Corsairs in Drain Pipes: An Examination of the Submariner Folk Group in the United States Navy During the Second World War

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Abstract
During the Second World War, United States submariners were isolated from the rest of the Navy. Submariners faced a higher level and different type of danger than the rest of the Navy. They developed their own way of speaking, a unique worldview, and their own traditions. Although it is widely recognized, especially among contemporary sources, that submariners shared a unique bond, nothing has been published that examines submariners as a cultural group. This project will examine submariners as a distinct sub-culture within maritime culture and as a folk group. The goal of this project is to identify and clearly define submariner culture. In doing so, the author hopes to identify and examine the reasons for its formation. This project will focus on the United States Navy during World War Two. This project utilizes firsthand accounts of submariners and an examination of actual submarines, submarine memorials, and submariner material culture to identify, explain, and define submariner culture.

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The United States Navy grew rapidly during World War II from 1941–45, and played a central role in the Pacific theatre in the war against Japan. It also played a major supporting role, alongside the Royal Navy, in the European war against Germany. The Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) sought naval superiority in the Pacific by sinking the main American battle fleet at Pearl Harbor, which was built around its battleships. The United States Navy (like the IJN) had followed Alfred Thayer Mahan's emphasis on concentrated groups of battleships as the main offensive naval weapons.[18] The loss of the battleships at Pearl Harbor forced Admiral Ernest J. King, the head of the Navy, to place primary emphasis on the small number of aircraft carriers.[19].