SUBMARINE NAVIGATOR

Doug Corteville is Assistant Professor of Sciences and Mathematics at Iowa Western Community College. Doug is also a retired naval submarine officer who served during the height of the 'Cold War' period. Doug explained he was never in a war battle, but was always training to be prepared. He served as a navigator on an early (built in 1956) nuclear powered submarine. Doug said their sub was often the 'target' for training other larger class and newer subs, as it was relatively slow and noisy. Doug spoke of a particular week of training exercise out of their homeport in New London, Connecticut. It happened that that week was when a very damaging hurricane hit the New London area while they were at sea. The hurricane flooded the naval dock and knocked out electricity throughout the area. Doug explained that all vessels at port were sent to designated areas in the sea to ride out the storm. The submarine and all vessels in the training exercise were told to delay returning home and to ride out the storm in their designated areas of the sea. Doug said the 30-yr old sub he was on couldn't safely submerge deep enough to get out of the wave action generated by the hurricane. Doug said the sub was pitching 30 degrees. The crew had just settled down for an infrequent Poker game, when they got a call that all vessels had to return to base as soon as possible because all the sailors were needed at home to help clean up all the downed trees. But, Doug explained, they were so far out of their designated area that it took an extra 12 hours for their submarine to get to port. When they finally got to port they found all the other vessels anchored along the shipping channel. These ships and subs couldn't get to port because the electric drawbridge across the channel couldn't open up. Doug said their small sub could sail under the bridge, so they were the only one to tie up at the naval dock, despite the extra 12 hours of travel. Then he spent nearly a week around home without electricity cleaning up debris.