

SEA STORIES

by John Stines
 USS Raton (AGSS-270)
 EM3(SS)

You have to love
 the all volunteer service!

John Stines story is documented in the walls of the Manitowoc Maritime Museum, but was none the less is a story worth documenting.

At 18 years of age this young man joined the Navy as an engineman (EN3) and was stationed aboard the USS Nereus (AS-17), a Fulton class submarine tender in San Diego.

“One day,” John tells, “men from the USS Raton, then docked at Pier #1, came aboard the Nereus moored in the middle of the bay and took two crew members back to their boat (the USS Raton).”

John was in sick bay that day and didn’t hear about this earlier incident until later. Now, clock forward to midnight.

“Three guys came into sick bay and told me they were there to immediately transfer me to the USS Raton, which was set to sail to Japan at daybreak.” John explained he was sick and couldn’t go.

“I traded you for fried chicken,” one of the men quipped, “so you’re going with us—we’ve already paid for you!”

So much for the “volunteer” service story sub sailors tell!

“I haven’t packed my sea bag,” John explained.

“Not a problem, your friends have already done that for you,” they added.

John was whisked away on a motor whale boat to the AGSS Raton and a few hours later found himself as a submarine sailor on his way to Japan.

Before leaving the Nereus, however, the corpsman did give the sick John

a couple penicillin shots to help him out a bit.

“From that day on,” John says, “I have been allergic to penicillin.”

John shared that all men coming aboard the USS Raton were immediately told they were on a Manitowoc built boat.



John Stines, EN3, 1962.
 “I didn’t even get any chicken?”

They were well-built boats, he said. While on the boat he went on two West Pacs. First to Hawaii and Japan, and the second time to the Aleutian Islands.

The Raton was a slow submarine, he added. It looked just like the USS Cobia, except for the water vents on the side of the sub. The Cobia’s water draining vents are rounder looking, while the Raton’s were longer and narrower in appearance. “This is how you could tell a Groton boat from a Manitowoc boat,” he explains.

The boat’s exterior had five colors—black, white, and three shades of grey, making it practically invisible in the ocean. What set the Raton apart from the other Manitowoc boats, he added was its bubble on the bridge that kept the watch out of the rain



John joined other USS Illinois Base members as tour guides aboard the USS Cobia during Manitowoc’s 2016 Sub Fest.

