

Sue Eckles Presentation at the COCHINO/TUSK Reunion

You probably assume that I am here tonight because of the equal opportunity status of our Country. No, that is not the reason. I am here to share with you a little insight into the feelings of this former USS COCHINO (SS 345) submariner's wife and the impact that was felt due to the happenings of Aug. 25, 1949 when my husband's first submarine blew up on Aug. 25, 1949 and sank in the North Atlantic Sea on Aug 26, 1949.

As a bride of less than a year, I traveled to New London CT in June 1949 with my husband Jim to be settled in an apartment before he was to go to sea in July, for several months, on what became known as "The Last Cruise". I had an opportunity to meet other wives before he left who would soon play a big part in my future. We kissed our husbands goodbye at the Submarine Base in Groton and watched them back away from the pier, then we drove to Groton Long Point to catch a last glimpse of the COCHINO fading into the horizon of Long Island Sound.

The first news we heard of the disaster was on the radio and no wife knew at the time if her husband was safe. Thanks to those who manned the phones, each wife was called personally to reassure her of her husband's condition. Jo McGrath, wife of Paul McGrath, and I had relocated ourselves in a new apartment after the submarine's departure. Unbeknown to us, a USS TUSK wife lived below us on the second floor with several small children. USS TUSK was the sister ship operating with USS COCHINO in this sensitive North Atlantic operation. We were told that her husband had been one of the men who had been swept overboard when rescue operations of COCHINO began. We had not met her or her children personally, and when we watched her relatives load up her belongings to travel to her home in Missouri, we felt so very sad for her, as the thought passed thru our mind—"There, but by the grace of God, goes I". We, in a sense, felt guilty. Her husband died so that ours might live. The courage and commitment of the Officers and Crew of the TUSK was above and beyond the call of duty.

This was my introduction to my husband's Submarine Service. In my wildest dreams, I had no idea of how much submariners depend on each other to survive and how much each wife depended on each other for moral support. Believe me, that was a hard lesson to learn, but by learning it that particular way, there was a guarantee that I would never forget it.

The day finally arrived for the families and friends who waited and watched as USS TUSK slowly traveled up the Thames River, returning to the New London Submarine Base at Groton CT, with the remaining crews of COCHINO and TUSK aboard. It was a joyous but sad occasion as we gave thanks for the return of our men. I made a vow to myself that day that I would never watch my husband's ship depart on a cruise again, but would always be there when he returned. This vow I kept for the entire length of time he was in the Navy.

Submarine TUSK has made this day possible. They have given me my husband and made it possible to have 2 beautiful daughters and 2 grandsons. They made it possible

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for my husband to have a career of 30 exciting years in the Navy and also serve on 8 other submarines after COCHINO. Thank you former TUSK OFFICERS and CREW from the bottom of a former COCHINO wife's heart.

Sue Eckles.....Summerville, SC

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