

## LAGARTO: Navy is asked to confirm sub's identity

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boat in Thailand discovered the missing submarine.

Author Clive Cussler has spoken with the men about a documentary on the Lagarto, as well as their discovery. U.S. Rep. Daniel Lipinski (D-Ill.) has called on the U.S. Navy to confirm the submarine's identity.

After talking with the family, Macleod took Kenney-Augustine and her brother, John Kenney Jr., off the shores of Thailand last week to read letters and poems from family members in the first burial ceremony the missing men have had.

On July 31, a diver tucked a dozen white roses into the conning tower, or attack center, of the USS Lagarto. Minutes later, the flowers had disappeared.

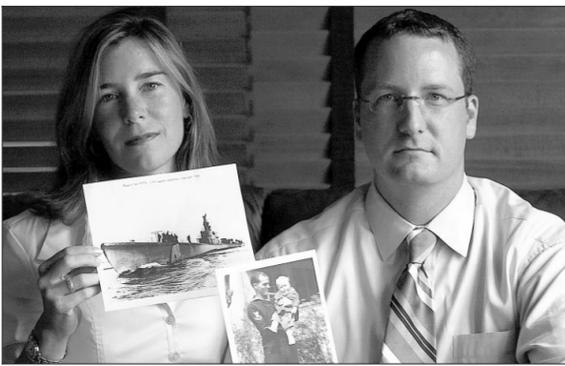
"We thought that was nice," said Kenney-Augustine, of Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood. "Like they accepted our offering."

For 60 years, Mabin's daughter, Nancy Kenney of Lake Lee-lanau, Mich., wondered if her father had somehow come out of the war alive. She waited for him to be released from a prisoner-of-war camp. Or to appear on a remote island. Or to pop through the front door after a top-secret mission.

She knows the families of the other 85 men on board the submarine must have wondered the same things.

"From the letters between my mother and the other wives, I can see there was great confusion," Kenney said. "They were hoping their husbands were in prison camp. Imagine that—seeing that as the best-case scenario."

Kenney was 2 when her father was lost. She said her mother, Margaret Chambers of



Tribune photo by Charles Osgood  
**Elizabeth Kenney-Augustine and her brother John Kenney just returned from a Lagarto burial ceremony in the Gulf of Thailand.**

Glen Arbor, Mich., was pleased to hear her husband's resting place had been found.

"He was the love of her life," Kenney said. "She's been shaken by this."

The USS Lagarto was one of 28 submarines built in Manitowish, Wis., and the Wisconsin Maritime Museum has adopted the submarine and created a memorial to it. According to the museum, the submarine was tested in Lake Michigan.

It left Subic Bay in the Philippines on April 12, 1945, for the Siam Gulf, now the Gulf of Thailand, for its second trip.

USS Baya officers reported at the time that they were to rendezvous with the Lagarto to discuss plans to attack a Japanese convoy on May 3, 1945. At 1 a.m. May 4, 1945, the Japanese convoy drove off the Baya, but nothing was ever heard again from the Lagarto. It was supposed to dock in Australia at the end of May, but it never arrived.

In June 1945, Mabin's family received a letter saying he was missing in action. A year later, another letter arrived describing him as "presumed dead."

"This will give you a real glimpse into World War II," Kenney said. "This is what I grew up with. That's the last correspondence any of the families had with the Navy."

After the war ended, the Japanese released records showing the minelayer Hatsutaka sunk a submarine at the same time and

same place the Lagarto was believed to be during the war, but there was no confirmation.

Kenney's children grew up with Mabin's ghost. Every year on Memorial Day, John Kenney has searched the Internet for some sign of his grandfather.

"This year, I did a Google search, and someone had posted that it had been found," John Kenney said. "Two divers had found it. It's considered one of the holy grails of Asian diving because it's one of the only U.S. subs lost anywhere near the Gulf of Thailand."

Kenney said he immediately called her mother and asked if she were sitting down. After he told her, she began to cry.

"I went through so many emotions," Nancy Kenney said. "It's an odd feeling to grieve for someone 60 years after they're gone."

She began to contact the families of the missing men.

Kelan Spalding's brother R.B. Spalding of Springfield, Mo., was also on the Lagarto.

"My wife heard about it on the news and said, 'Do you suppose that could be Bobby's sub?'" Spalding said. "But I thought it would be in deeper water."

Then he got the call from Nancy Kenney.

"I was 9 years old when it went down," he said. "I'm relieved to know exactly why and how and where. I hope they allow the divers to film it."

But he doesn't want anyone to go inside the sub.

And no one will. According to the U.S. Navy, all sunken U.S. ships are considered gravesites and are off-limits.

But Macleod said the divers don't want to go inside the submarine.

"We have no plans to explore the wreck," Macleod said. "We hope to be able to conduct non-intrusive filming only."

For the families, seeing the outside of the submarine has provided closure.

"I thought there would be a moment when they scraped the coral off and found letters: USS Lagarto," Kenney-Augustine said. "But it wasn't like that. We just sat above as they dove beneath, and I thought, 'How wonderful.' It was similar to going to a cemetery and visiting a loved one who has passed and standing over his grave."

John Kenney said the submarine is sitting upright as if it sank straight down. There are no numbers or names on the side, and research shows the only place divers could find the name of the ship is inside the captain's quarters. Instead, they used the five-inch guns—an upgrade from previous subs and a good marker for the Belao class—and the slant of the bow to determine its make.

The teak deck and outer superstructure have deteriorated and been torn away, leaving the pressure hull, the conning tower, and a perfectly preserved light.

On the port side, the middle torpedo bow tube remains open. The torpedo is missing.

"It looks like they went down fighting," John Kenney said.

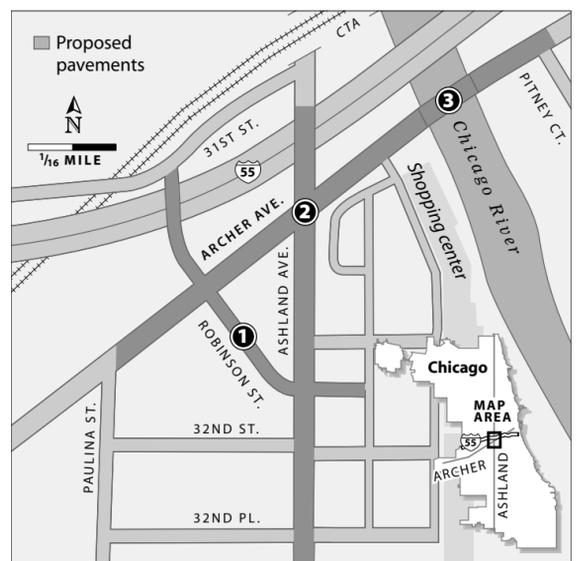
Nancy Kenney hopes to find more Lagarto families so she can relate the news. Her e-mail address is n.kenney@worldnet.att.net. She said she finally feels as if her father has been laid to rest.

"I can't tell you how wonderful the divers have been—so sensitive to the families," Nancy Kenney said. "They even attached an American flag at the top of the tower. I thought, 'God bless them for that.'"

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## Archer Avenue improvements

- ① New expressway entrance and exit ramps, and Robinson Street to be extended
- ② Intersection to be redesigned, and overpass to be removed
- ③ Bridge to be rebuilt



Source: Chicago Department of Transportation

Chicago Tribune

## AROUND: Bush to sign transit bill in Aurora

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[structure]," Morcos said of the \$13.6 million project.

Still, some longtime area residents might miss the excitement of driving over the dilapidated old overpass, which was built in the 1950s. A few diehard Chicago drivers might even get all melancholy about no longer being subjected to playing chicken with vehicles turning late after traffic signals have switched to red at the hectic intersection below.

What drivers will likely welcome is the reconfigured Ashland-Archer intersection. There will be six lanes on Ashland and seven lanes on Archer. For the meantime, lane reductions on Archer will be in effect until the project is completed this spring, officials said.

Also, the entrance and exit onto the Stevenson will be relocated away from the intersection onto Robinson Street—eliminating hundreds of vehicles daily from the intersection, transit department officials said.

"There will be a long entrance ramp on Robinson Street to allow vehicles to queue up better," said John Yonan, assistant project director at the department.

Robinson will be rebuilt and extended from Ashland to 31st Street. Traffic exiting the Stevenson will be able to access Archer from Robinson, or continue on 31st to Ashland, department spokeswoman Maria Castaneda said.

New traffic signals will be installed on Robinson at Ashland, Archer and 31st, providing access to the Riverside Square shopping center. The work is being coordinated with a traffic-signal interconnect plan to synchronize signals along Ashland from Cermak Road to 95th Street, Castaneda said.

### Bush brings funding pen here

Illinois received just about everything it asked for in the multi-year federal transportation funding legislation that Congress has approved. Against that backdrop, President Bush will travel to west suburban Aurora on Wednesday—in the district of U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.)—to sign the

\$286.4 billion highway and mass-transit bill into law.

The funding level pales in comparison to the \$375 billion that Hastert and other congressional heavyweights had once sought. But it is considerably higher than the amount requested by Bush, who rarely addresses transportation issues, except to call for the shutdown of Amtrak.

Federal funding for road building in Illinois will increase 33 percent under the legislation. Seed money also will be provided for long-planned commuter rail projects, including the Chicago Transit Authority's Circle Line and Metra's STAR Line.

The legislation provides some funding for a western access road to O'Hare International Airport and starter money for work to modernize freight train operations in the Chicago area, the nation's worst rail bottleneck.

Illinois will receive about \$1.2 billion a year, an increase of \$309 million annually. Federal approval shifts the pressure on the Blagojevich administration and the General Assembly to come up with the state matching funds necessary to leverage the money from Washington.

### Skyway exit ramp to close

The exit ramp from the westbound Chicago Skyway to State Street will close for a month starting Aug. 15, according to the Illinois Department of Transportation. The closing is needed to facilitate work that is part of building a Skyway interchange with the Dan Ryan Expressway (Interstate Highway 90/94). A detour route will direct westbound Skyway traffic to proceed to the northbound Ryan, take the 59th Street exit ramp and turn right to travel to State Street.

Meanwhile, for people who are suddenly new to driving between the Ryan and the Skyway since the opening of a newly constructed Skyway ramp about a month ago: The entrance to the Skyway has been switched from the right side to the left side of the local lanes on the southbound Ryan.

The new configuration will eliminate the annoying, traffic-slowing problem of two lanes funneling into one lane.

Contact Getting Around at [jhlkevitch@tribune.com](mailto:jhlkevitch@tribune.com) or c/o the Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60611. Read recent Getting Around columns at [www.chicagotribune.com/go/gettingaround](http://www.chicagotribune.com/go/gettingaround).

## RIVER: Waterway improvement plan is set

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Meter, who lives on the Milwaukee River and trained for this year's race by putting himself through a grueling 10-mile loop five times a week.

"It used to be I would dip my paddle in the water and it would disappear," Van Meter said as he carried his sleek racing kayak to the launch. "Now I can see fish a foot below my boat."

Gliding past factories that line the North Branch of the river and skyscrapers that wall off the waterway in the Loop, he made it to Ping Tom Memorial Park in Chinatown in a little more than an hour. He almost caught up to teams of corporate sponsors paddling Voyageur canoes.

Others were more relaxed about the trip, choosing to meander along picking up soggy trash or expressing their creativity.

Martin and Tom Cassell decided a few years ago that they weren't going to come close to winning the race, so the father-and-son team from St. Charles went for style points by turning their fiberglass canoe into a makeshift pirate ship.

This year they added a tiny steering wheel and strung pen-

nants along rigging that already featured a plastic parrot. They joked they would unfurl the sail "if the wind is right."

"The only thing we need to work on is a grappling hook," said Martin Cassell, who like his son wore a shiny pirate outfit along with water sandals.

"We're very lazy pirates," Tom Cassell said.

The race has drawn a core of dedicated paddlers who spend their summers exploring rivers and lakes, and racing throughout the area.

About 30 percent of the people who signed up for Sunday's race were participating for the first time, said Margaret Frisbie, executive director of Friends of the Chicago River, the non-profit that organizes the event.

Drawing attention to the river already is having an effect.

Late last month, Mayor Richard Daley announced the city's agenda for improving the waterway. Among other things, the plan calls for disinfecting treated sewage pumped into channels and canals dug a century ago to reverse the river's current away from Lake Michigan, the city's water supply.

Rules for the river always have been less strict because it was assumed people wouldn't come near it. But that is changing as more boat launches are built, expensive condominiums and homes go up along the banks, and fish and wildlife return to a waterway once treated as little more than an open sewer.

"It's getting better," Frisbie said. "But we still have so much to do."

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## CAR: Neighbors say gang activity is increasing

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Fire Department arrived within minutes, she said.

Paramedics tended to Samano and his friend, who both lay on the sidewalk outside Angelica Maravilla's home in the 3300

block of Lawndale.

Maravilla said her family was awoken by the sound of shattered glass in the room facing the street. When she entered the room, Maravilla saw one of her windows was broken and the corner of a couch by the window was on fire.

One of the boys, apparently in a desperate search for help, punched through the window with his burning arm and ignited the couch, Maravilla said. Both boys were found lying outside her home's front door.

"I was very scared," said Maravilla, who lives with her husband and their four children.

Two empty bottles of sodium

chloride—a solution used to treat burns—sat on the hood of a pickup truck parked in front of Maravilla's house, witnesses said. And a pair of blue jeans, stripped from one of the boys by paramedics, according to witnesses, also was picked up by police. Cash could be seen hanging out one of the pockets of the jeans, witnesses said.

Gang activity is a growing problem in Avondale, said residents of the neighborhood.

"They should stash some troops on this street instead of Baghdad," said Bernard Naftali, who has lived on Lawndale since 1966. "I wouldn't mind."

Larry Ligas, chairman of Lo-

gan Square Concerned Citizens, said gang-related problems in his Logan Square neighborhood are creeping into nearby Avondale.

"There's been a lot of gang-retaliation activity going on, and arson is a part of the way that they show their 'muscle,'" Ligas said. "And the problem is expanding into Avondale."

Esquivel said he did not know if Samano was involved in a gang.

But when asked if he thought his brother-in-law's death was gang-related, he said: "I don't think anybody else would have done this."

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