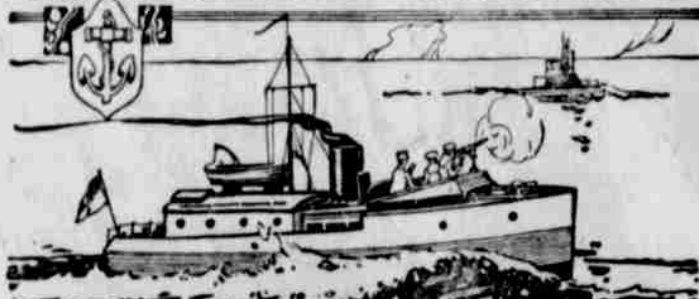


SEA SLUG STORIES



Thrilling Tales of U Boat Hunting, Told by an American Boy Who Served For Months With the British Patrol and Who Did the Thrilling and Perilous Work That Is Now Being Done by Hundreds of Other American Boys.

No. 1 Chasing U Boats With Sea Slugs

By
A SEA SLUG,
British Service Name For Crews
of Submarine Chasers.

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PROLOGUE.

The author of this series of four articles is a young American, who has spent most of his time since the war started with the British patrol fleet, taking an important part in helping to organize that branch of the service known as the Sea Slugs (submarine chasers).

He has accumulated a remarkable collection of anecdotes incident to this exciting branch of the service, and many of these were personal adventures in which he took part and which make one of the stirring narratives to come out of the war. He recently returned to the United States to assist the American navy in organizing the same branch of the service and should be of great value because of his experience abroad. So far as known he is the only American who served with the British patrol prior to the advent of our destroyer flotilla in British waters. Of course some of his experiences, of military value to the enemy, cannot be related. At the request of the service publication of his name is withheld.

WE were all sitting around tables in "The Knut" at Keppel's Head, drinking pink gin and "it," "it" being Angostura bitters. We were a crowd of "sea slugs," as those who man the U boat chasers are commonly and unlovingly called by the rest of the service.

"They can talk all they want to about the science of submarine hunting," said one of the boys, "but there's just one thing that gets submarines—luck. All the schemes the wise heads devise can't come up to one little piece of good fortune."

"Righto," said a subaltern who had just whispered something into the ear of San, the girl who serves drinks at "The Knut." "You take Max Horton, now, the man who torpedoed the Moltke."

"The whole thing is mostly luck. It's luck when we get a sub, and it's luck when a sub gets anything. I had this yarn straight from Max himself."

"He was submerged in one of our subs, an E boat, somewhere under the ocean, and the plumbing went out of commission. It isn't very pleasant in a submarine anyway. The smells and the stale air when you are running submerged are enough to make many a man sick who never turned a hair at the roughest sea while he was afloat."

"Well, as I was saying, the plumbing went out of commission just as Horton was dressing and had washed up. He hadn't put his trousers on as yet. He ordered the craft to the surface so one of the mechanics could make repairs to the plumbing and meanwhile went on dressing."

Surprised at Seeing Moltke.

"He was standing on one foot while sticking the other through a trousers leg just as the periscope of the submarine stuck out above the surface."

"Suddenly a seaman broke into his cabin and yelled, 'There's a German warship on our starboard quarter, sir!'"

"Max kicked himself free of his trousers quicker than you could wink, and in a matter of seconds he was bent over one of the forward torpedo tubes sighting on the vessel ahead of him. The silhouette book showed she was the battle cruiser Moltke."

"Whiz-z-z! sang the torpedo. Bang! went the Moltke. Max submerged again and finished putting on his trousers. Rather clever, don't you think—standing there with his shirt tails dangling and putting a German battleship?"

"That's a good deal like"—began one of the other boys, but before he could finish the sentence a messenger came in and spoke to the "Brass Hat," who was among us, which is to say he spoke to the senior officer.

"Come on, old chumps," said that

individual. "We can't wait for the last drink San is bringing. A little job is on our hands."

As we ran down the wharf the men in the chasers started the motors, and by the time we had tumbled pell-mell into the boats they were ready to get away.

Speeding through the Solent, still ignorant of our errand except for the Brass Hat, we passed miles of shipping tied up in the harbor waiting for cargoes or to be unloaded.

Later on the Brass Hat, whose boat was leading the line because of his rank, signalled to us that we were after a submarine which a hydroplane had sighted off the Isle of Wight.

The U Boat Chase.

Offshore a short distance was a patrol boat lying very low in the water and flying distress signals. We ran over to her and learned that about an hour before the periscope of a submarine had been stuck up not far from her; then the craft had submerged, appeared again about a mile away and fired four shots, which let in enough water slowly to sink the patrol, which before the war had been nothing but a dirty little trawler.

Finding the crew of the patrol could take care of themselves in their small



"Whiz-z-z! sang the torpedo. Bang! went the Moltke."

boats and learning that the submarine had run over to the westward, where we knew chain net traps to be laid, we circled in that direction.

Our powerful motors thrummed evenly. The water seemed to part ahead of us, and the gunners squinted along the surface.

Suddenly off to the west we made out her periscope. Intense joy thrilled our little crews. She was inshore from us. She was between our circular course and the chain nets—in the trap. The periscope we had seen might be a dummy, for a submarine frequently casts loose a phoney periscope to draw fire, but at any rate she must have been between us and the nets if she cut it loose.

Presently, probably after a look around, the periscope suddenly disappeared, and we knew it was a real one with a German U boat on the end of it.

The Brass Hat, in his own boat, was, of course, in the lead. That was his prerogative as well as his duty. Like a flock of falcons we were swooping down on the prey.

Abruptly the lead boat comes to a dead stop and lists heavily to starboard. Evidently something is wrong. We see men crawl out over the stern and fish around with boat hooks and poles. Cold as it is one man goes overboard and remains under water so long we could not believe he would come up alive.

We can see the Brass Hat gestulating as we run in closer. We can't hear what he is saying, but we have a pretty good idea. We've listened to him before when distressed. One of his men signals that the boat has fouled the chain nets. We wouldn't dare cheer, but we are inclined that way. Everybody likes to put it over a Brass Hat, and now there are only five of us to share the glory at the finish. Each of us stands a better chance of being the one to give the submarine its conge.

Circling round in an even smaller radius, we search the water for a periscope, a shadow or the conventional "streak of dirty grease" or "line of bubbles."

Brass Hat Still Stranded.

The Brass Hat is signalling now for us to go over and help him off. Nobody pays any attention to those orders. He wants to run things and get the U boat himself, but we won't give him the chance. Later we will tell him we didn't see his distress signals. Now he tries to direct the procedure from where he is, but we are like a lot of hounds released from restraint. The one idea of our lives is to get that U boat.

All of us have towing torpedoes out. These are bombs on long cables, which are towed astern and sink to a certain specified depth. If the cable fouls anything at all as the boat goes ahead the bomb pulls up to it, and when it bumps it explodes.

We are in line. Suddenly there is a crash and a roar just ahead of us. I am thrown off my feet. Barrels of water splash down into our cockpit and roll off the decks. The bow lifts itself clean for a second. I think that the submarine has blown us up. Perhaps I am dead already.

Then we settle down again, and except for a scared look on the faces of a couple of men and rather nervous, forced jests on the lips of others we are plowing ahead just as before.

Nothing has happened except the towing torpedo of the boat in front of us in the line fouled a submerged spar or a bit of wreckage and exploded right under our bow. "If we had been a few yards closer we would never have been there any more."

As we realized what had happened our tongues were loosened, and if the crew of the boat ahead could have heard what we said about them we would have lost their friendship most assuredly.

Way inshore, after a circling chase of perhaps twenty minutes, the submarine came up. She was in such shallow water that she probably was having trouble in operating submerged. She was gone then.

What followed was very businesslike. It illustrates the attitude the British have come to take toward the submarines because of their flagrant violations of every form of international law and decency. It is the attitude which any country obliged to fight against them will assume. To the British mind submarines must be exterminated just as one would exterminate a nest of poisonous vipers or a nest of hornets. People ask me how many submarines are being captured now. Very few. Many are destroyed, but few captured.

No sooner did the hull of the submarine show itself than we began to hammer her with our three inch guns. She opened fire, but her shots went wild, and in a few seconds she disappeared.

As fast as we could we ran over to where she had gone down. If the principles which obtain on land, in the air or in the navy at large existed in submarine warfare we would have gone over to see if we could rescue any of the wounded, but it was a U boat, and we simply made sure that there was nothing left of the craft.

Some Bubbles, a Greasy Patch—That's All.

About where she went down a quantity of gas and air bubbles was rising, and the dirty patch of oil was once more in evidence. That was a pretty certain sign the career of one U boat was at an end, for the sea must have been pouring into her, and even though all her crew did not drown, once the salt water reached the storage batteries the chlorine would do the work.

But we are taking no chances. We circle round and round the spot and drop depth bombs—deadly machines. These are powerful explosives which are set so they will detonate at a certain depth. We first sounded the bottom and then set our bombs for ten fathoms. Suddenly I hear a cry from the boat behind us. One of the crew reaches out, grabs the collar of a man who has just dropped a depth bomb over the stern and yanks him unceremoniously into the cockpit. At a glance I see what has happened.

The engineer has stalled his motor just as the bomb is let go. It sinks slowly, and there is a slight momentum left in the submarine chaser. We hold our breath and watch in suspense, expecting any second to see our comrades hurled into the air among a mushroom of water and splinters.

There is no way to help them. Suddenly there is a muffled roar, a column of water rises to what seems a hundred feet and falls back, drenching every one who is near it. But our comrades are unhurt. The momentum of their boat has carried them just far enough to save them from being blown

into atoms. That is the second narrow escape for our little squadron in this chase after a single submarine.

The End of the U Boat.

But our work is done. There is no doubt now about the fate of the U boat. It is not necessary for one of the depth bombs actually to come in contact with the submerged craft to destroy it. When under water a submarine's rigidity is multiplied. Its elasticity is next to nothing. An explo-

Trains into Monmouth

L've Portland 7:35, a m.	Gerlinger 10:20, Independence 10:32, Monm'th 10:50
" Salem 9:35, " "	" " " " " "
" " 1:40, p m.	Dallas 2:45, " " 3:10
" " 3:45, " "	Gerlinger 4:38, Independence 4:55, Monmouth 5:05
" " 6:00, " "	6:45, " 6:57, " 7:10
" Portland 3:20, Connects with above	
" Corvallis 6:45, a m.	Independence 7:35, Arrive Monmouth 7:45
" " 1:15, p m.	" 2:14 " 2:35
" Dallas 7:00, a m.	Arrive Monmouth 7:25
" Airline 8:30, a m and 3:40, p m.	Arrives Airline 8:05 a m and 4:13 p m
Leave Independence, 6:50 a m, 7:35, 8:45, 10:55, 1:30, p m 2:20, 4, 4:40, 7:00	

Trains out of Monmouth

L've Monmouth 7:05 a m, Independence 7:35, Gerlinger 7:49, Ar Salem 8:30	
" Same as above	Portland 11:10
" Monmouth 1:45, p m,	" 2:14, " 2:27, Salem 3:10
" Same as above	Portland 5:25
" Monmouth 4:35, " 4:55, " 5:10, Salem 6:00	
" " 9:05, a m.	Dallas 10:10 " 11:10
" " 4:30, p m	" 4:55, " 6:00
" " 9:05, a m, Independence 10:32, Corvallis 11:20	
" " 4:55, p m,	6:57, " 7:45
" " 7:25 a m and 3:10 p m.	Arrives Airline 8 a m and 3:40 pm
Leave Monmouth 7:05, a m, 8:15 9:05, 10:50, 1:45, p m, 2:35, 4:15, 4:55, 7:10	

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sion as powerful as that of a depth bomb near it is almost certain to cripple it if not destroy it. It is the same principle as that which kills fish in a pond when dynamite is exploded beneath the surface of the water. The shock is sufficient to kill the men in the U boat, and so we glide along homeward secure in the knowledge that even if our gunfire did not finish the enemy the bombs have done the work. On the surface we notice swarms of dead fish.

We cut the Brass Hat free from the nets and listen to him curse, then return to Keppel's Head and "The Knut," where San had our drinks waiting for us. The subaltern, who had been interrupted in his story when we went out

where she had been lying, but could not find a sign of her except for a few bubbles. These told of her fate. The last time I talked with that chap he hadn't seen a U boat since.

"Well, if our pal, D., had been as cautious as this fellow you tell about," said another subaltern, "he would have saved himself a lot of trouble and a bawling out. You boys all know D. He's mighty keen after U boats. He

was cruising round off Peterhead last autumn, when all of a sudden he sighted one, only a few yards ahead, just awash. She didn't seem to show any signs of life.

"D. is a nervy chap, and to save time he decided to run full speed ahead and ram her instead of waiting to fire his guns. He crowded on every ounce of power he could and crashed down into the hull of the submarine."

"The shock as he struck her just abaft the conning tower knocked every one of his men off their feet and dented his own bow badly. When they picked themselves up there was one wild scramble to get forward with the lance bombs."

The lance bombs, I might explain, are bombs fastened to instruments somewhat like harpoons which stick to the side of the submarine and explode. Their chief characteristic is their liability to go off before you can throw them and blow the hurler up.

"Well," the subaltern continued, "D. himself had grabbed a bomb and was just about to hurl it when he turned sick and his knees gave way under him. A head had stuck out of the conning tower of the submarine, and an English voice yelled:

"What in h—s the matter with you? Are you trying to knock us loose from our steering post? Do you want a tow?"

"It was an E boat. Both the submarine and the chaser had to go in for a refit, and D. came uncomfortably near a court martial."

I have heard of many incidents like this, and it explains why the British submarine service hates the Sea Slugs. Every time any kind of a submersible shows itself above water somebody is likely to take a pot shot at it. San got us another round.

The three remaining installments of



We Began to Hammer Her With Our Three Inch Guns.

after the enemy, took it up where he had left off. It is characteristic of the Sea Slugs that nothing was said of the danger two of the boats had run, and if anybody felt proud of what we had accomplished he made no mention of it.

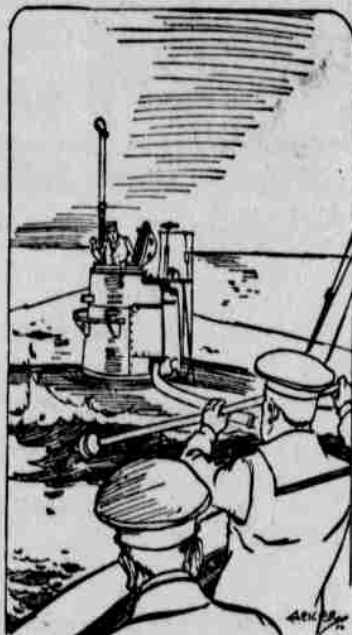
"As I was saying," remarked the subaltern, "Max Horton's experience when he sank the Moltke was a good deal like that of a friend of mine who is in the service, and it goes to show the truth of the statement that it's mostly luck gets a submarine. This chap I speak of had been cruising around for months and had never seen a hostile periscope, much less a submarine. He hadn't even found one of those spots of dirty oil that are becoming classic around the British Isles."

"Then one day, about noon, with the sun shining brightly, he was running along at top speed wondering whether there really was such a thing in the world as a German U boat, when suddenly, almost dead ahead, he saw something sort of wallowing in the sea."

"The bow gun was loaded, and the gunner saluted and said, 'Submarine off the starboard bow, sir. Shall I fire?'"

"No," ordered my friend. "It's probably one of our own. No such luck as for us to run into a German."

"With that the U boat sent a shell whistling past his ear, and he decided his luck was better than he had thought. His three inch began to spit and the fire from the submarine stopped. A couple more shots from the chaser, and without any further sign of life on the U boat there suddenly was a big roar, a cloud of smoke, and she disappeared. They ran over to



"Are you trying to knock us loose from our steering post?"