Legends of the deep surface in submarine insignia

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Lifestyle Editor

MANITOWOC — Ray C. Young never laid eyes on a “kraken” — the Scandinavian sea monster of Norwegian lore. He never landed a “lizard fish” either. But through God-given talent, he became quite acquainted with this remarkable duo and all sorts of other denizens of the deep.

It was Manitowoc artist Young who designed the penguin battle insignia for the last 10 submarines launched by Manitowoc Shipbuilding Company during World War II. He also drew the finny symbols for four subs readied for action in the mid-1940s by the Electric Boat Co. of Groton, Conn.

During the 50th anniversary of World War II in 1991, all 14 of Young’s good luck emblems for these fighting “pippin’ boats” will be on display at the Manitowoc Maritime Museum when it features this city’s involvement in the war.

Young had been a product designer for Manitowoc Shipbuilding Company during the war years. A Navy commander and his co-officer stopped at his office one day and handed him a sketch of a “blowfish.” Two other artists had received copies of the drawing. Based on that sketch, each submitted an original version of an insignia for the U.S.S. Kite.

“Then I drew a blowfish in color. I was told it was already done. But the one by the two artists was the only one accepted. The Navy preferred ours.”

Manitowoc Shipbuilding christened a total of 28 subs for this country’s defense and Walt Disney had been called upon for symbols for some of these. But that was before Young’s work was discovered. The Manitowoc artist’s renderings were favored because they were more realistic in character and depicted the serious nature of war.

Young’s U.S.S. Krait drawing of the mythical sea monster won the distinction of being the “most outstanding” sub insignia in World War II. He caricatured the creature with periscope eyes and a K infused thunder into its breast placed armor.

Three of his insignia also appeared in the book, “War Under the Pacific: World War II,” published by Time. Upon direction from the Navy, the Smithsonian provided Young with pictures of the peculiar fish he was to symbolize. He made molds and reproduced them in four colors, and made copies for the U.S.S. Kite’s crew and friends.

When other submarine commanders saw Young’s first battle symbol, they “came in by the droves” to him with requests for logos for their own subs.

“aroused interest among the crew and their families. They were proud to have their own insignia.”

U.S.S. KRAKEN

Ray Young of Manitowoc reminisced about the insignia he had designed for 10 submarines built by Manitowoc Shipbuilding Company “During World War II.”

Herald Times Reporter photo by Kay Corsock