

# SEA STORIES



by Tom Ramsay,  
MS1 (SS), USN Ret.

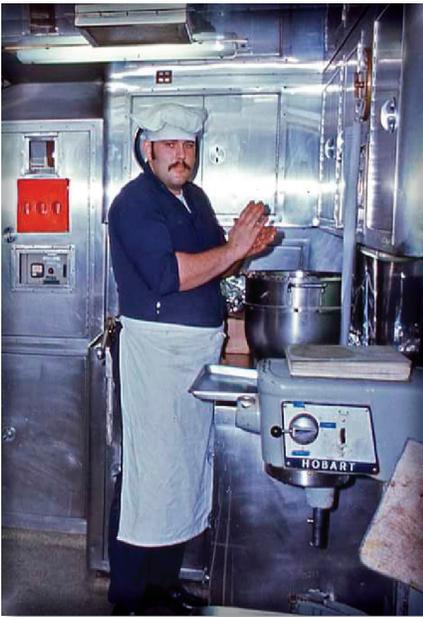
## “I’m only the cook . . . what do I know?”

This line can get most submarine cooks out of hot water or tough situations. But, some Navy cooks (*MS1 Tom Ramsay, in particular*), found it to be his career motto.

When asked tough questions from inquisitive civilians, you all know the drill: “How many missiles does your boat carry?” Tom answers, “I don’t know, I’m only the cook.” The questioner immediately apologizes, as if he/she is sorry that he is “ONLY” a cook and walks quickly away ashamed of the question.

How deep can your submarine go?” “I don’t know, I’m only the cook,” he replies.

“Do you carry nuclear weapons?” His answer: “I don’t know, I’m only the cook.” Again, the apology and the person begins to shy away from this uncomfortable situation.



**What do I know? I’m only the cook! This saying only followed by his all time favorite: “Never trust a skinny cook . . . they don’t eat their own cooking.”**

*(Tom Ramsay cooking aboard the USS Tecumseh SSBN-628. Something he did for or 10 years on that boat.)*

Our journey now heads across the ocean, where we find the USS Tecumseh (SSBN-628) docked in Scotland. A phone rang in the Wardroom. One of the officers answered, spoke for a few seconds, and then handed the phone to Mess Management Specialist Ramsay with these words: “It’s your father.”

Ramsay quickly takes the phone and anxiously asked his Dad if his Mom was OK. “Sure, Son. She’s fine. We just moved from Illinois to Camano Island north of Seattle, Wash., and I found out they had a new football team here, called the ‘Seahawks.’ I sure would like my season tickets to watch them!”

“It was nice they let me know they moved,” Tom explains. A few years before, he was going to surprise his folks

with a short visit between patrols. He hitched a ride with a shipmate who was traveling through Chicago on his way to see his folks.

“I went to my house on the far south side of Chicago and found completely different people living there.” Ramsay said. Our home phone was disconnected, and the neighbors didn’t know where my Mom and Day were.

### *Where are you?*

“I didn’t have a car, and had nowhere to go and no way to get back to Charleston. I stayed with an old girlfriend and her family in town for two days before my ride came back. The old joke: ‘They moved and left no forwarding address’ was TRUE!” He did receive a letter from his folks about a month later telling him they had moved to the northside of Chicago.

Before we proceed, however, let me backtrack a bit at this point in the story. In the 30’s, Ramsay’s Dad, Bill, was a short (5’3”) Scotsman, who was a Chicago All-City Running Champion. The Bears’ Coach George Halas and the team took a liking this this “fast” lad and brought him onto the team. During tryouts, Bill’s short stature resorted in a rash of linemen tormenting him by pushing him in the back all day. It happened one too many times, however.

After one of these pushes, Bill Ramsay quickly spun around and punched the aggressor—only to find he had knocked George Halas on his butt. Mr. Halas got up, threw Bill off the team, and banned him from football for life!

Bill Ramsay still loved football, but now “hated the Bears.” As a joke, Tom bought his Dad season tickets to the Bears, so he could go and root

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## Sea Story continued



**“This is  
for real!”**

*Sea Stories are a sub sailors' most important form of communication. Share your stories for a future issue. Make a few notes about one of your best memories and send it to your editor at [kateram@jcwifi.com](mailto:kateram@jcwifi.com). Don't worry if you aren't a writer, I can call you and put it together for you! Send pictures if you can.*

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for whatever team the Bears were playing. This purchase went on for years.

**Now, back to the Wardroom on the TCUP:** Hearing his Dad needed season tickets for the Seahawks. Tom looked around the wardroom, which was now empty, and called Seattle to order his Dad season tickets using the sub's phone.

He placed the call and heard: “I'm sorry the Box Office doesn't open for 15 minutes.” Tom quickly explained that this call was long-distance--coming from “Scotland, you know the place north of England?” This impressed the man on the phone, and he happily helped Tom purchase tickets—with a valid credit card, of course.

The event was forgotten until four weeks later, when the Captain walked into the Wardroom, scratching his head with a phone bill in hand. He looked at Tom, and said, “Who do I know in Seattle that I called?” “I don't know, Cap—I'm only the cook.” The Captain apologized for disturbing Tom and walked out the door.

Don't feel too bad for Tom, though, because he got a “BIG PAYBACK” while

aboard the USS Omaha (SSN-692) during a liberty break in Japan.

As a good sub sailor, Tom headed to a known Navy bar, to taste (or drink) the local cuisine. Tom walked into the bar, looked around, and thought he had died and gone to heaven. The bar was full of 20 to 30 Navy Cooks! He was excited when he saw all the MS ratings!

He walked up to a nearby MS Chief and remarked at all the cooks in the room. “Are you a cook?” the Chief asked. When Tom said “Yes,” the Chief replied: “Wow, you are probably the only real cook in the room! We wear the Cook's patch because we can't wear our own ratings in public.”

Tom had finally had his bubble burst!

