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The Bremerton Base Commander

The Past, Present and Future

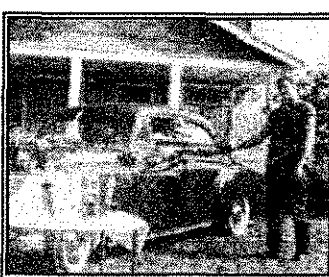
C. Elliott Abram SOSN(SS) USNR
An Autobiography

At the editor's request, new Bremerton Base Commander, Elliott Abram, authored the following autobiography of his life. Elliott, like several of our new leaders in the USSVI, was not a career sailor. I find it heartwarming that men, like Elliott, want to reunite with the submarine sailors and experiences of their earlier days. It is also significant that they take up leadership roles in the organization. Enjoy. /Ed.

Where do we start? Born in Olympia WA 1937 Aug, to **Clare and Charlotte Abram** where the state library now exists. The state legislature, in their wisdom had the Hospital raised. My dad worked for the Union Pacific Railroad at that time and a year or so later he went to Barber College and then opened his own shop. The location was across the street from our residence, in Seattle's Madrona district. When WWII started, he tried to sign up with the Navy, but mom would not approve. She was about to have my baby sister, Clarene. He closed his shop and went to work in the shipyard at Harbor Island. Mom went to work for Boeing. My mother began teaching piano to some neighborhood kids, my sister and I, on the side. After a couple of years she said she had done all she could for me, and sent me to music teacher named 'Mrs. Redburn'. I studied under her glowering eyes for 4 years. In April 1946 my brother Clark (Corky) was born and I though life was never going to be the same. It wasn't and he still goes by Corky as another career Boeing employee.



Mom & me -1939



My Trophy Car - 1956

The summer of 1952 we moved from the wartime workers paradise known as Holly Park to Renton WA (Hazelwood). In this time period I was introduced to drag racing, and learned a few things about engines. The person I learned about 'engineering' an engine design was a gentleman named **R. E. (Reggie) Washington**. (I sometimes think he really is related to George) He was a mechanical eng. for Boeing and Crew chief for an unlimited Hydroplane (Miss Thriftway).

In 1956 the car I put together after working with Redgy (as his gofer) was unbeatable in its class. It set a west coast elapsed time record for "H gas coupe and sedan" that stood as far as NHRA records and I can tell, until 1961.

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Please pass this issue onto another Subvet

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still have the trophy and the record run was recorded by KING TV during the 1956 Seafair Drag Races in Arlington WA. I think the only reason it made the TV news broadcast that weekend was that I was the only guy who jumped out of the car at the trophy presentation and kissed the Seafair Queen. All the other winners drove their car up to her and reached out the window to get their savings bond and trophy. Not me. I really planted one on her.

I worked part time in a lumber mill while in my senior year in High School and after graduation worked the "green line" most of the time. My job was unloading boxcars of mahogany, teak, and many other special ordered wood products.

One of the few times I was working in the woods got me involved with a broken chain (saw chain) and a big tree. Off to Boeing when I realized the limited advancement potential at that place.

I joined the Submarine Naval Reserve that met at the south end of Lake Union and was immediately put on second shift at Boeing. The following spring I attended the Hunters Point Reserve Training Facility and met some people I still regard as close friends. Have you ever heard of a young actress named **Tina Louise**? Some of those friends were responsible for bringing her into the barracks in the trunk of their car. At that time she was stripping at the burlesque place named the **PRESIDENT** in San Fran.

I met her up close when she woke me dancing on the bunk above me with a radio, lights, and the whole crew laughing their UNOWHAT's off when I woke up. One of the guys on the *Bream* ended up marrying her. I don't think she was the same girl who became an actress, but she was just as good looking.

The conflict between my reserve duty and my boss at the great kite factory eventually led to a notice from the President. I took my draft notice to the reserve station CO. I was **THREE WEEKS** short of the one year limit on reservists so I rode the train to San Diego and went to boot camp. When graduation time came (Dec 20th or so) I was handed orders to Pensacola. **WHAT?**

I had orders to go to sub school when I arrived at Boot camp! I refused the orders, was sent to a TAD barracks, and was told to report to a Lt Commander to explain myself. It took me two weeks to get out of there, and I missed my scheduled sub school class. I did get there, graduated, and from there ended up choosing my own duty, on the *Bream* stationed in PHTH. To all you youngsters out there that means Pearl Harbor, **Territory of Hawaii**.

I met some of the greatest guys in the world on that boat. There were a few who I thought had some social adjustment problems, and guess what --- they either left the boat or drank themselves to death.

After several months of mess duty, the Captain (**Cowdrey**) said that after the Lt. in charge of the engineering gang reviewed my sonar test(s) he wanted me to change my striker rating to



Bream Ship Mates – L-R: Gary Stout, Me, Joe Williams & Ray Gannoe

Sonarman. That's another story, but suffice to say that's how I became a sonar striker

The *Bream* participated in some war games off the CA coast, and I got my first attaboy as one of the "ears" of the boat. With some help from the leading Sonarman (**W. Page**) we simulated an attack on the target. Got in, got out, undetected, all using passive sonar, and won the big E of the fleet.

As a result of that we were selected to go on a 'round the world' good will tour the following year. Seems that plan went away when some of the crew of the *Gudgeon* got back into PHTH with some classified discomfort regarding further duty in the sub service. They took our round the world tour, we went to New Zealand and their WestPac tour.

Lots of sea duty and a few outstanding moments such as sonar approaching the *Nautilus* and with a Mk 14 practice torpedo put a dent in that one, and *Wahoo* went to dry dock with a bent screw with another Mk 14 practice. Man! This was going to be fun when we used homing or wire-guided torpedoes. It wasn't until recently that I found out that one of the real thrills of being a sonarman and getting it right was a real ego builder.

Bream got several tin cans and a couple of subs plus ASW helo's out to "pick on" a target I contacted while messing around pinnacle rock, south of PHTH entrance by 40 or 50 miles. It was multi screw making slow turns and seemed to be shadowing us. After pretending not to know the unidentified contact's presence for about 30 minutes the Capt. ordered a turn towards the contact and wow! What a reaction that got! Contact cranked up everything and we tracked that contact for an hour and a half while on the radio to Pearl, and it left us doing close to 30 knots.

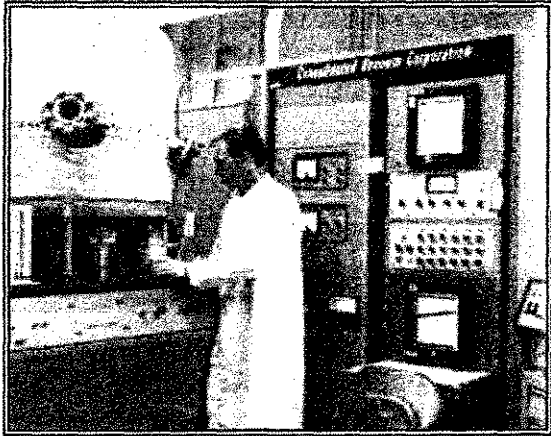
That was Dec. 24, 1958. We went in port, and all the others stayed out. I didn't dare tell anyone who missed Christmas Eve that I might have had something to do with it. Now I find out that our cold war adversary had some pretty fast subs snooping around as early as 1957. I was sent to a few interviews in '59 and that year decided to move on. I was offered almost anything to stay but money. I had my '58 Austin Healey shipped to Oakland and me to Treasure Island.

Boeing made me an offer I could not refuse, and got a rating of experimental E/E technician. I went right to work with two PhD's and several other engineers as their 'figure out how to

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build it guy'. The organization was known as the solid-state physics group. I went to college to study chemistry, some more math and began to design stuff myself. I moved on to thin film electronic research, causing me to study ultra high vacuum theory and design. Soon after becoming a 'lead man' there, I was asked to design a lab within a 12,000 square foot space containing etch, photo resist, bonding, assembly, specimen preparation, and machinery room for 24 vacuum systems of various sizes. We

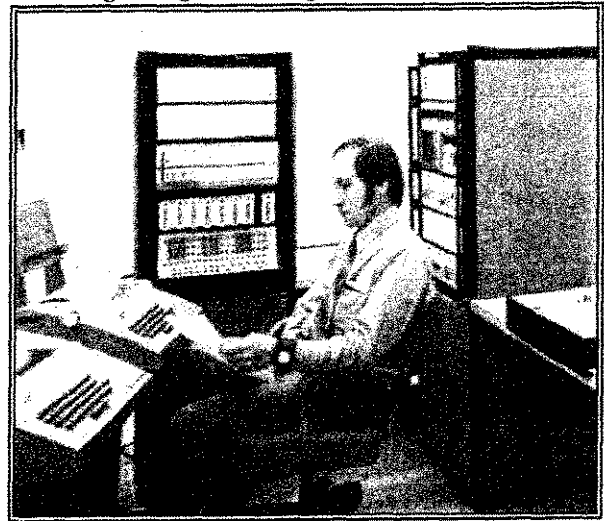


Working in Boeing Vacuum Lab - 1968

were going after a subcontract job. We later expanded the facility, and won a contract to build MK46 hybrid circuits using laser trimmed thin film resistor and capacitor elements with active devices bonded to connecting pads.

Sometime after that I was selected to go to pre-management training, and before I could get back to the lab stuff I was offered a job in the Commercial Airplane group as an avionics planner. I took that job and started out developing and implementing the first computerized and (semi) automated planning and material release and records system in the Boeing Commercial Airplane Co. It was for 737 cockpit and passenger cabin wiring. I overlooked the design, but in 1966 the people who worked on computers were a little strange. Few understood wiring diagrams and none could read a blueprint. That was a challenge. When Mr. McNamara killed the DYNASOAR project it hurt the military group (Solid State Physics) I started with, they downsized fast. Later in the '60's when the SST was buried and the "LAST PERSON OUT OF SEATTLE PLEASE TURN OUT THE LIGHTS" billboard went up our avionics group absorbed as many of the temporarily fortunate as possible. I put in for a transfer back to the Military group when 737 was scheduled to move from the Seattle plant to Renton. The Avionics group was 3 strong when I arrived, 45 strong when the first layoffs started, and down to 2 when my transfer went through.

On to my biggest Boeing challenge. The Electrical Electronic Parts group needed someone with my experience, and I thought I was going to be in need of a job. What I did in that group included the planning for, the designing of E/E parts burn in facilities. The PC boards, all active and passive elements, the environmental provisions, and monitoring equipment had to be acquired, fabricated and assembled. Most of this was in support of MIL specification preparation and validation for anything (E/E) that anyone wanted to get MILQUAL'd. We were fast



Testing at Boeing in 1972

growing into a highly regarded E/E test facility and won DARPA, NSA, NASA and many other contracts to qualify electronic parts for military and space applications. Each of the many contracts I became responsible for became a story in itself. They will be offered for publication in future as room and interest become available.

As it turned out, I attended many technical schools; most of them consisted of electronic test application software classes that were intended as starting points for a lot of self-education. Some of the S/W techniques I developed are baseline stuff new test application engineers won't ever see because I worked near machine level coding, while today's 'high level' stuff just uses them as macro instructions. My specialty turned out to be applications providing imbedded design programming, test, analysis, & acceptance of all kinds of programmable electronic parts. Almost anything that could be field programmed was able to have its configuration established, tested, and accepted by QC in one socket insertion. When I retired from Boeing, I received a 'mock' (it was a roast) award called the "GOLDEN PROM AWARD". It is captioned "For 4.7424 E 6th Minutes of dedicated advice to Boeing management regarding operation, business decisions, PROM technology and everything else in the world". I had promised a large body of Boeing managers that if they did not fire me I would drag them kicking and screaming into the business of paperless design. It looks like someone actually listened. But I was just the "kick off" guy for the most part; thousands of others have taken up the gauntlet and made things work the way they should.

During my career years, my family life started out with a disastrous marriage to a lady from Portland, Or. in 1961. Two years later she tried to kill me and the young boy (Lloyd) who turned out to have been fathered by someone else. He was adopted out some time after our divorce was finalized. I don't see or hear from either his mother or him. .

My next family move included marriage to **Vi Ann Butler** of Des Moines WA in 1970. She had a 1 1/2 year old daughter named Sarena, and later our daughter Desiree' was born. Vi died

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of Leukemia in 1984, and I raised the two girls, and a number of horses with a lot of help from our oldest daughter, Sarena.

After a lot of looking around, a wonderful lady named **Charlotte** came into my life through our mutual interest in showing Tennessee Walking Horses.

We were married Nov 23, 1993. She had a daughter, **Theresa**, who was born March 2, 1972, **Desiree** our youngest by a short time was born March 15.



Theresa was in the Army

Charlotte and I -1993



August 20, 2002

One year later I coordinated the opening of the USSVI National Office. I now am a life member of both the Local and National USSVI

and stood up with Charlotte as her maid of honor and witness at our marriage. **Ty Westenhaver**, Sarena's husband was my best man.

Because of Charlotte's interest in becoming a Master Gardener, and with help from **Jim Foote**, I found myself a member of Bremerton Base. I adopted **Theresa (L. Tolly, LMP.)** in 1999



Bud Berg (USSVI) Challenges Stan McCully (SAOC) (photo-Elliott Abram)

SAOC HOSTS BREMERTON SUBVETS

The Submarine Association of Canada (SAOC West) hosted some of Bremerton Base members and wives in Victoria, BC the weekend of August 9th. **Bud and Mary Berg, Jim and JoAnn Foote and Elliott and Charlotte Abram**, drove to Port Angeles, walked on the ferry COHO and spent a great weekend with their counterparts picnicking and sightseeing on Vancouver Island



L-R: SAOC President **Bob Emery**, wife **Julie**, **Jim Burnett**, **Mary Berg**, **Elliott Abram**, wife, **Charlotte**
(Photo - Bud Berg?)

