

## Mon., July 31: By and Below Water



Walking through a rainforest early the next morning, I followed Jack's direction to take a short side trail and found myself in reeds viewing a large natural lake. Back in the woods, we admired a massive, intricate spider web that must've taken many labor hours, and trees displaying walls of exposed roots, with ferns all around. A few moments' more of walking

revealed a massive tidal flat. I felt like I'd visited three disparate environments within a few minutes in Foulweather Bluff Preserve near the tip of Kitsap Peninsula, a favorite spot of Ann Marie for a host of reasons. Owned by The Nature Conservancy, this tiny wildlife preserve punches far above its 117-acre weight for experiencing nature.

The beach, nearly three-quarters of a mile long, was at that point in the tide cycle wider than a football field. I was glad they'd warned me to wear my boots as I mucked across the squishy sand, itself teeming with wildlife. Ann Marie pointed out that the hundreds of circles in the mud were living sand dollars; I'd only seen the surf shop variety before. We were all stumped by slimy green circles, my guess being some kind of egg sacks. Several exposed rocks were covered by seaweed and little shell-like dens built by their denizens, perhaps little clams. I wasn't going to stick a finger in there to confirm. Tiny crabs dug their escapes when we stepped close.





A heron didn't want us anywhere near it. As we tried to get a closer look, several times, we only closed within 40 yards or so before it lifted off a few wing-beats down the strand. My attempts to get a vid of him utterly failed. Ann Marie and Jack kindly apologized to the bird after the third attempt, and we stopped trying. In the other direction was the preserve's namesake bluff, which Ann Marie rightly warned us away from lest part collapse on our heads. Her caring was not enough to prevent my getting a closeup look at a divot at the base.

After dropping her off at home, Jack and I headed out again. We stopped in Port Gamble, which demands the over-used adjective "quaint." The captain of a passing merchant ship, a San Francisco lumberman, noticed in 1853 a sand spit at the opening to Port Gamble Bay<sup>1</sup> he thought would be a good place for a sawmill. He and his partners bought the land from the S'Klallam people living here. Within a few months, the company sailed in with the equipment for a mill, but struggled to find employees. After surviving a raid by a Native nation from Canada, the mill started importing experienced workers from Maine. By 1858, they had opened a second mill and began building a town for employees to live in.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Named by a U.S. Navy captain for an officer killed in the War of 1812

2 Town history summarized from onsite signage and: <https://www.historylink.org/File/5505>

If you've heard the term "company town," this place is what it means. The company owned the houses and built all the usual amenities, including a general store in the 1870s and a service station 50 years later. This may sound like a sweet deal, having the company provide a nice if small home and modern



town. But the workers had long hours and low wages. If you got fired or quit, you also lost your home. Managers lived in nicer houses on the hill, and workers down below, reinforcing the company hierarchy. Regardless, the mill was very successful. When closed in 1995, it "was the oldest continuously operating sawmill in the U.S., at 142 years."<sup>3</sup> Though Port Gamble changed hands a few times afterward, and is now a National Historic Site, remarkably it remains a company town. Residents lease their homes, and a property company manages everything else.

We stepped into what remains the company general store, the front shelves now offering local arts and crafts, too. Upstairs claimed to be a museum, but as soon as I hit the top step I turned to Jack and said, "This isn't going to take long." It was more a collection of old miscellany with limited context or marking, heavy on maritime natural history. After taking in a few more of the old buildings in town, most with signs describing unremarkable histories, we moved on.

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3 Ibid.

## Northwest Passage



Among Jack’s new areas of expertise is foraging of wild mushrooms. This is no small feat, given the percentage that are poisonous, some of which look very similar to edible ones. He led us into a park with steep gravel roads used by mountain biking enthusiasts. We exchanged greetings with a pair who passed us a couple times.

He’d had luck here before, but warned me it may be too early in the season. We dove off-trail into the woods, shoving our way through waist-high ferns. With the ground underneath hidden and irregular, I was now grateful for the hiking poles Jack provided. I still had to give in to gravity at one point and take an unplanned seat. A martial arts fall break prevented injury. Sadly, indeed we had no luck. He apologized, but I told him “nonsense,” I was enjoying a nice off-trail hike.

Jack indulged my request for one other stop. He had suggested several small Native museums. Though each Nation differs to a degree, even from close neighbors, I’ve seen many such museums, as you know. What I had never seen was a United States Naval Undersea Museum.

Along with killer whales, the waters around Kitsap Peninsula are teeming with submarines. Naval Base Kitsap was combined from two bases on different sides. According to a military website, it has the third-largest number of submarines in the Navy. Hence this location for an official Navy museum focused on subs. Though one must bear in mind the owners’ perspective, it was information-packed.

The first section described the life, and pronunciation, of the submariner: “sub-ma-REEN-er” when referring to the Navy kind, it said. People—women have served onboard since 2011—get on-the-job training when not on duty, and must “qualify” within a year (for officers) or less (enlisted). A laminated “Qualification Card” from 1992 listed items including, “Radiation Protection and Nuclear Indoctrination,” “Tagout Procedures,” and “Ships (sic) Casualty Procedures.” The newbie must pass “an hours-long oral exam”<sup>4</sup> at the end to get a pair of dolphin pins for their uniform and stay on board.

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4 All facts and quotes in this section are from museum exhibits unless otherwise noted.

The effectiveness of submarines was proved in World War II. Unlike the land campaigns in Europe, much of the invasion against Japan was conducted above, on, and under the Pacific Ocean. “Crewed by just 1.6 percent of U.S. Navy Sailors, (submarines) sank 30 percent of Japanese warships and 60 percent of Japanese merchant ships.” The homemade battle flag of the U.S.S. Segundo at right illustrates this. Each little Rising Sun flag represents merchant ships Segundo sunk, and the two with sunbeams are for warships. The submarine in the fish’s mouth is for a Japanese counterpart whose surrender the Segundo accepted a few weeks after the war ended. Another flag in the collection, its placard admitted, used a racist caricature of a pelican saying “So Solly” (instead of “Sorry”). This has happened throughout the history of war. Part of the way you prepare people to kill other people is to emphasize the *otherness* of the enemy.



The exhibits acknowledged the Navy was slow to integrate. Though African-Americans served in integrated forces in the American Revolution, sometime after that they were relegated to their own companies (led by white officers) and/or service and support roles. My father’s service was an example: He and two white lieutenants commanded blacks who ran supply depots, basically mobile warehouses, during the advance on Germany in World War II. Pres. Harry S. Truman ordered the U.S. Armed Forces to fully integrate in 1948. But 35 years passed before a black man was promoted to captain of a submarine.

Though women sailors were long blocked from becoming submariners, at least they had full-time work with their employer of choice. The wives of male submariners have an unemployment rate of 24%, and underemployment rate<sup>5</sup> of 54%, an exhibit said, due in part to the career disruptions of regular moves. Because nuclear missile subs constantly patrol on long missions without stopping, one wife only got three letters in 12 years from her husband while he was deployed.

The next section covered the history of underwater weapons. Even as a writer of military history, my eyes glaze over on the evolution of better ways for humans to kill other humans. So I will just report the highlights, most of which I did not know:

- “The term *torpedo* was derived from the torpedo fish, which stuns its victims with an electric shock.” The fish’s name, in turn, “derived from the Latin *torpore*, which

<sup>5</sup> Referring to people who want to work full time but can’t get FT jobs, or are qualified for more-skilled (and better-paying) jobs than they have.

## Northwest Passage

means ‘to stun.’” The American inventor of the steam-powered boat, Robert Fulton, apparently first used the name for underwater mines he also invented, and demonstrated by blowing up a ship in 1805.

- Americans tried to use floating mines to attack a British fleet off Philadelphia during the American Revolution. But these drifted with the current, and the British had moved by the time they arrived.

- The first version of a “spar torpedo,” a mine on a stick jammed into its victim by another boat, was invented by a Dutch guy in the 1600s. This is the kind used by the one Confederate



submarine, the CSS Hunley, to successfully sink a U.S. ship in Charleston during the Civil War. Sort of “successfully”: The Hunley sunk, too.<sup>6</sup>

- A U.S. Navy admiral during the Civil War was referring to mines when he ordered an attack on Mobile, Ala., by saying, “Damn the torpedoes; full speed ahead!” Those mines were just 10” cannon shells mounted on boards and anchored to the bottom at an angle. The museum has one of the originals he damned, shown at right.



- J.A. Howell, who served in the Mobile battle, invented the first American version of what we think of as a torpedo (a self-propelled weapon). That was in 1871. It took nearly 20 years for the Navy to adopt it.

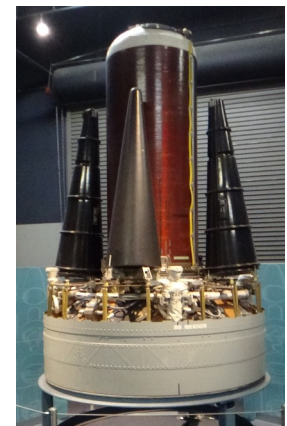
Next we came to the entire control room of the USS Greening, shown below. I sat in the driver’s seat and played with the wheel. Jack reported that the periscope gave you a view outdoors.

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<sup>6</sup> The Hunley was recovered in 1995, its sailors still inside. They were buried in a Charleston cemetery, and the boat is on display in a museum in North Charleston.



The mock-up of a MIRV was sobering for me as a former employee of the nuke weapons complex. A *multiple independent re-entry vehicle* is a missile meant to rise above the atmosphere, re-enter it, and then release several nuclear warheads that can fly on their own to their separate final targets. Recognizing the fake warheads in the model and knowing what each can do made me literally pause. Much of the fear around the number of warheads the U.S. and Russia and China have is misplaced. A tiny fraction of each total is sufficient to wipe out humanity.



The last part of the museum I'll cover was eye-opening for both of us, and created ambivalence. It detailed the use of dolphins and, a surprise to me, sea lions in naval operations. At the time of the exhibit, the Navy had 140 animals, 40% sea lions. This program apparently began in 1964. During the Vietnam War, the creatures "guarded harbors and ships," and in the Iraq War in 2003, dolphins found mines in a port harbor. During a training exercise off San Diego in 2013, a dolphin found a Howell torpedo from the 1800s, now displayed at the museum. That and another in the torpedo section are two of only five in the world.

One panel quoted a handler as comparing dolphins during those training exercises to dogs excited about a ride in a car. “They line up (during training) and kind of compete to get to go first. They’re motivated. Because it’s rewarding.” Here we arrive at my ambivalence, the same I feel about the dogs trained at Fort Robinson or used today in police work. Yes, they want to do it, because they are trained and rewarded with treats and affection. *But they don’t know the work is dangerous.* They are choosing to do what their trainers ask them to do, but they cannot choose to hunt for mines with awareness doing so could kill or maim them. I realize most humans in the world don’t think animals matter as much as people, but these are highly intelligent beings, aware they exist. Dolphins may be able to recognize themselves in a mirror.<sup>7</sup> But I don’t see how anyone who claims to love animals could send them in harm’s way without their informed consent—much less eat them.

I had been worried Jack would be bored. I ended up having to wait for him, happily. We checked out the “sail” of a submarine outside, meaning the tower, and headed home.

First we stopped for gas at Costco. I would never have known a big-box store was there if he hadn’t turned in, thanks to the combination of hills and preserved older trees. Not everyone feels the need to clear-cut in order to build.

When Jack and Anne Marie gave me a tour of their house, his art had been everywhere, as I mentioned. This evening he asked me which was my favorite. I knew why, so I was circumspect. I landed on a set of four small, impressionistic mountain scenes he said he recently did solely as a color study, playing with hues of blue. They’re yours, he said. They will go perfectly in my guest room, I said, adding my profound thanks. He wrapped them up in a packing blanket for the trip.



Dinner was a simple meal of potatoes, mushrooms, asparagus, and tomatoes, rendered perfectly by Ann Marie, and more mango ice cream. Yet I still felt compelled to leave the next day. Compared to the Brazil trip, this may have been the bigger sacrifice.

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<sup>7</sup> Last I checked, there was some debate about this among scientists.