

Alligator Symposium II
Nauticus
Norfolk, VA

30-31 October 2004

The second conference dedicated to the Hunt for the *Alligator* the U.S. Navy's first submarine--convened at Nauticus in Norfolk, Virginia on Saturday 30 October. A welcome by Richard Conti, Director of Nauticus, was followed by short opening remarks by Rear Admiral Jay Cohen, Chief of Naval Research, who related the story of how he first became aware of the Alligator and described the technological, educational, and historical importance of the Hunt.

Dan Basta, Director of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Marine Sanctuary Program described the value of the *Alligator* Hunt as a means to involve students in the sciences. Bombarded by sound bites and repeatedly told that "the next big thing" is the most important, it has become, according to Basta, increasingly difficult to get Americans to focus on serious problems such as the decrease in the numbers of students proficient in math and science. Alligator is a "compelling hook" with which to interest students in science, as well as to interest the public in our oceans. Finding the vessel is a significant challenge but we need "great challenges to do great things," concluded Basta. Given the small size of *Alligator*, its probable resting place near the edge of the continental shelf, and the limitations of existing technology, finding it will certainly be a very great thing.

Rear Admiral Jay DeLoach, Deputy Commander, Submarine Forces, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, gave an overview of submarine development during the civil war, comparing submarine technology at that time with some of the most recent technological advances in today's submarine force. This was followed by a panel discussion on "Pushing the Envelope of Technology," featuring retired Rear Admiral Brad Mooney (moderator), Tom Nutter (Special Programs Officer for Commander Submarine Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet), Dwight Coleman (Director of Research for the Institute of Exploration), Lieutenant Commander Brian Lawrence (Salvage Engineer, Naval Sea Systems Command), Tom Jones, (Boeing Corporation), and Ivar Babb (Director, National Undersea Research Center). Members of the panel provided an overview of current undersea archaeological technology; the capabilities of deep sea salvage techniques; the promise of autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs) for deep sea search, and a description of underwater mapping techniques.

Over the lunch break, conference attendees were invited to tour the Office of Naval Research 108-ft. "Afloat Lab" (YP-679), which was docked nearby. This is the vessel that was used for the most recent expedition in search of *Alligator* in August. Following lunch, producer David Clark previewed a few minutes of his forthcoming documentary on the Hunt for the *Alligator*, which will be aired in the

fourth quarter of 2005 on Discovery Channel's Science Channel series, "Secrets of the Deep." The audience was then introduced to members of the Eakins family, descendants of *Alligator's* last commander, who had come from as far away as California to take part. Samuel Eakins' great, great-grandson Jeffrey Malone spoke on behalf of the family and described how, despite being told over the years that they must be wrong, they were happy to see fact catching up with family lore. They had known about *Alligator* for 140 years! In addition to Mr. Malone and his wife Charmaine, other descendants included May Eakins Tamarato (grand-daughter), her daughters Barbara Larson and Nancy Mason, and Bobby Havens (great-grandson).

Another panel discussion came next, this one discussing efforts to date and including NOAA's Michiko Martin (moderator), Robert Neyland (Head of the Navy's Underwater Archaeology Branch, Naval Historical Center), Mike Overfield (NOAA), Tim Runyan, Frank Cantelas, and Valerie Grissing (East Carolina University), Gary Ott (NOAA HAZMAT), and Odean Vanthul (Maritime Education Specialist, Nauticus) and Kate Thompson (Maritime Education Specialist, NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program).. Panel members described the August expedition from Ocracoke, North Carolina, its methods, and the information gleaned from that research, as well as new techniques for conserving artifacts. Discussion concluded with a description of last year's "Explorers' Club," which was begun by Nauticus in cooperation with Crittenden High School in Newport News. The focus of the Club was on the search for *Alligator*; students spent after-school hours learning the history and science, and making field trips to modern submarines and to the coasts to run experiments. The Club is running again this year, and lesson plans are now available on the NOAA *Alligator* website.

The final panel presentation dealt with construction and deployment of *Alligator*, and was staffed by Captain Phil McGuin (moderator), Craig Bruns (Collections Manager, Independence Seaport Museum), Tim Smalley (Boating Education Coordinator, State of Minnesota), David Merriman (D&E Miniatures), Commander Wayne Horn (Senior Undersea Medical Officer, Naval Submarine Medical Laboratory), and retired Senior Chief Electrician's Mate (SS) Jim Christley (Historian and Artist). Bruns delivered a presentation on Philadelphia during the "*Alligator* era," and Commander Horn delivered a detailed analysis of the potential of inventor DeVilleroi's air scrubbing system while the volume of air inside the vessel itself would have limited the endurance of the crew to about 35 minutes, the purifying mechanism might have been capable of extending dive time to several hours. Modelmakers Smalley and Merriman described their work in constructing the 1/7 and 1/12 scale recreations of "*Alligator Junior*" (the sub first evaluated by the Navy in 1861) and *Alligator* (the final version now somewhere off Cape Hatteras). Both versions will appear in Clark's documentary. Finally, Jim Christley left participants with a long list of research that still needs to be done.

Throughout the symposium, uniformed members of the Navy & Marine Living History Association engaged visitors and attendees with discussions of *Alligator*, of the life of the sailor, and of Confederate underwater warfare with displays of artifacts, equipment, and illustrations. Artists Joe Hinds and Jim Christley also displayed some of their artwork, which now includes *Alligator*.

Regards,

Chuck Veit

President, Navy & Marine Living History Association

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