

U.S.S. CUSK

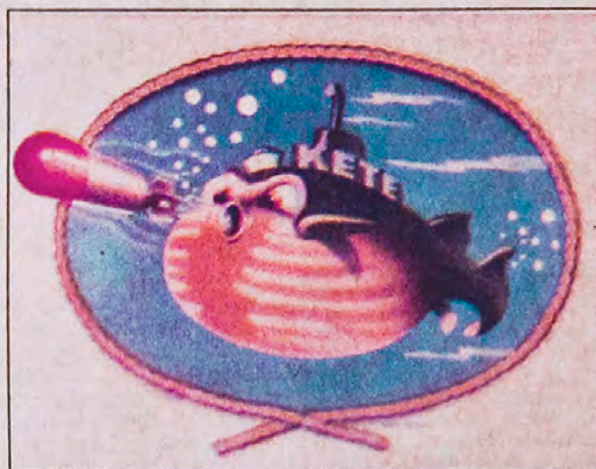


U.S.S. CORSAIR



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 Daryl Cornick



U.S.S. KETE



U.S.S. KRAKEN



U.S.S. LOGGERHEAD

Legends of the deep surface in submarine insignia

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MANITOWOC — Ray C. Young never laid eyes on a "kracken" — 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 piscine 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 ready 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 "pigboats" 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 picture, each submitted an original version of an insignia for the U.S.S. Kete.

"When I saw this blowfish I could hardly wait for them to get out of the office," Young, now retired, recalled. "I made a sketch, then air brushed it in color and matted it. I thought if they don't want it I'll keep it for myself."

But Young's work topped the others. His puffed-bellied blowfish looked menacing. It huffed and puffed and came off the drawing board blowing a torpedo from its mouth. The Navy men were wild about it. They had it reproduced in four colors and made copies for the U.S.S. Kete'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.

"I knocked out an insignia every month," said Young, whose failing eyesight has since prohibited him from doing artwork.

Each of the 14 submarines that adopted Young's emblems was named for a fish.

"One fellow once said there were so many subs being made that pretty soon fish would be named after them," Young laughed in recollection.

After the U.S.S. Kete, the Manitowoc artist designed insignia for the U.S.S. Kraken, Lagarto, Lamprey, Lizardfish, Loggerhead, Macabi, Mapiro, Menhaden and Mero, all part of the Manitowoc Shipbuilding fleet. Then a commander on the East Coast wrote to Young and requested a suitable badge of battle for the sub he was going to take to sea. With that assignment, the local artist's logos were adopted by submariners manning the U.S.S. Cusk, Greenfish, Halfbeak and Corsair.

The insignia were stamped on ship stationery and loud speakers and on the crew's jackets. They were seen on mess hall items and on conning towers when the subs were in port.

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 ferocious in character and depicted the serious nature of war.

Young's U.S.S. Kraken 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-incrested shield on its breast-plated 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 used in symbolizing the potency of the subs. He also did a lot of library research on each one before sitting at his drawing board. For the U.S.S. Lizardfish, he developed

a ferocious looking lizard which met with the commander's approval. He depicted the U.S.S. Corsair as a one-eyed, peg-legged pirate. The U.S.S. Loggerhead was equipped with a deck gun on his back and clutched torpedoes in his front claws. The U.S.S. Cusk came out of Young's imagination piloting a torpedo, while the U.S.S. Lamprey was shown wrapping its body around a fish-faced enemy torpedo, thus impeding it from its target.

"There are certain liberties an artist can get away with," Young said when talking about his work. He remembers submitting a mermaid sketch for the Lady Fish, but that one didn't meet with approval. "The commander said it wouldn't do. The men would get too excited," Young said of his lady of the sea.

Young attributes his art ability to "God-given talent." Without any "hard experience," he was hired at age 19 by Milprint, a Milwaukee printing company.

"The vice president hired me. He said, 'I'll give you two weeks and if you don't make good, you'll be fired,'" Young recounted his early employment.

The company printed wraps by the carload for Baby Ruth and other well known candy bars. Young did paste-up work in the art department until he moved into the office with engraving and purchasing duties after another employee left suddenly.

Later he took a job with Altone, another Milwaukee company. "They had 10 artists, mostly photo retouchers," Young said. He had been told previously on his first job that "good retouchers are a rare animal," so he took private lessons in that field. But at Altone he was hired for lettering. "The art director at Altone told me to watch the retoucher," Young said. "I did a lot of practicing on retouch."

Finally Young was given his "first real retouching assignment." Both he and a seasoned artist finished their order and surprisingly the "good artist" was asked to copy Young's style. "That was the beginning of my art career," Young said.

The artist Young had "beat out" told him about an ad

he had read for a retoucher elsewhere. Young applied, was asked what he expected for pay and was hired the next day at Kruse Engraving of Milwaukee.

Then the Depression hit. Eventually it affected Young. He moved northward where two artists had started the Green Bay Engraving Co. They provided him with a studio for free-lancing. In those days Young designed menus for Kapps and other restaurants while beating the pavement for other orders. But there were none. His mother was living at Milwaukee at the time, and one day on the way back there he stopped at the Mirro office at Manitowoc. "Can you do retouching?" he was asked. Answering in the affirmative, he opened his portfolio, showed his work and landed the Mirro full catalog account for the next 40 years.

Other accounts cropped up during Young's 40 years as a free-lance artist. Kohler, Hamiltons, and firms around the country, including the designing of beer labels for Kingsbury. When World War II was drawing to a close, Young got on the payroll in the "post-war planning department" of Manitowoc Shipbuilding. "Their first job for Kohler was manufacturing kitchen and wall base cabinets made out of steel," Young said. He did the designs for these and Kohler wanted to meet the artist. Through that contact he wound up retouching Kohler's generator photos for its catalog.

Young also was the designer of the cabinet for the Manitowoc Company's ice cube machine and he did work for Color Craft at Manitowoc as well.

"This was a 24-hour a day job. Nine o'clock at night was nothing every day," Mrs. Young's said of her husband's round-the-clock schedule of holding down a full-time job and doing free-lance work all throughout his artistic career.

Now, with 52 years of artwork behind him, Young is looking ahead to the day when his insignia will be on display in 1991 at the Manitowoc Maritime Museum. For him it will bring back memories of his own involvement in the war.