchatka, Russia in the distance. On the surface the submarine’s captain was well aware of the vulnerability of his command and turned back to stay in the edge of the fog bank and observe the coastline. Running in and out of the heavy fog, SUNFISH sighted masts in the distance. SUNFISH started tracking these new contacts, eventually determining that the ships were anchored off the coast, near some inlets, which were too shallow for navigation. None of the ships were showing any identifying marks, so SUNFISH went to battlestations as she moved closer to investigate. As the fathometer ticked below 15 fathoms of water beneath the keel, SUNFISH slowed to Ahead 1/3 and continued inwards towards the two mysterious ships. Finally, at a range of 4,000 yards, Russian markings could be seen on the southernmost vessel, so SUNFISH shifted her attention to the other merchant. Closing in on her new target, SUNFISH couldn’t make out any distinguishing marks, any guns or flags. Intrigued, the sub’s captain ordered searchlights rigged on the top of the bridge and started challenging the ship with the signal “AA.” “AA” was a challenge used by Japanese escorts and the sub hoped

to spook her prey into giving her identity away. SUNFISH’s captain noted in his report that the situation was: “unusual; ship not identified, probably just inside territorial waters, and showing no identification or colors. Continued challenging and closing.” At this point, much activity could be seen on the deck of the merchant, with sailors running to and fro preparing to get underway. The ship started smoking as she built up steam to get underway, and a small fleet of lighters scattered from her sides. At a range of 2,000 yards, the Japanese crews nerve broke and she raised the Japanese ensign on her aft flagstaff. At the same time the “flag-raiser” started waving a white rag from the end of a broomstick. Unable to accept the Japanese vessels’ surrender and with no way of insuring the ship’s parole, SUNFISH proceeded with her attack. She fired one torpedo at a depth of ten feet and watched the torpedo’s track disappear directly under the vessel. Firing another shot at a depth of six feet, the torpedo appeared to pass under the ship, though multiple crewmen reported hearing a “thud” at the correct time. After her second shot, SUNFISH started turning to the left to open the range and avoid a collision. The captain noted: “We looked and felt silly. Changed swing into a complete circle, steadied.” SUNFISH fired one last torpedo at a depth of five feet. This shot struck the target and sank her within a minute. The captain of SUNFISH believed that both of his previous shots were hits, but the torpedoes were duds. SUNFISH turned back out to sea and continued on her way, leaving 4,000 tons of Japanese shipping settling on the bottom behind her.



On **1 July 1989**, USS HOUSTON (SSN-713) left port for a training mission. The trip would prove to be a brief one—only six hours—but during that time the sub’s crew demonstrated that training is often all that stands between a vessel and disaster.

Shortly after submerging, with the boat at periscope depth, a standard low-pressure ventilation procedure was conducted—and it went horribly wrong. Later tests showed that the main snorkel valve did not close and that an audible signal which would have indicated that fact was disabled. In an 18 March 2001 article in the Washington Post entitled “Terror at Sea: A Submariner’s Tale,” Christopher Lehman—at the time a chief who had just been assigned to HOUSTON—described what he saw as he was speaking to the chief engineer in the torpedo room. “As we talked, I glanced behind his shoulder. I couldn’t believe my eyes. Across the room... seawater was gushing through a main air vent. I thought to myself, ‘Is this some weird joke to test my reactions?’ I turned to the chief engineer. He stood frozen in silence, staring at the water with a look that said it all: This was not a drill.” His next thought: “It was show time. This was what all the training had been about: We would need nerves of steel, quick thinking, quick reactions and true courage to survive. If the men in control of the ship failed now in any way, we were all simply doomed.”

As the flooding alarm began to sound, the boat took a sharp up-angle and shot towards the surface. But as more and more water poured in, its weight slowed the ascent and eventually began pulling the boat down. Lehman and the chief engineer, who had been scrambling towards the air vent to investigate the problem, were almost thrown from their feet by the dramatic changes in angle. “All about the sub, silence set in,” Lehman recalls, “the only sound seemed to be that of our main engines, fighting to overcome the massive water drag.” Finally the engines succeeded and HOUSTON began to rise again. The angle was “so steep we were forced nearly parallel to the deck. The six or seven of us in the torpedo room clung to the torpedo stowage racks for our very lives. Letting go meant a possible 40-foot free-fall, straight back

and down, or sliding down the length of the deck like a cue ball heading for a pocket. We could only pray that the torpedo shackles would hold those 3,000-pound beasts that lay beside us. If one broke loose, it could have smashed us, or caused an explosion on impact.” At the same time, a second alarm sounded—seawater had reached the boat’s batteries and started a reaction that released toxic chlorine gas.

When the sub hit the surface and leveled off, Lehman released his hold on the torpedo racks and grabbed a gas mask. He believed the worst was over. Unfortunately, a moment later the tons of water sloshing in the bilges rushed forward, dragging the sub back down. Her engines were still powering her forward which, moments before, had meant toward the surface. Now that forward momentum and the weight of the water conspired to pull the sub down at an alarming rate. Lehman remembers, “I could hear the outer hull sing as the metal shrank and buckled under the tremendous ocean pressure.”

“The control crew had, in fact, done two things. First, they performed a crash-back maneuver, taking the boat from ahead flank (maximum forward speed) to back full emergency (maximum engine power in reverse); then they performed an emergency blow, blasting compressed air into the ballast tanks to achieve the highest possible level of positive buoyancy in the fastest amount of time. HOUSTON responded, shooting back towards the surface, where she remained. Her crew having responded exactly as they were trained to do, was able to return safely to port. She remains in active service today.



On **June 17, 1945**, PCU CUBERA (SS-347) was launched at Electric Boat Company in Groton, CT. Although she joined the fleet too late to take part in World War II, she made her mark on the silver screen in Ray Harryhausen’s 1955 science-fiction film *It Came from Beneath the Sea*. Much of the movie was shot at San Francisco Naval Shipyard, so several real Sailors played supporting roles. But CUBERA was a central character, portraying an atomic sub (which, in reality, she was not) that tangles with a giant octopus (which, in reality, had only six arms because of budget constraints). What follows is a brief summary of the plot of the movie that made an unassuming diesel-powered sub into a Hollywood star.

A nuclear submarine on her shakedown cruise in the Pacific is damaged when she comes into contact with something massive. After the boat frees herself and returns to Pearl Harbor, workers find huge chunks of animal tissue jammed in her dive planes. A team of marine biologists determines that the tissue is part of a gigantic octopus. Military authorities scoff at this explanation, but are finally persuaded to investigate after receiving reports of missing swimmers and ships pulled under by an unidentified living being. The scientists eventually conclude that the octopus is from the Mindanao Deep and has been forced out of its natural habitat by hydrogen bomb testing in the area. The testing has rendered the octopus radioactive, which drives off its natural food supply.

As the octopus continues its rampage, the government is forced to evacuate all sea traffic in the North Pacific. When the creature attacks a local sheriff on the coast of Oregon, the government mines the waters along the entire Pacific coast; officials retreat to Navy headquarters in San Francisco. An electrified safety net is strung underwater across the entrance to San Francisco Bay to protect the Golden Gate Bridge. A special jet-propelled atomic torpedo, with which the government hopes to destroy the creature, is prepared, and not a

moment too soon. Later that same day, the giant octopus demolishes the net across the Bay and heads toward San Francisco.

The Navy orders the Golden Gate Bridge abandoned, which turns out to have been a good idea when the creature catches sight of the bridge, becomes enraged, and attacks. Scientists and Navy personnel launch a submarine, loaded with the atomic torpedo, and prepare to attack. But when the creature is shot, it retaliates by grabbing the submarine. Using an aqualung, the boat’s commanding officer swims out to the octopus and places explosive charges on it before being knocked out by the creature’s flailing arms. One of the scientists then swims out and shoots the octopus in the eye, forcing it to release the ship, and pulls the CO to safety. Back at the base the torpedo is detonated, destroying the giant octopus as it heads back out to sea.



**10 March 1962**—Crowds gathered at General Dynamics Electric Boat in Groton, CT for the commissioning of USS THOMAS A. EDISON (SSBN-610), the U.S. Navy’s eighth ballistic-missile submarine. From the very beginning, THOMAS A. EDISON was intimately connected to the man with whom she shared a name, the inventor of the electric light bulb:

Edison’s grandson, Peter Edison Sloane, welded his initials into the boat’s keel when it was laid in 1961 and his daughter, Madeleine Edison Sloane, served as the vessel’s sponsor a year later. But THOMAS A. EDISON was also connected to another famous name: Steinway & Sons. Cy Young, the boat construction captain, was determined that the sub have one unique accessory: a full-size piano. He promptly journeyed to New York and paid \$1,500 for a Steinway, which he had shipped back to Groton in a specially made stainless steel, felt-lined box. The piano was loaded onto the sub during a second shift, when questions were less likely to be asked, and remained in its box until all the major hull openings had been closed and there was no chance it could be removed. Then it was unloaded and strapped to the bulkhead in crew’s mess. From there, it passed into legend. A brief article on the piano, titled “This Equipment Secured During Ultra-Quiet, or Don’t Shoot the Piano Player He’s Doing the Best He Can” noted that THOMAS A. EDISON “stands apart from the rest of the United States submarine fleet... [as] the only sub... with a piano as optional equipment.” The article’s author did admit that “there are a few problems with having a piano aboard. It can’t be played during ‘ultra-quiet’ and not many piano tuners will come aboard to tune it. Aside from that, it has provided many hours of musical enjoyment for the crew,” especially during what were termed “Mid Patrol Proms.” (No descriptions of this celebration could be found.) Edison himself shared an affinity for Steinways with the sub’s captain, as evidenced by a letter he wrote to the company in 1890: he said he “wanted to purchase a Steinway piano because, for some reason unknown to [him], it gave better results than any others he had tried.” The piano would remain aboard the THOMAS A. EDISON until her decommissioning in 1986, after which it was transferred to the Navy Museum in Washington, DC.

An article written as part of Steinway’s 150th-anniversary celebration said that “it was rediscovered after a 1992 crew reunion within two weeks from being destroyed. Crewmembers, who credit the piano as a source of enjoyment and inspiration during difficult times, were so passionate about the instrument that they rallied together to ensure that the ‘Submarine’ Steinway piano met a more favorable fate.” Steinway volunteered to restore the piano in exchange for the opportunity to display the instrument in its anniversary exhibit in 2003. It remains, now in near-new condition, in the Naval Historical Center’s artifact collection.