

IN THE SAME BOAT

For Neal Huggins

Born in 1961, Darren Baker served in the Navy and later took his degree in foreign languages at the University of Connecticut. His previous works include *At the Office* and *Trapasy*.

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Walking the plank

There were two small steps that year that became giant leaps. One was for a man on the moon, the other for a boy on an equally barren surface. When the man took his step, he had the whole world behind him. The boy had only his brother and he was no help at all. In fact, he was only making it worse by sneering, “Let’s go, let’s go.” As the older of the two, his brother should have been the one in the lead, but he was no fool. They had to get across a space not much wider than a plank, with deep, murky water looming below them. The day was grim and chilly, somewhat better conditions than on the moon, but hardly ideal for an excursion that was, after all, supposed to be fun.

The boy finally took that first step, if that’s what a few inches could be called. He was sideways now, his hands gripping as much of the wall behind him as they could. Crawling along with one baby step after another, he at last made it to the other side and looked around. He could see water on his right, a pier on his left, and towering high above him was the sail and wing-like fairwater planes of a submarine. It was a dull hunk of black metal super-imposed against the bleak background. Absolutely magnificent.

Loughton was not quite seven at the time. His father, a mess specialist on board the nuclear-powered submarine USS

Ulysses S. Grant, had arranged to give his family a tour of his boat that day. The tour topside would take them from the aft section forward, and for that they had to get around the sail, which was set squarely in the middle of the deck. It looked no more difficult than walking on the ledge of a building, but Demain, two years older than his brother, balked when their father, petty officer second class Martin Stairs, told him to follow him. The boy just stood there, arms locked to his sides, eyes fixed on the point where the deck began to narrow around the sail, and didn't budge. Their mother Jenny was still urging him forward when Loughton, on impulse, slipped in front of him to lead the way. Instead of being grateful, Demain merely began sniping at him from behind, just to remind him who the owner of this boat really was.

It had always been that way between them. Only weeks before their neighbor, Mr. James O'Neill, had turned 100, and Jenny sent her two boys to his home with cigars in hand to congratulate him. They were greeted at the door by Mr. O'Neill's sister, who could have easily passed for 100 herself. She ushered them into the kitchen, where the old man sat hunched and wheezing next to the table. Being the oldest, Demain was supposed to be the first to congratulate him, but he just stood there as he did on the deck of the Grant. Granted, the old man was a scary sight for a little kid. Hoary and shriveled, he looked like he could actually remember Grant. Like the general, Mr. O'Neill enjoyed a good smoke, and his huge eyes behind the thick glasses started to water as Loughton, again to the rescue, stepped forward and put the first cigar in his hand. Demain didn't hold it against his brother for stepping in his shoes that time, but it was a different story on the boat.

The tour below decks had been impressive. The hum of the machinery, the lights glowing on the panels, the periscope, all those torpedoes. Not surprisingly, the space

where their father worked, the galley, was like any other kitchen. The only thing that stood out about it was the stale-looking casserole that had been lunch that day. Demain, already developing a fastidious habit towards food, couldn't believe his father dished stuff like that up. The boys had never seen him cook at home and now they knew why not. Although they joked about the casserole together, Demain was still not about to let his younger brother off the hook for showing him up topside. When Loughton later banged his head hard on a valve, both his parents flinched with him. Demain did too, but in a fashion that could only mean, "Watch the big head next time, Junior."

But for the most part, the boys were a team of navy brats. Throughout his career, Martin would be stationed aboard five ballistic missile submarines and his sons knew all of them by heart. Before the *Grant*, there were boats honoring Revolutionary War generals Nathaniel Greene and Baron von Steuben. After the *Grant* came two more named after generals from the same war, the *Pulaski* and *Lafayette*. They might have wished their father had chosen a more glorious assignment, like engineering or navigation – to be the captain, for that matter – but they made the best with his mess specialty. They even once sat down together and drew up a menu for him to take on patrol, and nowhere on it was there any casserole.

When he joined the Navy, Martin Stairs was a high school dropout sorting fruit and vegetables in a local supermarket. His recruiter told him that it was only natural he should continue working with food, and while being a cook brought him few medals and no glory, it did bring him the keys to the meat freezer. That was saying a lot on a sea-going vessel, even in the modern age. The Russian navy might have to eat borscht every day, but there was plenty of steak stocked aboard American ships. Fry up a late-night T-bone for the executive

officer and he might look kindly on that extra day of liberty you want. Hand your favorite machinist's mate a rump roast and he'll be happy to fix your air conditioner. And all that meat went a long way off the boat as well. When Loughton needed some serious dental work done, dental work way beyond the pay of a naval petty officer, Martin sauntered over to the dental clinic one day with a box of prime ribs in one hand and his son's hand in the other. A few hours later the boy was missing several teeth and his mother couldn't have been happier.

But Jenny, who was working in a textile mill at the time she met her future husband, was less thrilled about some of the other shady deals he had going on. For example, that motorcycle parked out front. Where the hell did that come from? Or that new stereo that was in their living room one day, gone the next. One evening they left the boys with a babysitter and headed out to his favorite hangout for a game of pool. Jenny was just about to sink the eight ball when a man in a black coat appeared and asked Martin if his name was Stairs. Apparently he had something to show him outside in his car. Much to his wife's bewilderment, Martin stuck his cue stick in her hand and left with the man. He returned a few minutes later pretending nothing at all had happened.

"Who was that man?" she asked.

"I don't know," he replied with a shrug. "He got my name from one of the boys here."

"What did he want?"

"Nothing important. He has this machine gun out in the trunk of his car and wanted to know if I'd buy it."

"Machine gun!" she cried. "You see what kind of people you hang out with?"

"I told you, I don't know the man."

Maybe he didn't, but the one yarn she refused to swallow concerned his recent demotion. He got into an argument with

his chief while chopping cabbage one day and it ended with the chief on the floor. Both men later claimed that it had been the cabbage they were arguing over, but the executive officer knew, or at least wanted to believe, there were no cooks on his boat stupid enough to come to blows over a head of cabbage. More likely they were arguing over the spoils inside the freezer, and so the XO sent petty officer first class Stairs before the captain without the cabbage as evidence. He was busted in rank, which worked out to a cut in pay and even more hard times ahead for the family. Jenny pleaded with him to curtail the private enterprise he was running out of the ship's mess. If money was a problem, get a second job, she would get a second job, but she wanted nothing more to do with men in black hocking machine guns.

In fact, most of his business was legitimate in the sense that it consisted of mere barter among service personnel. The lowlifes who had crept into their lives came from the bars and dives he hung out in between patrols. She would later discover that the babysitter he had arranged the night they were shooting pool turned out to be his regular at the bar. As he freely admitted, he couldn't very well have her hanging out while he was in there slumming with his wife.

Fights and shouting matches came to dominate their family life. Like other children, the two boys had to sit and take it or wait it out elsewhere. Peace was restored when their father received orders to a new boat. It was stationed out of Groton, Connecticut, almost a thousand miles north of their home in Charleston, S.C. Martin and Jenny agreed she would be staying behind with the kids. The tour was to last three years, but in the end he never came back. They finalized a divorce somewhere along the way and another navy marriage was in the drink.

Demain and Loughton were sorry to see their father go, but life went on. By this time both were adolescents, tall and

wiry, with dark brown hair and eyes. They never lost complete contact with navy life, however. Most of their friends were navy brats and they played in sport leagues sponsored by navy housing. Jenny started working as a clerk at the naval shipyard and was soon hanging out with her co-workers at the chiefs' club on base. Doing a little slumming of her own, as it were.

She started dating a chief electrician's mate she met there and before long he was staying weekends with them. The boys didn't mind it so much, as he hogged neither the Sunday paper nor the morning donuts their mother laid out for them. Moreover, an electrician proved quite handy to have around the house. He would eventually go back to his wife, as would chief number two, a boatswain's mate who turned out to be a good plumber. Number three was a quartermaster, the rate that took care of maps and navigation. As Jenny remarked later, he couldn't find his way to first base. Then there was this chief and that one, all leading her to write off that period of her life as "one of sickness, where my moods swung to the point of recklessness and poor judgment." Evidently she was cured by the time she married a chief sonar technician, after her boys had already left home.

The first one to leave, naturally, was Demain. He had all but quit high school before his senior year, content with working full time at a restaurant at night and hanging out at home during the day. Although his mother rarely saw him, she knew the score. She demanded that he at least finish school, but there was no hope for that after he got one of his co-workers pregnant. Chunky and loud, Kim was a year older and working at the restaurant to put herself through junior college. Their relationship began one night while they were counting buns in the storeroom, followed by stars at the beach. He had just turned 18, had no diploma, and drove around in a decrepit 1967 clunker with a steering wheel as

big as the other four wheels on the car. But he could count, and his way of drawing constellations in the sky, all for the purpose of drawing her lips closer to his, proved irresistible. Jenny shook her head at the prospects of him becoming an uneducated teenage daddy making little better than minimum wage, but he stuck with it and, unlike her former husband, enjoyed cooking at home.

Loughton too thought family life had done his brother good, but he preferred to follow in his father's footsteps. He was bored with life in the same town all the time and saw the Navy as a chance to see the world, even if he was determined to do most of the touring underwater. When he paid his first visit to a naval recruiting office, the submarine service was all he wanted. The rates available to submariners were limited, however, and many of them had no appeal to him at all. There were the torpedomen and machinist's mates, but he didn't go in for grunt work. Electronics and fire control technicians probably had to squint a lot. Sonar sounded interesting, but he didn't want to sit around listening to whales all day. He couldn't become a cook because his mother would kill him. At last he settled on being a quartermaster. He loved maps, and the quartermaster's table was just behind the periscope, meaning right in the middle of the action.

The recruiter, a mess specialist like his father, was named Mac, which he insisted Loughton call him because his full name was Makoshguba. Mac just shook his head when Loughton told him about his choice.

"Quartermaster? Why do you want to eat hotdog when you can have steak? You should choose a job that will really write your meal ticket."

"Like what?"

"That depends on what you're qualified for. For instance, are you good at math?"

"No. I hated algebra."

“What about physics?”

“I’m taking it now, but my teacher is a real bitch.”

“Are you passing it?”

“Barely. I told you, the teacher’s a bitch. She docked me points one time because I swore in class.”

“And what about chemistry?”

“Not for me,” Loughton groaned. “It’s as bad as algebra when it comes to formulas.”

The recruiter leaned back in his chair with his hands cupped around his waist.

“So, you’re basically telling me that you’re not really good at math, physics, or chemistry. Is that it?”

“You could say that.”

“Then let me ask you this: Have you ever considered a job in nuclear power?”

Loughton straightened up in his chair. Nuclear power? What the...?

“You just asked me if...”

“I know what I just asked you. But what I’m telling you now is it doesn’t matter whether you’re good at math, physics, or chemistry or not. The point is the Navy can train anybody this side of an able-bodied primate to be a nuclear power operator. Trust me, we can.”

“I believe you, but I don’t want to be a nuclear power operator. I want to work with maps.”

“You can play with maps on your family vacation,” the recruiter scoffed. “Do you want to eat hotdog or steak?”

“Look,” said Loughton, tired of the mess hall analogy. “I like both. I like hotdogs with mustard and steak with ketchup.”

The recruiter leaned further back in his chair and gave him a hard look. Another wiseass. He’d make a perfect nuke, he thought. Loughton noticed the slight chill in the atmosphere and was beginning to feel uncomfortable by it. He had walked

in there expecting to be welcomed aboard and here he was being grilled by a cook. Finally the recruiter reached over and pulled out a sheet of paper from under the mess on his desk.

“Have a look at this,” he said, handing him the paper. Loughton had no more started reading it when the recruiter began explaining what was in it.

“That’s a directive that says you will get \$2,000 cash just for completing nuclear training. Quartermasters don’t get anything when they finish their school. What’s more, you start off at a higher rank than they do. That means even more money in your pocket.”

Loughton had to admit he was impressed. He’d have to work 50 day and night shifts counting buns at his brother’s restaurant to make money like that.

“It sounds good,” he said, “but what about Three Mile Island?”

The accident that occurred at the nuclear power facility on Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania was still in the news.

“Small potatoes. And you know how I know? Because the potatoes growing around the plant didn’t get any bigger after the radiation was released,” Mac laughed.

Too bad Loughton’s history teacher couldn’t be there to hear that corny line. He was convinced that the accident was much worse than the government’s official report led on. He claimed to have seen secret footage shot near the site that showed, among other things, dairy cows with bloated udders and listless eyes.

“I don’t know. It seems too complicated for me. I just want to serve aboard a submarine, that’s all.”

“Then you’ve got nothing to lose. What we’ll do is this: I’ll take you up to Fort Jackson to process your enlistment. There they’ll give you the nuke qualification test. If you pass it, the money’s yours. If not, you get the maps. Okay?”

Loughton thought about it for a moment. The money

sounded good, and the recruiter was certainly right about one thing: Maps he could play with anytime, but not a nuclear reactor. And if the test turned out to be a waste of time, he reckoned it was the Navy's loss, not his.

"Okay," he said. "What the hell."

Hell was what he got when he phoned his father to tell him the news. Martin was finishing up his last tour of duty, down in New Orleans where he was living with another woman. He had been in the Navy twenty years and swore he never met a nuke that he liked. Know-it-all shitheads, he called them, and couldn't see a son of his becoming one as well. Loughton assured him he was only taking the test to get the recruiter off his back, but his father knew better. Nobody failed a test in the Navy unless they were absolutely one hundred percent hopeless.

"It's your call," Martin warned him. "But remember, nuke or no nuke, there's one rule in the Navy that applies to everyone. Always let the man above you piss first."

That sounded like the kind of advice Jenny expected her ex-husband to give. She was all for her son becoming a nuke and Demain's wife liked the idea too. Ambitious herself, Kim was continuing her education after the baby arrived and was becoming more and more restless with her husband's take-it-easy attitude about everything. He had finally enrolled in a manager-training program at the restaurant, but that two thousand dollars was more money than they were going to see for a long time.

All of which was more reason for Demain to scoff at his brother's plans. The two had grown noticeably apart during their teenage years, primarily because he considered Loughton an upstart in everything. He got the best grades in school, angled for the best positions in sports, he even got his driver's license first. Demain didn't begrudge him his deci-

sion to join the Navy since that was a given the moment he whacked his head on board the Grant. But all this talk now about being a nuclear-trained whatever. Big man as usual.

Loughton hardly felt like a big man, however, during the trip to Fort Jackson. Sitting next to him in the backseat was a classmate, a redheaded genius who was the captain of the high school math team. In the front seat sat another math wiz, from the College of Charleston. Loughton couldn't figure out what he was doing in company like this. But the recruiter assured him the test was cake. It was merely a formality to weed out, as his father had told him, the utterly hopeless cases. "I hope you ain't one of them," the recruiter added as an afterthought.

Before taking the test, the potential recruits, along with a hundred others, were herded into a big hall where they underwent a physical exam. It was administered by a doctor whose weather-beaten face reminded Loughton of Mr. O'Neill, who incidentally never made it to 101. Although his hands didn't shake when he reached down to squeeze Loughton's testicles, they were eerily cold.

"Turn your head and cough," the old man wheezed. As a football player, Loughton had had his testicles squeezed many times by doctors checking for signs of a hernia and none of them ever had a problem with the way he coughed. But this one did.

"I said cough, goddammit!" So he coughed again and the doctor let loose his grip. "You think I got all day to be grabbing you boys by the balls or something?" he growled and moved on to the next unfortunate recruit.

Once the physical was over, Loughton dressed and was told to go to a special room to take the nuclear qualification test. There were eight others sitting there in addition to him and the two geniuses. The test consisted of 85 multiple-choice questions, of which he had to answer at least 46 of them cor-

rectly. They had two hours.

The first questions were easy. What's two plus two, five minus three. It looked like the recruiter had been telling him the truth after all. Any able-bodied primate could be a nuclear power plant operator. Suddenly the questions switched to geometry. It was never his strong point. Neither was that horror of horrors, calculus. He looked over at the geniuses. They certainly weren't thinking about primates at the moment.

Things got a little better with chemistry. He always considered the table of elements akin to looking at a map. But then came physics, with its heavy dependency on math, and he started looking around the room again. The geniuses had already finished their tests and left. Loughton needed all two hours and still had to hail-mary the last five questions. He turned his test in and left to sit outside, a gloomy pall cast all around him. He hadn't wanted to be a nuke, but failing a test, any test, absolutely galled him.

Mac hardly noticed it when he came skipping into the lounge with their results.

"Well, what'd I tell you? Easy, wasn't it, gents?"

Loughton was sure he was talking to the other two. In fact, while the college student scored an impressive 73, his classmate, the redhead, had gotten an 81, the highest of any recruit so far that year. The recruiter was proud of his find. Loughton also congratulated him before turning to Mac and saying, "It looks like it's the maps after all."

"What are you talking about?" he grinned. "You're in too. You scored a 48, two above the minimum. Congratulations. You're going to be a nuke!"

Loughton just stood there, completely mute. The expression on his face said it all.

Oh, shit.

The ride of a lifetime

It was the day he had been waiting for. After three years and three days in the Navy, Loughton Stairs was about to head out to sea for the first time. He never envisioned the moment would arrive on a boat that had also never been to sea before, much less on a submarine that had never been underwater before, but he didn't care. Even the fact that the Portsmouth was making its maiden voyage just over twenty years after the USS Thresher went down on its maiden voyage, which was still in all the local papers, couldn't dampen his spirits.

A wet and heavy gloom hung over the Thames River when he reached the boat at six in the morning, but what was weather to a submarine at sea? He got there early in order to have breakfast on board. Demain had told him the captain ordered boxes of fresh pastries to be made ready for the VIPs (and crew of course) who were scheduled to make the five-day trip. Loughton climbed down the forward escape hatch, turned the corner into the crew's mess, and saw that the place was jammed pack with crewmembers and shipyard workers. The latter too were making the voyage because technically the shipyard still owned the boat. The captain didn't say any-

thing about pastries for them, but they cleaned out every box before Loughton and the other arriving crewmembers could get to them. Perfect. His first voyage to sea and all the donuts were gone.

Demain was working in the galley that morning and had arrived even earlier than Loughton to prepare a real breakfast for the men who had been on duty throughout the night. Loughton decided to take his complaint to him.

“Hey, where are all the pastries?”

“I don’t know. There were three boxes of them out there. Are they all gone?”

“Yes, every last one of them and I skipped breakfast on the base today.”

“So get in line for eggs and sausages.”

“I don’t want to wait around for eggs and sausages. Don’t you guys have some of those donuts stashed away for the officers?”

“Yes, but it’s in the wardroom and only for the VIPs.”

“Well, think of your little brother as a VIP for this occasion and bring me one.”

“I don’t know, Lot. The admiral and his staff still haven’t arrived and the captain wanted me to make sure there were plenty of them left for them.”

“Jesus Christ, Main, it’s just a lousy donut. Come on, I’m hungry.”

“All right, but don’t go telling everyone where you got it.”

Demain walked into the wardroom and came back a few seconds later with a glazed donut. He handed it to Loughton, who didn’t look all that hungry when he took it from him.

“This is it? There was no Bavarian cream?”

“Get your own goddamn donut next time! I’m busy.”

He wasn’t joking either. In addition to the crew of 126, the mess division had another 50 officers and shipyard work-

ers to feed and clean up after over the next five days. Since Demain was only a non-rate, his job would be cranking – washing dishes, drying dishes, stacking dishes, running to the freezer for meat, to the cooler for vegetables, and to the dry stores for potatoes. If somebody in the wardroom wanted coffee, the crank had to run for that as well. The show hadn't even hit the road yet and here his little brother was having him run for a donut, a VIP donut no less. Next time Loughton should get his ass there earlier, especially after whining so long about never going to sea.

Demain was also feeling edgy that morning on account of Lisa. She hadn't slept at all the night before and woke him up twice for no other reason than to let him know she couldn't sleep. It wasn't just the realization that the thing she dreaded most about being a navy wife was finally upon her, even though she was seeing him off to sea for a mere five days. But it was a new submarine and when it made that first dive into the murky depths of the Atlantic, her husband would be on it (brother-in-law too, but he was only an afterthought). Her nerves had already taken a thrashing when the base newspaper, which one couldn't miss living in navy housing, ran a front-page article in memory of the Thresher, including a picture of the doomed boat heading out to sea and the memorial wreath laid in honor of the 127 men who went down with it. When Demain left home at four-thirty that morning, their goodbye was long and full of her tears.

Loughton had intended to ask Demain how Lisa was holding up with the boat about to sail, but since he basically told him to get lost, he took the crummy donut, grabbed his duffel bag, and headed to his assigned berthing. The situation inside berthing was more chaotic than in the crew's mess. For its sea trials the boat was expected to carry forty percent more men than usual, meaning petty officers like Loughton were expected to double up for the run. Two men sharing a

single bed, or “hot-racking” as it was commonly known, had been standard on the old diesel-powered submarines, where space was always in short supply. While one man stood watch, another one kept the sheets warm. Nuclear-powered submarines could afford to be bigger and Loughton would have his own rack once sea trials were over and the extra personnel had departed. But giving a lowly crank like Demain his own rack under any circumstances was considered a needless luxury, so he could count on hot-racking long after the boat was fully operational.

Naturally the only ones who had it made on a 688-class attack submarine were the captain and executive officer. They had their own private staterooms, but the XO would have to wait until after sea trials to see how well he slept in his underway. He had to vacate his stateroom to accommodate the head of Naval Reactors, admiral Harrison Parr, who always accompanied every new submarine on its first run, if only to demonstrate the confidence the Navy had in its nuclear-powered fleet. The fabled admiral Rickover, who lorded over Naval Reactors for nearly thirty years until forced into retirement, wisely didn’t begin the tradition until after the *Thresher* went to the bottom. Although an admiral far outranked a commander, Swift was, after all, the captain, and the captain made room for nobody on his ship.

Atwater’s temporary berthing would be in the officers’ quarters, three smaller staterooms that housed three officers each. He would be rooming there with the engineer, navigator, and the other senior officers on the *Portsmouth*. The junior officers, who like Fisher and the Stairs brothers had never been to sea before, moved their belongings to the forward end of the boat. They would be berthing in the goat locker, the name given to the chiefs’ quarters. They were joined there by other senior officers from Naval Reactors and squadron headquarters. The chiefs moved down the line

to the 21-man berthing in front of the machinery room, normally reserved for senior petty officers, and they in turn pulled rank in the last and largest berthing space in the submarine, where upwards of 60 men had to make do with two showers, two urinals, three toilets, and three sinks. For sea trials over 90 sailors would be crammed in there, Loughton included. Demain would eventually have his hot-rack there too, but till then he would have to camp out with the shipyard workers in the torpedo room, the only space large enough to provide a convenient makeshift berthing for the overflow of personnel.

Underway time was nine o'clock. Admiral Parr and his entourage arrived ten minutes before and dispensed with all formality. He went straight to the XO's stateroom and didn't reappear until the boat had cleared the mouth of the river. His officers made themselves comfortable around the wardroom table, helping themselves to whatever donuts were left. It was an open secret that most, if not all of these shore duty officers angled for boats making their debuts at sea because it required only a few days of their time and allowed them to continue collecting sea and submarine pay. The admiral had a symbolic role to play there, but the officers were just taking up space, taxpayer money, and all the best donuts.

Finally, a few minutes after nine, Squadron called in permission for the Portsmouth to depart. The officer of the deck, the man actually running the boat at any given time, ordered the gangplank and mooring lines removed. The ship's ensign was shifted from the after deck to the bridge, which was only a hole carved into the top forward end of the sail and big enough for five or six people to stand inside and enjoy the best view from a submarine underway. Four of them had to be the OOD, a phone talker to Control directly below, where the helmsman and quartermaster were stationed, a phone talker to Maneuvering in the engine room, where the propulsion

engines were operated, and a lookout with binoculars. The captain, of course, was there as well, not just because he was taking the boat to sea for the first time, but because it was his boat and he would ultimately have to answer for anything the OOD did wrong while maneuvering it.

Logically the OOD for the occasion was the navigator, Lieutenant Commander Anthony Infante. A lanky athletic type with chiseled features, he was the very opposite of the engineer. With a nod from the captain, he picked up the microphone and ordered a back one-third bell on the astern engines. The order was acknowledged in Maneuvering, where the throttleman turned the wheel that opened the throttle to the astern engines. High-powered steam from the steam generators broke the shaft and propeller free from their rest positions, and the 6,900-ton submarine slowly began backing away from the pier into the middle of the Thames River. The OOD then ordered an all-stop. The throttleman wheeled the stern throttle closed and opened the larger ahead throttle. The steam now brought the shaft and propeller to a halt and the submarine began to drift to a stop. The weather was raw and visibility poor, not exactly ideal conditions for taking in the moment. So with another nod from the captain, the navigator ordered all ahead one-third on the main engines. As the boat began to move, he ordered the helmsman to come right and steer course something-or-rather. The boat angled to the right and slowly started picking up speed. Within a couple of minutes she was underway and heading out to sea.

Guiding a submarine into and out of port required every crewmember to have a watch station, and for this first maneuvering watch Loughton was stationed in Maneuvering itself. It was a small rectangular control room, just big enough to accommodate the throttleman at his panel on the left, the reactor operator at his panel in the middle, and the electrician watching over his on the right. Behind them sat

the engineering officer of the watch at an elevated desk. He was nominally a junior officer, but for this first run Meyers was given the honor. Loughton had to cram himself into the corner behind Meyers' right shoulder and relay the bell orders announced by the phone talker on the bridge. He was merely echoing the orders, because the OOD's voice could be easily heard coming in over the 1MC loud speaker. Loughton was there as a backup in case a power failure rendered the OOD's microphone dead. Although in the middle of the action, he preferred to be out in the engineering spaces walking around the engines, pumps, heat exchangers, and other equipment that produced the hum he fondly recalled from his first time aboard a submarine. The hum could be heard in Maneuvering as well, but not so well with the oversized headphones he had to wear. And he felt like a parrot standing behind his division officer and repeating orders that everyone could already hear.

Once the boat had reached deep enough water, but not too deep, the maneuvering watch was secured and preparations made to submerge the Portsmouth for the first time. The bridge was cleared, all hatches checked and re-checked, and Infante, now stationed at the periscope in Control, reported to Swift that all stations were ready. With the admiral standing nearby, the captain gave the navigator permission to submerge the ship.

"Very well, sir," replied the OOD. "Diving officer, submerge the ship, make your depth five-zero feet."

"Submerge the ship, aye, sir. Depth five-zero feet."

The diving officer for the initial dive was master chief petty officer Victor Redding, the senior enlisted man on board. The chief of the boat, or COB as he was called, had over twenty years in the Navy and had served on more submarines than Swift and Infante combined. He sat in a chair just behind the helmsman, who steered the boat, and the

planesman, who controlled its pitch underwater. Sitting out-board of them on the left was the chief of the watch, whose job it was to flood the empty ballast tanks with seawater, thereby adding the weight needed to give the ship negative buoyancy. When the diving officer gave him the order to do so, the chief of the watch announced, “Dive! Dive!” throughout the boat and energized the diving alarm. It had a very displeasing sound to it, more like somebody throwing up instead of the nostalgic “a-oo-ga” noise made famous in old submarine films. He then opened the ballast tanks and shortly thereafter the OOD, looking through the periscope, could see water slowly begin to wash over the deck. The ship was going down. There was at least double the amount of people that needed to be in Control at the time and not one of them said a word. Suddenly, the silence was broken by an announcement coming in over the boat’s emergency call system.

“Emergency report! Emergency report! Flooding, flooding in the machinery room!” The chief of the watch didn’t even wait for an order from the diving officer, OOD, captain, admiral, or everybody else staring at him. He spontaneously secured the ballast tank flooding, announced the flooding casualty throughout the ship, and energized the collision alarm, which was used for flooding since a collision usually led to flooding. Strangely, its rising siren was more appealing than the diving alarm, but nobody was comparing the two of them now. The diving officer ordered a positive up-angle on the ship and the helmsman guided it to the surface with ease. The boat had never really been in any immediate danger – the sail hadn’t even gone under – but flooding was flooding and now all everybody could do was wait for the next word to come from the machinery room.

Loughton was one of the few sailors who didn’t have a watch station for the initial dive. After the maneuvering

watch had been secured, he took advantage of the free time to pack his gear into the locker located below the rack he was sharing with another crewmember. When the alarm sounded, he looked up from the locker. There was another man in berthing at the time, also unpacking his gear, and the two of them just stood there staring at each another. Neither needed to say anything because this-ain't-supposed-to-happen was written all over their faces. They immediately left berthing to file into the crew's mess to be available for any damage control muster. The place was already packed by the time they got there, but Loughton could make out his brother standing on the opposite side in the crowd. His face said the same thing.

Before a damage control party could be assembled and sent to the machinery room, the flooding was over. Actually it never even began. A relief valve on a fresh water tank with no connection to the sea had begun overflowing just as the diving alarm sounded. It was a simple malfunction that just happened to occur at the worst possible time. What made the case so unusual was that the sailor who discovered it and called away the emergency had been to sea before. Everybody knew that because Murphy made sure everybody knew it. Loughton's former nuke school classmate had apparently lost his nerve when he saw the valve overflowing and sounded the alarm before consulting with other A-gangers in the space about it. Although the captain accepted his knee-jerk reaction as the proper thing to do under the circumstances, he instructed the engineer to have another A-ganger relieve Murphy on his watch for the next diving attempt. He could go unpack his things too.

The initial dive turned out to be anti-climatic after that first bit of excitement. It wasn't even an initial dive anymore and once the boat reached fifty feet and all stations checked out, it became more or less routine to take it down to further depths

in fifty-foot increments. One hundred feet, one hundred and fifty, two hundred... By that time Loughton was back in the engine room hanging out in the lower level compartment, which was the largest single space on the boat. He wanted to see if it was true that seawater pipes started creaking as the pressure inside them increased. He heard nothing. And as for that other trick of tying a line from one side of the hull to the other and watching the tension on it slack the further the boat went down, nobody showed enough interest to set it up.

Once the ship reached a proper cruising depth, the diving maneuver was secured and regular watch rotation went into effect. This meant an 18-hour day, with 6 hours on watch, 6 hours off to do maintenance, drills, paperwork, qualifications, eat, shower, play cards or just plain hang out, and 6 hours for sleeping. There were no weekends, no holidays, no "and on the seventh day he rested." At sea every day was a workday.

Making sure the boat was safe and working properly was only part of the sea trials. The crew also had to prove that it could operate the boat safely and for this the command lined up a set of drills. A brief was held before each one in the wardroom, with the captain sitting at the head of the table while one of his senior officers went over the scenario with the rest of the team. Swift was prone to manicure his fingernails with a miniature file throughout the brief, rarely looking up from his hands but fully tuned in to the discussion. This was evident by the questions he asked like, "And what happens if it doesn't start?" Most of the time the team leader had the answer on the spot, but for those cases when he didn't, the captain didn't rant or rave. He simply reminded him that he was expecting the answer before the drill went down. Then he would go back to doing his fingernails again.

The most eagerly anticipated drill was the reactor scram, whereby the control rods were unlatched and dropped to the

bottom of the core, thereby making the reactor subcritical to the point of shutdown. The scram mechanism was installed as a protective device to shut the reactor down automatically in case of a plant malfunction. Once shut down and the problem fixed, the reactor could then be recovered by the reactor operator in a tedious process of latching the rods and pulling them inch by inch. If he went too slowly, he risked draining all the power out of the battery and sending the electricians into a state of panic. If he went too fast, he could spike the criticality meter and send everyone else into a state of panic.

For all the pressure on him, the reactor operator didn't sweat as much as the machinist's mates did. After the scram, all steam supply was secured to keep residual heat in the core. Part of that steam went to the turbine generators and with them shut down, the boat had to be rigged for a reduced electrical state, including taking the main air conditioning units off line. The temperature in parts of the engine room soon climbed to well over 100 degrees and all the watchstanders could do then was sweat it out until the reactor was up and running again. The temperature in the machinery room, located below the crew's mess in the forward section, barely rose at all during the scram, but the auxiliary MMs there were sweating more than their nuke counterparts, for an entirely different reason.

Most of the steam generated by the reactor went to the main engines. Without propulsion, the submarine would soon start to sink, so during a scram, an electric motor was engaged to turn the screw just enough to keep the boat moving forward. The motor and all other necessary electrical components were powered by an enormous battery, though not so enormous that it could sustain a submarine even in a reduced electrical state for long. To keep it charged, a diesel generator located in the machinery room was fired up. That meant bringing the boat to below the surface and raising the

snorkel mast. The generator would then suck in all the air it needed to make electricity for the battery.

The problem for this first scram was getting the damn thing started. There was a lot of confusion coordinating the various watchstanders connected with snorkeling, and the captain, who was in Control at the time, started berating the OOD, still Infante, to get the machine running. There was little Infante could do about it, but as the officer of the deck he had to answer for all ship operations. Things came to a head when the A-gangers nearly wrecked the generator by trying to fire it without any air supply to it. Now Swift really lost his cool.

“Mr. Infante, nobody starts a diesel without any air! What the hell’s the matter with you!?”

Infante of course knew that, but he said nothing. Since the boat was hovering at periscope depth, he merely glued his eyes to the periscope sight glass as the captain lashed out at him. And when one ear got tired of the yelling, he conveniently swung the periscope around to a new line of sight. Swift managed to keep up with his 360-degree maneuvers until he decided to go below and check on the situation in person. Before leaving, he turned to Infante and solemnly warned him, “Mister, you better pray the diesel isn’t broke.”

It wasn’t and the A-gangers eventually got it up and running. It was no secret there was lots of equipment aboard a ship, especially a new one, that sometimes needed cajoling, caressing, or a good swift kick to get them started. Swift losing his patience on this occasion had more to do with the unease of knowing that the gang from Naval Reactors was snooping around and writing in their notepads at every opportunity. The head of that gang, the admiral, had no notepad that anyone could see nor did he have much to say the whole time he was on board. When he wasn’t in the XO’s stateroom, he would move from space to space,

always wearing his trademark black sweater, and quietly observe the operations and drills taking place. Nobody knew how old he was, though he had one of those pinched faces that suggested he had been in the Navy forever. The captain naturally was eager to impress him and since events in the machinery room weren't making that task any easier, he decided to let the galley do it for him.

Loughton was scheduled for his first watch after lunch. Tradition dictated that the on-coming watch section ate first and the shipyard workers already standing in the chow line knew that. They were only standing there because they had nothing else to do. Loughton made his way to the front of the line and took the plate handed to him through the serving window. It took only one look for him to realize that Demain had cooked it. His brother was the only person he knew who would smother steak with a cream sauce, no doubt loaded with pepper and garlic, and glaze the beans with olive oil spiked with even more garlic. Although most of the sailors and shipyard workers fretted at not being able to use the ketchup bottles on the tables, the general consensus was that it was an excellent lunch. Loughton too had to admit it, but when he was finished, he couldn't resist going into the galley and asking Demain how he had angled the honor of cooking the first meal aboard the boat at sea. As a seaman apprentice with no time in, he should have been scrubbing pots and pans alongside the other cranks.

His brother wasn't in there. The cook on duty was George Frat, the senior mess specialist on board, a man who normally whipped up slop every bit as good as Martin Stairs used to. Just the week before, he had most of the crew dumping loads of ketchup on the steak he fried up. When Loughton asked him if he knew of Demain's whereabouts, Frat merely pointed off to his right. That could only mean that he was working next door in the wardroom mess, which served the

officers, the captain, and for this cruise, the admiral. Enlisted personnel outside the mess division weren't allowed in there unless they had a damn good reason, so all Loughton could do was stand at the door and spy in through the small circular glass window.

There he saw Demain all right, standing at the oven and wearing the crisp starchy white uniform of a wardroom mess attendant. It was incredible. He hadn't been on the boat half a year and here he was already the head chef. Loughton waved at him through the window, but Demain was too intent on his work to notice. Somebody did notice, however. As Loughton looked off to the left at the wardroom table, full of officers sitting around and obviously enjoying their meal, he saw the engineer staring at him with a face that could only mean, "What the hell do you want?"

It was his first watch aboard a submarine and all he could think about was how his brother had once again bagged a good deal. Demain was cooking for the admiral, the top dog in the nuclear-powered fleet, while Loughton was stuck down in engine room lower level, a dark, damp place where nobody, least of all an admiral, ventured unless he absolutely had to. In a way that was good, because it provided a measure of privacy lacking everywhere else on the boat. But as the largest watch station on board, it required him to be constantly on the move, writing down pressure and temperature readings in a log book, adjusting valve positions, taking equipment on and off line, and the like. There wasn't much time to just sit and enjoy being alone, even if there were any chairs to sit on.

Midway through his six-hour watch, Loughton was sitting on a locker in the forward part of the level. He had just finished another laborious round of log entries when he was surprised to see Baumann waddle in from the back part of the

level. He looked as fat as ever and Demain's cooking was going to be little incentive for him to tighten his belt.

"What the hell are you doing sitting here, Stairs? You're supposed to be on watch."

"I am on watch. You don't see these logs in my hand?"

"Yeah, but you're supposed to be watching over the entire space, not just sitting here on your ass."

"What do you care? You're not the engineering watch supervisor," Loughton replied, referring to the senior enlisted watchstander in the engine room, whose job it was to roam around the spaces and make sure nobody was just sitting on his ass.

"We've got Naval Reactors all over the place and they're just waiting to see what we can do. Get my drift?"

Loughton got it all right. A fat salt like Baumann would never spend off-watch time in the engine room unless something was about to go down. That something was a casualty drill, and for a casualty drill to look authentic, it had to be discovered. Apparently the drill team was in place somewhere in engine room lower level and waiting for the watch to come by and discover what they had cooked up. Loughton didn't want to keep them waiting too long, so after Baumann disappeared from the same direction he came, he picked up his logs and slowly followed after him. He turned one corner, then the next, and there he saw two people waving black blankets.

If he had played his role like he wanted to, he would have yelled out, "Oh, my God, it's a fire. A fire! Somebody help!! Help!!!" Instead he picked up the nearest emergency call phone and said in a no-big-deal voice, "Emergency report. Emergency report. Fire in engine room lower level."

A second later the more excited voice of the chief of the watch announced throughout the ship, "Fire, fire in engine room lower level!" followed by the dong-dong-dong of the

general alarm. The location made it clear this wasn't going to be one of those fires that could be easily put out with a CO₂ extinguisher. Most of the equipment for the main lube oil system was situated in engine room lower level, meaning this was no mere fire, but a blaze. The only way to fight the flames and high temperatures of a blaze was to rig a hose and drown it out with seawater, but that required getting enough men to the scene as quickly as possible. Till then, Loughton was alone.

The first thing he did was take a bulky rubber mask and hose out of a storage locker. It was the most uncomfortable contraption he had ever worn in his life, in part because the air to the mask had to be sucked in from the emergency air breathing system. Once he got the mask on and fitted around his face, he broke out a fire hose and began to unravel it towards a connection in the seawater system. He had just hooked it up when a damage control party appeared on the scene to take over. Technically Loughton was to take himself out of the drill because he was still responsible for watching over the rest of the space. Other systems could easily catch fire as well if someone wasn't looking. Still, he couldn't resist keeping an eye on the action and stayed close by just out of range of the monitors running the drill.

One of those rushing to the scene, presumably to take charge, was the engineer. He had just climbed down the ladder to engine room lower level when one of the monitors stuck a piece of plastic tape over the face shield of his mask. The idea was to inhibit his vision, which would be the case with smoke filling the compartment. It had been almost 15 seconds since Boley had unplugged his air hose in order to climb down the ladder, and now, with his heart racing from the excitement, he was desperate to get a breath of fresh air. He tried to feel his way around for an air socket, but each time he touched something, one of the monitors would strike

his hand and yell, "That's hot!" That of course meant he was getting close to the fire, but not to any air. When at last he reached an air manifold, all four of the sockets were already taken. It was generally the norm in such circumstances for a sailor to merely lift his mask above his chin to get both a breath of air and his orientation. It was cheating during the drill, but that was a lot better than suffocating. The engineer, however, refused to do it for fear someone from Naval Reactors might see him. His situation became so critical, more critical than even the reactor, that he tried to breathe in what little air he could, and his mask would have started taking the shape of his face had it been less rigid.

Loughton's hose was one of those plugged into the occupied EAB manifold. Sensing that the engineer was in trouble, he unplugged his hose, grabbed Boley's from his hand, and plugged it into the manifold. Boley breathed like there was no tomorrow. After regaining his composure, he attempted to burrow his way through the mass of people on the scene in order to take charge. He only succeeded in creating more confusion, particularly after his air hose got tangled up with the air hoses of the fire hose team. The entanglement got so severe that one of the air hoses ended up tightly wrapped around Boley's neck. At that point the lead monitor on the scene, the XO, was convinced that enough simulated water had been dumped on the fire and secured the emergency. It came just in time, because the engineer yanked hard on the hose that was strangling him, causing the lead firefighter to fall back on those behind him in the process. Swift wasn't amused when he learned later on that it was his own engineer officer responsible for adding the touch of Charlie Chaplin to the end of the drill.

All the drills and operations left little time for the crew to do anything except sleep when they weren't standing watch. There were no movies shown, no playing cards, no hanging

out by the coffee pot. There wasn't even much time for sleep with one alarm after another going off. That was a blow to the one crewmember who spent the most time in the rack, the ship's corpsman. Like the captain and XO, the doc was left off the watchbill, ostensibly because he had to be available for a medical emergency at all times. No emergency, no doc, and he was rarely seen outside of meal times. It was just as well because chief Dean Borek had a big meaty face with irritable written all over it. The most common refrain heard by crewmembers who went to him with a problem was, "What are you bothering me with this shit for?"

That was practically the case when a call came to Control asking for the corpsman's assistance back aft. The messenger picked up the berthing bill, located Borek's rack, and hurried there to inform him. He found the chief lying on his stomach, his huge face planted on his right ear, a grinding snore blowing wisps of air through the bristles of his smoke-stained moustache.

"Doc? Hey, Doc? Doc, wake up."

The messenger tried rousing him without touching him. An unwritten rule of submarine life was that any man who struck another while asleep was technically not responsible for his actions. Messengers were therefore wary of waking up people with short tempers, and Borek topped the list.

"Doc, wake up. They need you back aft."

Borek slowly opened his eyes.

"What?"

"They need you back aft. Ames fell down a ladder."

"Who?"

"Ames. He fell down a ladder. They want you to go to the engine room and have a look at him."

"Is he hurt?"

"I don't know. They called forward from Maneuvering asking for you."

“So tell them to send him to my office and I’ll have a look at him there. Shit, I ain’t even dressed.”

“Can’t do that, doc. It was the captain who ordered it.”

“The captain? Oh, shit!”

Borek lumbered out of his rack and began to put his overalls on. Fisher could have been lying flat on his back for all he cared, but if the captain wanted him back there, off he went. By the time he arrived on the scene, Fisher was standing there with more than ten people around him, including the captain, XO, engineer, engineering watch supervisor, several officers from Squadron and Naval Reactors, and the head honcho himself, admiral Parr. They had all been making a tour of the engine room together when Fisher slipped as he was going down a ladder and tumbled onto the deck. He wasn’t hurt, but Swift told Maneuvering to call Control and have them send the corpsman back there just to make sure.

There was nothing like a lot of brass hanging around to wake a corpsman up and Borek needed it. The right side of his face was lined with rack burns, the red streaks made by lying on the tiny seams that ran from one end of the cotton mattress cover to the other. Eager to show them he was on the job, he made a big spiel out of checking Fisher out. He made him wiggle his fingers, turn his head left, then right, pick this foot up, then that one. When it came time to take his shirt off, the moment everyone had been waiting for, he refused to even let him raise his arms. Better to take a pair of scissors out of his black bag and cut it off, despite Fisher’s complaints that it was a new shirt. All those in attendance, even the admiral, craned their necks to have a look the moment his back was bare, but there was nothing to see except some broken skin next to his right shoulder blade. Whether relieved or disappointed, the group of officers started filing out of the space as the doc went about putting a

bandage on the superficial wound. Once they were gone, Borek quickly packed up his bag. With the rack burns still clearly visible on his face, he turned to Fisher before leaving and snapped, "Next time be more careful."

Demain knew little of this or other events that had been taking place since leaving port. He was too busy whipping up gourmet food for the crew. Frat and the other cooks knew all about cooking with ingredients like garlic, olive oil, and vinegar, but didn't have a feel for the nuances of a pinch of this or a dab of that. They didn't even care what color the food was, so long as it didn't look alive or overly burnt. Just before the boat got underway on sea trials, Swift had offhandedly asked Stairs to write down what he would put on the menu. The captain took one look at it and ordered the supply officer to make sure the stores had everything on the list. He didn't so much as say it, but it was clear that seaman apprentice Stairs was going to be doing the cooking for these VIPs underway.

It was unusual for a non-rate to be doing anything but cranking. The cooks took it in stride, even the thought of having to help prepare all this fancy food, but somebody was going to have to crank in Stairs' place and it wasn't going to be one of them. In fact, every submariner, even the officers, had to crank at least once during their time at sea, usually their first time. Since the Portsmouth was manned with plenty of sailors making their first underway, the division chiefs didn't have far to look for available personnel. When Trout was given his quota of personnel to provide, Loughton ended up on the list and in the galley on the final day of the sea trials.

Knowing he would have to crank sooner or later, he welcomed the opportunity to do it now as a way to get a word in with his brother. There had simply been no time to speak to

each other since the boat departed. Demain was either in the wardroom or his rack, Loughton in the engine room or his rack. With his new job in the galley, he could surely find a way to sneak off next door for a minute or two. So he thought. Frat, however, was determined to keep him busy washing, drying, and stacking all the pans, plates, cups, and utensils that went into feeding a 150 people or more. The chores seemed endless and it wasn't until a crowd had already formed outside the serving window did Loughton manage to slip inside the wardroom kitchen, where Demain was stirring and tasting the day's sauce.

"Hey, Lot, how you're doin'?"

"Just great. I go through all that nuclear training just to scrub a bunch of pans."

"Yeah, Frat told me he had you in there cranking."

"That's because you ain't."

"Sorry about that, man, but the captain wanted me in here."

"How did you swing this deal, anyway? How does he even know you're a cook?"

"I don't know. He likes to cook too and sometimes asks me about some of the foods I know how to prepare."

"Sometimes? You mean you talk with this guy on a regular basis? Christ, he barely knows I exist."

"I don't know what to tell you."

Indeed he didn't. The sauce had reached critical mass, no time for soothing his brother's enormous ego.

"What about the admiral? Is he also asking you for recipes?"

"Don't be like that, man. I didn't angle for this job."

Frat suddenly appeared around the corner. He was in a bad mood that day because Demain insisted that the garlic be chopped as finely as possible so that every piece melted into the oil. It was a time consuming process that no decent, honorable navy cook should have to put up with.

“Hey, Stairs, the chow line is about to open and them tables ain’t set yet.”

“Which one of us are you talking to?” asked Loughton, his reputation for being a smart ass now a fixture on the boat.

“You, wise ass. Get moving. I want them ketchup bottles on the table right now.”

Demain finally looked up from his sauce.

“Ketchup? But I’m preparing a green pepper sauce for this steak.”

Frat was over thirty, a short man with a boyish, almost cherubic look to him. He tried to look older by wearing an ugly toothbrush moustache that he didn’t need to comb but constantly did. Like Martin Stairs, he was strictly old navy when it came to food and considered Demain and his pinches and dabs to be a threat.

“Look, buddy, you may think you’re a gourmet cook, but in this navy we eat ketchup with our steak. Got it?”

Demain didn’t get it and Frat turned out to be wholly wrong about the ketchup. The green pepper sauce was a hit and a fine lunch to end the sea trials on. It had been a successful underway and there were only a few major operations to wrap up before sailing home, including the crashback and emergency blow. Both required every movable object to be safely secured lest they ended up on someone’s foot, especially a heavy item like a fire extinguisher. But there were only a dozen of them, whereas there were hundreds of plates and cups to make sure didn’t go crashing to the deck. It was another time consuming process that only made Frat even more stressed out that day. Fortunately for Loughton, his cranking shift ended after the meal and he was able to go back to the engine room and enjoy what were clearly the high points of the cruise.

They started with operational maneuvers like angles and

dangles, whereby the boat was driven upwards and downwards with a slowly increasing degree of angle on the bow. It was a little like taking a slow ride on a big roller coaster. They were followed by snap turns, a series of hard rights or lefts on the rudder, each forcing the boat to lean outwards before snapping back into the upright position once the turn was complete. But even better was the crashback. When the order for it was given, the throttleman began to close the ahead throttle and whip open the astern while the boat was racing along at the fastest speed a flank bell could deliver. The idea was to bring the boat to a halt as quickly as possible, sort of like slamming the brakes on a 6,900-ton moving vehicle. The immense counter thrust exerted on the main shaft and bearings caused the entire boat to shake for the seconds it took to slow down. Not violently, but it was as close to an earthquake that most of those on board would ever experience.

The best was saved for last. The emergency blow was just what the name implied, an emergency down below that required you to blow the water out of the ballast tanks to get the boat to the surface as quickly as possible. The Portsmouth was several hundred feet underwater when the chief of the watch was given the order to throw the "chicken switches" (chicken as in scared), which injected high-pressure air into the ballast tanks. He blew the forward tanks first in order to create a huge angle on the bow. With the main engines pushing it along at full speed, the boat lurched upwards at a forty-five degree angle and took off for the surface. Fisher's tumble down the ladder was a cakewalk compared to what would happen to anyone not holding on tightly for the time it took the boat to make the ascent. No one got hurt on this occasion, though one or two ships had been blown out of the water by a submarine rocketing through the surface underneath them. Swift made sure to sweep the area first while at

periscope depth before giving the order to go down and blow. There wasn't a ship or plane for miles around when the bow and sail of the boat came bolting up out of the blue, followed by the rest of the Portsmouth easing back down in one gigantic splash. It was the ride of a lifetime.