

TOMAHAWK LEADER

AMAZING STORY: To HONOR THY COUNTRY

Finding the USS Grunion and its local ties

By Cherie DuPlayee-Brown

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Stories and memories swirl among names dropped in conversation: World War I, World War II, Korea, 'Nam, Persian Gulf, Desert Storm, Iraq ...

In this post 9-11 world, patriotism has seemingly come alive for a whole new generation of Americans. Love of country is in many TV commercials. Flags fly outside homes in honor of men and women serving and in remembrance of those who have served.

Some never experience war itself. For those who do, few ever forget the sounds or the images they witness. Over time, however, future generations forget the stories of ancestors in war. Details get fuzzy from clouded memories, while assumptions become reality.

There are many war stories out there. Tales of time and place may change, but characters remain generally the same; brave young men and women. They leave loved ones behind to miss them in their absence, pray and fear for them alike; rejoicing in their homecomings or mourning their fatalities. Sons and daughters who join the armed forces of the United States for different reasons: adventure, familial protocol, patriotic calling. They protect our land in foreign ones, fighting to the death against people they have never met.

World War II was a global military conflict, involving over 100 million military personnel, making it the most expensive and widespread war in history. It also was the most deadly clash in history. Over 70 million lost their lives. Most were civilians.

While WW II saw soldiers on foot as well as on water, one most vivid memory for many Americans is "the day that will live in infamy" – the attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

Six months later, on June 20, 1942, a Gato class submarine, christened the USS Grunion, arrived at Pearl Harbor, reporting for duty from the Electric Boat Company in Groton, Conn. The sub had 10 days to engage in pre-patrol training, just

like every other vessel at that time coming from new construction yards. On June 30, the USS Grunion left for its patrol with Lt. Cmdr. Mannert "Jim" L. Abele in command.

Under orders, Abele was to take his sub and its 69 other men aboard to the Aleutian Islands, off the coast of Alaska. The Grunion's job was to patrol westward from the island of Attu, on routes between the Aleutians and the Japanese Empire.

The small dots on a map that represent the Aleutian Islands would seem to convey little strategic value for either side of the war, but control of the tiny isles convinced the Japanese that an attack by the U.S. would be preventable. U.S. forces believed it possible to use the islands as bases in which to launch aerial attacks at America. Now, the Aleutian Islands were of mighty importance.

On July 10, 1942, the Grunion was reassigned from Attu due east, to the north side of the island of Kiska. Five days later, first word came from the submarine. It had been attacked by an enemy destroyer. She had fired three torpedoes at the foe, and missed with all three tries.

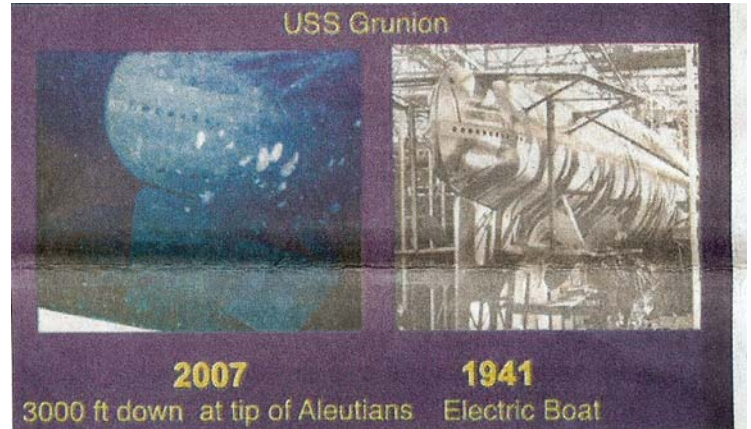
Shortly after this message was received, another one came: the Grunion had sunk three destroyer-type vessels. According to Grunion history, this message was so distorted that details of the attacks were never learned (Japanese information confirms that boats 25 and 27 on its fleet had indeed been sunk, while a third had been damaged, but survived).

Orders came down the chain of command that the Grunion, along with other boats, S-32, Triton and Tuna, were to hold posts in the approaches to Kiska. They were to be in place by daylight of July 22.

Word had it that that afternoon there would be departing enemy vessels. U.S. Naval forces were originally scheduled to make a surface bombardment on Kiska that afternoon as well. While it didn't happen as planned, the Navy fleet did carry out the task a few days later, on July 28. The Grunion's job was to guard exits from Kiska. In the night, the Grunion attacked an unidentified

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USS GRUNION, LOCAL TIES FOUND



These scenes are of the USS Grunion, lost at sea during World War II. The top photo is of the ship's periscope. The submarine's history and its demise 66 years ago tomorrow (July 30) are in Part 1 of a feature by Reporter Cherie DuPlayee-Brown in this week's *Tomahawk Leader*. Part 2, next week will focus on a local tie. -Web Photos

ship six miles out. She had been depth charged, but sustained no damage.

Two days later, on July 30, 1942, the Grunion transmitted heavy antisubmarine activity at the entrance to Kiska. The vessel only had 10 torpedoes left, she warned. The sub was directed to return to the Dutch Harbor Naval Operating Base in Alaska.

Not only was it never sighted, USS Grunion was never heard from again.

Among the victims of World War II, 70 more names would be added to the list of boys Killed in Action.

Those left behind

Lt. Cmdr. "Jim" Abele left behind three sons, Bruce, 12, Brad, 7, and John, 5, who grew up oftentimes wondering what became of the Grunion – and their father. At some point in time, the brothers decided to go looking for him, perhaps not knowing the full extent of the project they were undertaking. What started as a search for the dad they did not know growing up would eventually become a successful search for a submarine and the families of all 70 of its men onboard.

Through what started out as Brad's collections about his father, affectionately dubbed the "Jim Book," the brothers found out new details about their father, that he was not just a sailor in the U.S. Navy (he taught at Harvard for awhile) and he touched many lives.

While the Jim Book was published online, the Abele boys knew one thing for certain: the Grunion had never been found. Years of research and donated time had yielded little progress.

The biggest break in the case came approximately 10 years ago when an Air Force lieutenant colonel by the name of Richard Lane walked into an antique shop and paid a dollar for an old Japanese electrical diagram of a ship's winch. On the back of the illustration was a note, handwritten in English: "Wiring diagram of deck winch of Kana Maru." He had little if any idea of the importance such a sentence would play in the discovery of a long lost ship at the bottom of the sea.

With no information regarding his purchase, Lane posted what he had on a military history website looking to find its meaning. What happened next was just one of the miracles that took place in the course that will write the Grunion's history books.

A young amateur historian by the name of Yutaka Iwasaki who was living in Japan saw Lane's posting and replied. Lane wanted to authenticate the diagram he held in his hands. Not only could Iwasaki confirm it was indeed a true part of naval history, he had more to offer.

"He said he had information regarding the USS Grunion," said Bruce Abele from his home in Newton, Mass.

To Lane, Iwasaki now relayed information about the Kana Maru, a Japanese freighter that sunk the Grunion.

Through heavy fog, common on the Aleutian waters, shots and

torpedoes between the two boats were launched until the Kana Maru fired a shot it believed hit the conning tower of the submarine. The attack then ceased.

Back in the states, a friend of Abele's happened to be checking one of the few Grunion websites the Abele family had yet to check into. The friend noticed Iwasaki's post saying he had information on the Grunion and mentioned it to Bruce the next time he saw him.

"(Iwasaki) had found an article written by a military commander of the Kana Maru in some obscure magazine in Japan," Bruce said. With that, John Abele tracked down an email address for Iwasaki and wrote to him.

"It was one big mystery. Our goal was to find out what happened to the sub," Bruce related. "The description the military commander gave said he was shooting at a sub. For 27 years they didn't even know it was the Grunion they had been firing at."

With the feeling of loss and the pain of never having closure in the death of their father, the Abele brothers continued searching and trying to connect the dots to this massive underwater riddle.

Meanwhile Iwasaki contacted a friend of his who had piles of documents that had been put together reliving moments of the Kana Maru, and, quite possibly, the Grunion. Then at one point, a tidbit came through; a chart depicting the potential location of where the Grunion went down from the logs of information the Kana Maru kept.

Now the Abeles had the coordinates, but still no way to get there. Finding a boat to haul expensive heavy duty equipment out to sea was not an easy thing to line up, much less even finding the equipment in the first place.

John Abele, who started Boston Scientific Corp., a business focusing on less invasive measures of medical techniques, the second largest employer in Ireland, was in Florida doing a presentation for his company. Entertainment for the day was provided by Bob Ballard, most notably famous for his work as an oceanographer. Ballard worked on finding the Titanic. This was a man who knew his way around the ocean's floor.

When the connection between John and Bob was made, the Grunion's story unfolded a bit more and Bob helped the Abeles by telling them how to go about finding a submarine, what to look for and what to expect.

"He taught us about sonar and ROVs (remotely operated underwater vehicles)," recalled Bruce. "It took us years (to get it right)."

Now the family knew what they needed.

Numerous attempts at trying to find a ship willing to haul out to the middle of the frigid Aleutian waters proved difficult, as any boat they lined up eventually recanted for some reason.

Then, by chance, Bruce's wife happened to be dining with a friend, who, as luck had it, brought along her son to the luncheon. The son, who rarely came home for such visits, just so happened to have recently gone crab fishing in Alaska and upon hearing the two ladies talk about details of the Grunion and the relentless battles the family faced in finding it, became engrossed in the story.

"He got interested, and said he knew a boat that might be interested in helping us," Bruce said. Through phone calls, the crab boat, the "Aquila," signed on, and, more importantly, stayed dedicated to helping the Abele family find the Grunion.

What may come as a surprise to civilians is the fact that once a submarine is lost at sea, the Navy does nothing to locate or retrieve it. Perhaps it's a lack of funds during wartime, perhaps it's time constraints in previously hostile waters, but whatever the reason, locating sunken boats is not high on the to-do list of the military. Fifty-two boats were sunk in WW II. Over 3,500 men, approximately 20 percent of the U.S. force, went down with those boats. Out of those 52 that sunk during WWII, only three have been found. Only three. That is, until last year.

In August 2006, a team of side sonar experts hired by the Abele brothers located a target in the Aleutian waters. Sonar images of a sub-shaped silhouette were recorded thousands of feet under the water's surface. Upon coming in from the cold waters of Alaska, Bruce says they ran into more opposition.

"It was basically a dirty mark on a monitor," he recalled of those first pictures of what the family thought might be the Grunion. "Loads of people told us that there was no way it was a sub."

Going back out into the waters with better equipment would prove to be a big test of the Abeles' willpower and patience. Because the Aleutian waters are the most frigid waters known in the world, the window of opportunity to search them is limited to one month out of the year. August 2006 came and went. The family would have to wait a full year before exploring a second time.

In August 2007, the members of the Aquila, a husband and wife team, well versed in the ways of physics, who run their crab boat with their two home-schooled children, went with crew and John Abele with the hopeful outlook that the Grunion might be found. This time, the boat brought along an ROV, housing a large number of high definition cameras on it that were able to take much clearer pictures of underwater objects. Over three hours of video footage was taken.

Bruce relates that even though they had coordinates of where they were the previous time when they found what they thought was the Grunion, the fact that they were able to relocate it a year later was nothing short of astounding.

Astounding it was and within 20 minutes, damaged and nearly unrecognizable at first, the Grunion was found.

"It has been such a stream of improbabilities," said Bruce of the search for his father's submarine. "We were lucky, but persistent."

Bruce reiterated that the Aleutian Islands are some of the most remote parts of the world and the long list of uncertainties and unbelievable twists and turns in the story had been "unbelievable — "mind-boggling," he said.

With experts now looking at the pictures of the wreckage that was found almost a mile under the surface of the waters and trying to chart the final demising moments of the Grunion, Bruce related that the sub

was found in a pretty mangled state after 65 years. While the sub has no signs of shell penetration, it did have a severely bent hatch that remains open to this day.

Bruce noted that was a strange thing to see. While 225 pounds of pressure would have broken a submarine of that day, he notes that the Grunion was under 1,300 pounds of pressure as it went down. Five hundred feet was a maximum depth at which there could be survival before taking a disastrous toll on a human body. The Grunion was nearly 3,000 feet below the surface.

Bruce and the Abele family ponder the possibilities of a circular torpedo — when a fired torpedo actually misses its intended target, only to come back and hit the boat it was fired from. It's an ironic possibility, according to Bruce, who notes several instances of such an occurrence happening back in the wars of yesteryears.

"There were problems with torpedoes," Bruce stated. Traveling approximately 53 mph, a torpedo could have "possibly hit the hatch," enough to knock it open, but the torpedo itself not exploding, therefore leading 70 men into a drowning panic.

Finding the families

Finding the Grunion has been emotional for the Abele family, whose mother, working through her own grief, took the time to often write notes and letters of condolences to all family members of the Grunion who served the U.S. Navy under her husband's command.

In January 2008, Yutaka Iwasaki came to America to meet the Abeles.

"He's a remarkable individual, a great writer," Bruce says of his Japanese friend. According to Bruce, Yutaka had been flooded by random notes and letters from various family members of the Grunion's men sending him thanks.

"Those are notes that will be treasured the rest of his life," he says of the historian who brought to America models of the Kana Maru and other models of sub chasers, to give the Abeles a feeling for the sizes of vessels involved. Indeed, the Kana Maru would have dwarfed the Grunion in comparison.

"We're supposed to be unemotional," says Bruce of the "quite scientific" Abele boys. Still he says the trip that found the sub was a moving one. "There's some excitement (finding the sub), but you don't see it clearly," he relayed of the murky waters and layers of years and sea urchins combing over the Grunion. Still, for the better half of a mile leading up to the sub, still visible in 2007, was the trail the Grunion left behind in the sand as it sunk farther and farther to the ocean's bottom, as if to leave behind a path leading right up to it, 65 years later.

The Abele family recently felt loss again with the passing of brother Brad in May of 2008 due to an aggressive form of Parkinson's disease.

Presuming the Abele family's life's work was coming to the closing stages would be incorrect. For the life of the Grunion, and the lives of those souls lost on it, were just coming alive after a long slumber. All 70 men onboard had loved ones. They all had a story to tell. They all had a sailor to be proud of. Little did anyone know at the time, but the finding of the Grunion would soon find itself winding into the lives of some very special people in Tripoli, Wis.

(To be continued)

To Honor Thy Country: Part 2
The Story of the USS Grunion and Tripoli's Elmer T. Schumann



Memories were not lost

The ties to Tripoli are recalled in the story of Elmer Schumann, who perished when the USS Grunion submarine sank during World War II. Siblings Jim Schumann and Jackie Tramm treasure Elmer's Purple Heart and a picture of the veteran and his wife, Teckla.

-Contributed Photos

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Presuming the Abele family's life's work was coming to the closing stages after finding the missing submarine their father commanded would be incorrect. For the life of the USS Grunion and the souls lost on it were just coming alive after a long slumber. All 70 men onboard had loved ones. They all had a story to tell. They all had a sailor to be proud of.

Little did anyone know at the time, too, but the discovery of the Grunion after six decades would soon find itself winding into the lives of some very special people in Tripoli, Wis.

Sixty-six years ago nearly to the day, in newspapers all over the country, headlines relayed the news of the sinking of the USS Grunion. And, in a far-away logging town in northern Wisconsin, people read these lines:

"Chief Quartermaster, Elmer Taylor Schumann LOST IN ACTION."

Word received by Teckla Maki Schumann, wife, read as follows:

"The Navy Department deeply regrets to inform you that your husband, Elmer Taylor Schumann, Chief Quartermaster, USS Grunion, U.S. Navy, is missing in the performance of his duty and in the service of his country. The Department appreciates your anxiety but details are not now available. Delay in receipt therefore must necessarily be expected to prevent possible aid to our enemies."

That paragraph encapsulated not only a military losing a soldier and a country losing a man, but also a wife becoming a widow and four children losing a father.

Elmer Schumann was born in Ohio and grew up in the Ozark Mountains. His family raised pigs and he dreamed of being a pig farmer someday. Joining the Navy first, however, he felt was his duty.

Elmer was married to a woman named Teckla Maki, who came from a strong Finnish background and a family of 13 children. Teckla's grandfather came to America from Finland, purchasing land and taking care of it, as was the way back then. He had a horse, eventually a team of horses, and then a sled. Working their way from California to Minnesota while working in the mining hills, Teckla's ancestors finally settled in Brantwood, where she was born to Val and Simone Maki.

Elmer met Teckla through a cleaning job the young woman had and the couple were married. With him in the Navy, the couple moved several times. Their first child, Jim, (husband to Gerri Schumann, Tripoli) was born in Charleston, S.C., in 1934. Soon after followed daughters, Jannine, (Kenneth Schneider, Franklin) and, Jackie, (Ralph Tramm, Brantwood). Eventually the family settled as he took a job with the Navy working the locks in Sault Ste Marie.

Figuring a life story based on memories of children now well into their 70's can be a difficult endeavor. But Jim still has vivid memories of his father, a man who Jim always knew to be a Navy guy from the time he was not much more than a toddler.

"He used to take me out in the rowboat to fish on Lake Superior," recalls Jim from his home in Tripoli. Remembering the days when it was legal to spear perch, Jim recollects days spent with his father on the water. "I could hit them," he says of the perch. "I remember they were really thick. Dad would put me on the sled, on top of all the fish we caught, and we'd go back home."

Jim also recalls his father being a great hunter, teaching the youngster tricks of the trade by making a deerhide jacket for Jim.

"He sewed it himself, using one of those old machines you work with your feet," says Jim.

Young Jim learned how to hunt for squirrel under the watchful eye of his dad, who bought the lad a .22 caliber short, so the shells wouldn't

carry far.

"We cleaned and cooked (the squirrels). He was a really good cook," Jim said, recalling his father was somewhat notorious for throwing small block parties in which he grilled and cooked for many friends and relatives; a big deal for a small town facing the era of depression and rations.

One time, Elmer took his young son with him on one of the Navy's ships, Jim's antics got to his father, when the elder found the youngster asking visitors for their loose change.

"They were money people, that was easy to see," Jim rationalizes still these 70 years later. "They always threw change over the side at the kids down below. I was a little guy; I never could get any (beating out the older, faster children)." Jim laughs as he says he pointedly just went up to the people and asked for the money once he got onboard. "Dad was mad that I was begging! He never took me on the boat again."

Remembering his father as a serviceman in the Navy, Jim can recall watching his father come and go to work in his sailor's outfit. Jim also recalls the day his dad came home to tell Teckla he had switched companies, joining the submarine service.

"Mom was pretty mad about that. Mostly scared, but mad. She thought it was dangerous to be in a sub," Jim says. But undeterred, Elmer said he thought it would be safer to be underwater as opposed to on top, perhaps leaving oneself more visible to the enemy.

The last time Jim ever saw his father was in Castle Rock Park, just outside of the Locks. When Elmer left to serve on a new sub called the USS Grunion, Teckla was pregnant with the couple's fourth child; a boy who would be born after Elmer departed. To this day, the family is unsure if Elmer even knew he had a child on the way, or if he got the message onboard that he was a father to a son named Clifton.

Not that long after, representatives from the Navy came to acknowledge terrible news, confirming that the Grunion was lost somewhere in the Bering Sea, not far from a place called the Aleutian Islands.

At first the Navy would only tell Teckla her husband was MIA (missing in action).

"We knew our father was dead," Jim says, although speaking as the oldest child in the family, he says he believes his younger siblings didn't realize the gravity of the information the family was being given. Clifton was only a newborn, and Jackie was just 3 when her father died, with Jannine a few years older. Within a month, the Navy came back to confirm it had switched Elmer's state to KIA - killed in action.

"She took it hard," Jim says of his mom. "We all took it hard. When you know that someone is not coming home, it is hard."

Times were already difficult, but without the Navy pay Elmer would send home on a regular basis, things would undoubtedly get tougher.

The Navy explained to the Schumann family that Teckla would receive a small insurance deal, called the widow's pension. For each child in the family, she would also get an "orphan's pension."

"That was the last we saw of the Navy," recalls Jim, who remembers his mother fretting over how she was going to feed and care for her children with no husband.

Kids get sick and errands needed to be run; Elmer's Navy friends brought what Jim believes was a 1942 Oldsmobile to Teckla.

"My dad had a lot of good friends. He was a good man," sums up Jim.

Years earlier, Elmer lived in Tripoli a short while and Jim recalls his father loving the area, content with the hunting land it offered. Elmer had managed to buy an old cottage from Teckla's uncle, Ed Maki, years prior to his death on the Grunion.

With the new wheels Teckla finally had, the widow loaded her children and their belongings and hit the road, on her way to Tripoli, to live in the area her ancestors knew and her late husband once loved.

"Mom drove 35 mph," Jim remembers of their trip from Sault Ste Marie to Tripoli. The journey seemed like it would never end, he says, remembering Teckla feared going too fast in the new car would yield her a ticket, and she definitely did not have the money to deal with that.

When we pulled into the big city of Tripoli, it was a happy day," says Jim, who recalls his mom laughing all the way into town, happy to finally be "home." Jim says one gentleman even tried telling Teckla she had a flat tire from the long trip.

"She didn't even care!" says Jim now. She just had to get her children settled in the old cottage.

"We didn't have electricity. There were no wires in the old house. A friend of my mom's finally came over and wired the place with enough to put one light bulb in each room. Other than that, we had a kerosene chandelier," Jim remembers.

To help feed the growing Schumann brood, the family depended on big gardens planted on their land.

"I hated those gardens!" Jim laughs as he recounts all the weekends given to hoeing and tending. Fulfilling one small dream of their father's, Jim says the family raised two pigs, as well.

At a time when everything was rationed, money was tight. Elmer's pensions were not that much money when mom was trying her best to raise kids on her own. Teckla took jobs as they came available, traveling for some time to Eagle River to be a bakery cake decorator.

In Mrs. Ruby Arndt's second grade class in the Tripoli school, Jim recalls the kids having to stand up and tell their classmates which branch of the military their fathers served in.

"I had to say he was dead," Jim poignantly recalls. "I cried hard, and the teacher walked me all the way home that day."

Ralph Tramm, Teckla's future son-in-law, is something of an amateur genealogist and has spent time studying the family's history lines. Upon pouring over Schumann's sea records, Tramm can tell that he was an able seaman, having decent service records with fairly good reports along the way. Not a big man physically per se, Elmer was a career sailor, according to Tramm.

Teckla rarely talked about losing Elmer unless, Jim says, she needed to. According to Tramm, Teckla did a marvelous job at nurturing her family.

"She was a typical tough Fin-Lander. Yet, she was a gentle soul," Ralph says.

Jim recalls one night sleeping in his bed when Teckla came in and woke him up. In the middle of the night, she handed him a shiny heart-shaped medal on a purple ribbon. It was Elmer's Purple Heart.

"She told me to take care of it, and give it to my son someday." Jim says he was slightly confused at the time, a child himself. But he hung onto it all these years. The medal today is slightly dulled from the obvious numerous fingers that have touched it over the years.

Jim hauls out a Navy-issued book on World War II submarines and ships lost at sea, including little stories of what is known about them. It contains a picture of his father among the details of the Grunion. On the worn cover are small stars colored in different crayon hues by Jackie as a youngster. The book has obviously been cherished by all ages.

Jim himself was set to join the Navy like his father, but Uncle Sam beat him to it, and the young man was drafted into the Army. Coming home from boot camp, Jim went home to visit his mom, who was by then remarried. Jim knew he was going to be stationed in Germany and was preparing to go overseas. His mom feared for him, just as she had feared for his father years before.

"She said, 'You make sure you get your ass home.' I remember that! She sure took good care of us kids. That was the last time I said goodbye to her," Jim solemnly thinks back.

Upon returning to camp in Arkansas, notice was waiting for Jim that his mother had passed away as a result of a cerebral hemorrhage. Asking to return home one more time, Jim was given a stern "no" from his commanding officers. He took it upon himself to inform them he'd go no matter what, even if it meant climbing over a wall. His \$37 monthly pay had already been spent and the young man had no money to make it back to Wisconsin. Guards were posted by Jim to make sure he didn't go AWOL that first night, but his fellow comrades heard of his mother's passing and took up a collection for him, raising the money he'd need. The next day, a car was waiting to take Jim to the airport.

Upon arriving in Wisconsin, this time knowing his mother would not be waiting to see him, Jim stood in the airport with his green duffel bag.

"A guy came up to me," Jim says. "He said I looked lost. He said 'How far you gotta go soldier?' He was a complete stranger. He drove me to my front door. I never did learn his name."

Jim, now 74, thinks his dad would be happy to know the Grunion has been found, although that has yet to be confirmed by the U.S. Navy. Everyone, including Teckla, was extremely proud that Elmer had served in the military, and this is closure for the family.

Ralph Tramm agrees when he says good things have come out of the sad story. Grunion research led Ralph to really start exploring the Schumann ancestors and descendants.

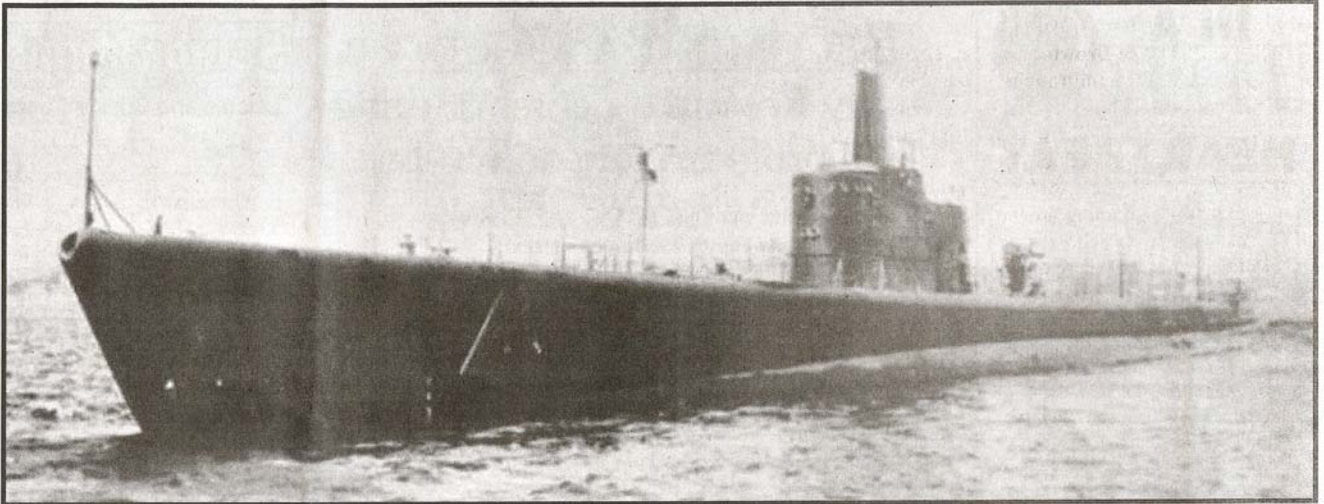
"I've found other relation," relays Ralph. In fact, through all of the first and second cousins Ralph has since discovered, the family was surprised to learn that Elmer had a brother living in New York. No one knew he existed.

"He was quite devastated when the sub was lost," says Ralph of the uncle, himself a retired member of the Air Force.

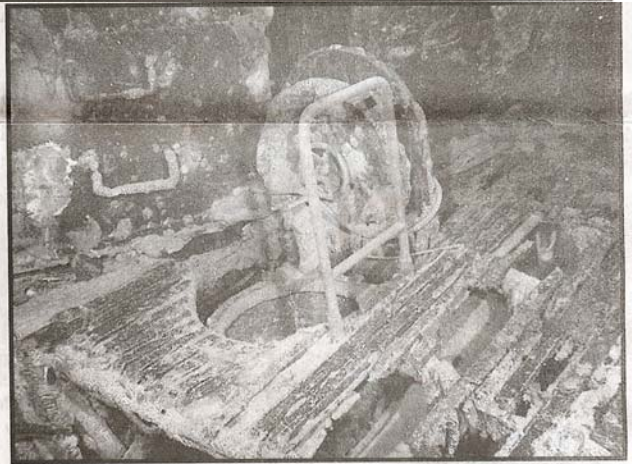
(The story behind the mystery of the Grunion continues. Look for the conclusion in next week's *Tomahawk Leader*, when we introduce one of the women who took on the mission of finding the families of the 70 missing crew members, and the first reunion planned for surviving family members.)

Putting to rest 70 men; peace for families: Part 3

The Story of the USS Grunion and Tripoli's Elmer T. Schumann



This grouping of photos shows, above, the USS Grunion; Elmer T. Schumann, who has ties to Tripoli; and the submarine's hatch.



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Mary Bentz lives in Bethesda, Md., and one day last year she received a phone call from a cousin.

"Did you see the news on AOL?" Mary recalls her cousin asking her. "They found the Grunion!"

Two years before Mary was born, the Grunion sank. She grew up only hearing stories about her uncle, Carmine Parziale. Carmine, a torpedoman's mate third class, was on the fated submarine.

Knowing it would be up to Bruce, Brad and John Abele, sons of the USS Grunion's commander, "Jim" L. Abele, to find any descendants of the Grunion's men, Mary called Bruce Abele, asking him if he was able to find her aunt, Carmine's only living sibling. They needed to find many more people, and Mary offered to help.

Mary has since become one of the three affectionately dubbed "Sub Ladies" (along with Vickie Rodgers and Rhonda Raye), a trio of women who have taken a year of their lives and a list of 70 strangers who lost their lives on the Grunion, and made it their mission to find living members of each and every sailor.

From the time the Grunion was found with unclear sonar pictures in 2006, and the time they knew it might be found again in 2007, the Sub Ladies had one year in which they wanted to contact 70 families. They were successful with 68 the week before the Aquila went out the second time with the hopes of finding the Grunion.

Mary took out an ad in the paper in the hometown of one of the two still-missing sailors, Moore Jules Ledford, and surprisingly there came an answer. That left the daunting task of finding the one last needle in the haystack: the family of Byron Allen Traviss.

Frustrated at the inability to find the last member of the sub, Mary was venting to Bruce Abele on the phone. She thought she was living a letdown of sorts.

"Bruce was trying to make me feel better. He said some people just don't read newspapers," rather choosing to listen to talk radio. That sparked an idea for Mary, who looked up Traviss' hometown of Detroit, called a local radio station and told the person who answered the phone her story. Within moments, she was live on the air, relating the tale of the Grunion and how their search had just one more question mark.

In less than two hours, an excited DJ called back. They got a call from a cousin through marriage of Traviss' family in nearby Dearborn. She was unloading groceries when she heard her long lost relative's name come across the airwaves. She is the only living relative of the man, who at 16 years of age, joined the Navy. His Purple Heart was hanging on her wall. The final connection happened the morning after the day the Grunion was found by the Aquila.

"That's when I decided to have (all of) their stories told," Mary recalls of the amazing factors that came into play in finding the families. "It would be a tribute to each one of these guys, to the Grunion and to each man as an individual, saying, yes, he was on that sub, and he gave his life."

Mary, who grew up always wondering what became of her father's baby brother, Carmine, knew others had a story to tell, and she began the second round of tasks: contacting hometown or next-of-kin newspapers, in order to have the stories told.

"Families are so happy and appreciative of the whole expedition. These men were never forgotten," Mary assures, noting that for some they're dealing with third generations of family members.

"Losing people in a submarine – it's almost always a never-find situation," Mary says. "The Abele brothers, for working on this so long and making it happen; it is *such* a human interest story."

Out of the 70 men who perished on the Grunion, Bentz found two wives who are still alive. She is overjoyed at what these turn of events means for not just these widows, but for all family members.

Once all of the 70 stories are written across the nation (it is a task almost complete – over 60 newspaper stories have appeared, with the *Tomahawk Leader* closing this chapter with today's edition), she expects to make a presentation of sorts. Each story will be going to the Bowfin Museum in Honolulu, Pearl Harbor.

"I would like to get the stories into every Naval Museum across the nation. It will serve as the obituary these guys never had," Mary says. "Finally, someone is recognizing these guys!"

Although the men of the Grunion were always presumed dead, the Navy kept the ruling of the Grunion loss listed as a mystery.

Indeed, agrees Bruce Abele, "Articles written about these men; I can't imagine a better memorial after all these years."

And, now fast forward to the future: Columbus Day weekend, October, 2008, there will be the first-ever memorial get-together held to honor the Grunion's sailors at the place of its sister sub, the USS Cod, in Ohio. Family members of all 70 men are invited to attend and meet, sharing stories and memories. The Schumann family of Tripoli does not currently plan on attending due to the long drive and some failing health issues, but will be there, no doubt, in heart and mind.

Mary Bentz sums up a lot when she concedes, "War is hell. America lost men; Japan lost men as well." The crew of the Aquila found the Grunion in minutes, but spent hours looking to fulfill a promise to look for the Japanese boats 25 and 27, which the Grunion sunk in defense.

Upon hearing the Grunion was found, Yutaka Iwasaki was in Japan. He commented, "Those men (of the Grunion) were crying out to be found. However, it is the Japanese way to never surrender; it's a disgrace to reach out to anybody." He talks of Japanese culture and believes no matter the time spent looking for them, the Japanese sailors were simply not meant to be found, for it would mean losing face.

The finding of the Grunion is not an easy story to sum up. Through the many twists and turns that it possesses, the story is as American as they come.

July 30, 2008, marked the 66th anniversary of the Grunion going underwater for the last time, playing its part in the epic battles that were to be forever known as World War II.

There are many stories to tell about any war. Perhaps more importantly, just as many soldiers to thank and families to acknowledge.