

## USSVI Charleston Base Meeting Minutes

13 April 2017

The attendance for the April 2017 meeting was 76 members.

**Opening Ceremonies:** The meeting was called to order by Base Commander Rick Wise. A quorum was present and the meeting started at 1900 Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the Invocation and the Tolling of the Boats lost in April was given by Base Chaplain Nick Nichols. The USSVI Creed was read by Base Secretary Vice Commander Mike Knaub. Rick welcomed the members and guests to the meeting.

**Holland Club Induction:** Rick Wise introduced Holland Club Chairman Bill Freligh. Bill explained the meaning of the Holland Club and read the certificates that would be presented to each of the inductees. With the aid of Rick Wise, Bill presented the certificates

- RMCM/SS Leonard Chilton Qualified on USS Darter SS-576, in 1967
- ENCS/SS James Flannery Qualified on USS Carbonero SS-337, in 1957
- LCDR Robert Kirtley Qualified on USS Sealion SS315, in 1967
- QM2/SS Ron Kozlowski Qualified on USS Picuda SS-382, in 1967
- RMC/SS Gorden Smith Qualified on USS Lewis and Clark SSBN-644, in 1967
- MMCM/SS Edward Stank Qualified on USS Shark SSN-591, in 1967
- LCDR Richard Walsh Qualified in USS James Madison SSBN-627, in 1967

Following the presentations photographs were taken to be posted on the base website [www.ussvicb.org](http://www.ussvicb.org). These photos are now posted at [http://www.ussvicb.org/activity-pics/170413\\_CB\\_HC/index.html](http://www.ussvicb.org/activity-pics/170413_CB_HC/index.html). The guests were thanked for attending and then asked to leave so that a short business meeting could be held. After the guest left the meeting continued.

**Secretary:** Base Secretary Mike Ciesielko reported that the March meeting minutes had been published in the newsletter and on the base website. Mike asked the group for a motion to accept the minutes as written. Rick Sparger made a motion to approve the meeting minutes as published. The motion was seconded by Walt Deal.

**Treasurer:** Base Treasurer Mike Welch gave a report on the Charleston Base finances. The base financial report is now located as a password protected file on the base website under Documents and Resources. The password is the same as needed for the Sailing List.

**Vice Commander:** Mike Knaub had nothing to report.

**Chaplain and Webmaster:** Base Chaplain and Webmaster Nick Nichols gave the following report:

### Submarines Lost During the Month of April

USS PICKEREL (SS-177)	April 3, 1943 – 7 <sup>th</sup> war patrol	Lost with all hands – 74 souls
USS SNOOK (SS-279)	April 8, 1945 – 9 <sup>th</sup> war patrol	Lost with all hands – 84 souls
USS THRESHER (SSN-593)	April 10, 1963 – sea trials	Lost with all hands – 129 souls
USS GUDGEON (SS-211)	April 18, 1944 – 12 <sup>th</sup> war patrol	Lost with all hands – 79 souls
USS GRENADIER (SS-210)	April 22, 1943 – 6 <sup>th</sup> war patrol	76 POWs; 72 survived the war

### Five Boats and 370 Men Lost

Master Chief Electronics Technician, Submarines, Phillip E. Euper  
United States Navy Retired  
Shipmate Departed on Patrol – April 2, 2017

## April Report

### Highlighted boat of the month:

USS PICKEREL SS-177 was lost on April 3, 1943 with the loss of 74 officers and men, while on her 7th war patrol. Pickerel departed Pearl Harbor, HI, and after topping off with fuel at Midway Island on 22 March, headed for the Eastern Coast of Northern Honshu and was never heard from again. The exact cause of her loss has never been determined, but her OP area contained numerous minefields.

### \*\*Interesting Submarine History on this date, April 13<sup>th</sup>:

**1942** | USS Triton (SS 201) departed for the East China Sea on her 3<sup>rd</sup> war patrol, under the command of C.C. Kirkpatrick. Kirkpatrick received the Navy Cross for Triton's successful war patrol.

**1964** | USS Triton (SSN 586) became the flagship for the Submarine Force, Atlantic Fleet.

- **ETCM(SS) Phillip E. Euper USN Ret.** Departed on Eternal Patrol on April 2<sup>nd</sup>. His memorial service was held Friday, April 7<sup>th</sup> at 1100 at the McAlister-Smith Funeral Home Chapel Goose Creek. FRA and Charleston Base participated.
  - Phil had contacted me via email on March 20<sup>th</sup> that he was in the hospital in ICU and no visitors. He contacted me via email again on March 26<sup>th</sup> via email that he was being treated and feeling better. Still in ICU with no visitors. He passed on April 2<sup>nd</sup>. I was never able to go see him due to no visitors.
  - Shipmates, I say again. Phil had not completed a page 2 so his passing caused some minor confusion for the family. When I called to offer condolence and see it Toni wanted a bell tolling she said yes they wanted the two bell. (discuss)
- **LT (SS) John C. Fletcher, USN Ret.**, departed on Eternal Patrol on Thursday, April 6<sup>th</sup>. He was not a member of USSVI.
- **Connie Roup** passed away Sunday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>. I am not aware of any arrangements at this time. The newspaper notice said that arrangements were being handled by Simplicity Lowcountry Cremation and Burial Services of North Charleston.
- **Lee Young** had successful cancer surgery but has been in and out of the hospital a couple of times since the last meeting. He is home now after being treated for infection.
- **Tom Skorepa** had successful lung surgery and is doing well. He reports no cancer. No TB. Will continue to monitor as determined by lung specialist. The prayers of all and the will of God has been heard and felt. Thanks to all who placed their love and hands on me.
- **Don Petersen** has been diagnosed with throat cancer and is having both chemo and radiation treatments.
- **Andrew Meadows**, Don's son, is scheduled to have a transplant on March 4<sup>th</sup>. Donnie's testing is complete and he is cleared to donate. Andrew must remain at Walter Reed for 2 months and a family member has to be there to ensure med compliance.
- **Rick Sparger** had successful back surgery and is doing much better.
- **Barbara Lynn Curtis**, Ken and Barbara's daughter-in-law, was in the ICU at MUSC for several days - following a kidney and pancreas transplant. She had been on the transplant list for several years. She is now home and doing extremely well. Blood sugar is in the green band and her kidney is working very well.
- **Lorraine Curtis**, Walt & Maureen's daughter, has been diagnosed with breast cancer and began chemo in early March.
- **Charlotte Loveday**, Jim's wife, has hospice care assisting her.

Follow-ups were made on those who've had surgery or illnesses in the last couple of months along with the base sending additional cards.

## **WEBMASTER NOTES:**

- Currently there are 6 ads on the Web site. I would like to encourage anyone that has a business to consider advertising through the base website and newsletter. The cost for an ad is \$25 for 12 months. If you would like to know more please see me or the Base Commander.
- Website is constantly updated.
- Make use of the EVENTS page on the Charleston Base website. All events that are put out to the membership via email will be listed and updated on the events page.

**District Commander:** Ed relayed that the Southeast Regional Convention was cancelled due to lack of attendance. National has decided that The Holland Club will no longer be funded as of next year. Ed informed us that next year's National convention will be a cruise out of Orlando.

The new National Website is under development.

We are looking for a new regional Commander.

Ed gave thanks to Mike Emerson, Mike Welch, Charlie and Pam Hudson for the wonderful help they gave to the Victory House Picnic.

**Membership:** Membership is now 302 members.

**Newsletter:** Is alive and well.

**Rec Committee:** Rick Sparger Picnic is 6<sup>th</sup> May We need volunteers to help.

**Submarine Veterans of World War II:** George Scharf encouraged everyone to join the WWII vets at the Fleet Reserve 27<sup>th</sup> April. George thanked the WWII vets for attending the Amberjack Ceremony.

**Scholarship:** George Scharf reported that the Applications need to be turned in by Saturday.

**FRA:** Larry Cox reported that the FRA will be hosting an old fashioned Navy Breakfast June 11<sup>th</sup>.

The AED defibrillator is in the Fleet reserve and training will be held.

The FRA will be holding a USS Hobson memorial service 23 April. White Point Gardens Downtown

The FRA is holding a yard sale 0800-1200 April 29<sup>th</sup>. They will hold a bake sale and selling hot dogs

**Election Coordinator :** Joe Lunn reported that Ralph Rhorsen will be running for Base Commander and Gordon Williams will be running for Treasurer.

**Storekeeper:** Ron Chambers has Chief patches for 7 dollars each.

**Veterans Affairs:** No Report

**Kaps for Kids:** No Report

**CRAMA:** No Report

**Chief of the Boat:** The COB gave thanks to the Awesome Amberjack ceremony.

**Base Commander:** Rick Wise is our new Public Affairs Officer.

The Little David Working Parties will be the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of April.

Walt Curtis won the depth charge last week and donated 70.00 to the Scholarship Fund.

There was a donation of \$50.00 from W.M. Lindler, son of Quartermaster W.M. Lindler. It goes to the Scholarship fund.

Andrew Meadows is scheduled for the Transplant surgery on May 4<sup>th</sup>.

The Sub Ball is April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Old Business:** None

**New Business:** Sub Ball tickets Rick Wise \$30.00 for one ticket.

Mike Ciesielko \$40.00 for two tickets, Mike Welch \$20.00 for one ticket, Ed Stank \$40.00 for two tickets.

**Good of the Order:**

**The After Battery:** We have a week-long event of the Annual Hog Roast this Sunday until Saturday

**Nuclear Historian:** Ed Stank Reported:

- **The Chief and the Pope In Heaven**

The Pope dies unexpectedly and finds himself at the gates of Heaven at 0300. He knocks on the gate and a very sleepy eyed watch opens the gate and asks, wadda you want. I'm the recently deceased Pope and have done 63 years of Godly works and thought I should check in here. The Heaven's Gate Guardian Angel checks his clipboard and says, I haven't got any orders for you here, just bring your stuff in and we'll sort this out in the morning Off they go to an old WWII barracks, 3rd floor, open bay. All the bottom racks are taken and all empty lockers have no doors. The Pope stows his gear under a rack and climbs into an upper bunk. The next morning he awakens to sounds of cheering and clapping. He goes to the window and sees a shiny Cadillac convertible coming down from the golden headquarters building on the hill. The sidewalks are lined with Angels cheering and throwing confetti. In the back seat of the convertible is a Navy Chief, ESWS pin shining on his chest, a cigar in his mouth, a can of beer in one hand and his other arm around a beautiful blonde Angel. This upsets the Pope greatly and he runs downstairs to Heavens Gate and says to the Guardian Angel, Hey, explain this to me, here I am, the recently deceased Pope, and I have spent 63 years doing Godly deeds on Earth and am here in open bay barracks, and I see this Chief that I know has committed every sin known to man, staying in the mansion on the hill and getting a hero's welcome. How can this be. The Guardian Angel calmly looks up and says, We get a Pope up here every 20 or 30 years, but this is the first Chief we've ever had.

- **Fifty-one years ago today, on the morning of 10 April 1963, USS THRESHER (SSN-593),** less than two years old and the lead boat in a new class of nuclear-powered, fast-attack submarines, began deep-diving tests about 200 miles to the east of Cape Cod, MA. The submarine-rescue ship USS SKYLARK (ASR-20) stood by overhead. At 0903 SKYLARK received a garbled transmission over the underwater telephone: THRESHER reported "Experiencing minor difficulties. ...Have positive up angle...attempting to blow." But THRESHER and the 129 men she carried—including 17 civilians—never returned to the surface.

The remains of the sub, broken up into six major sections, were eventually found scattered over a large area in more than eight thousand feet of water. After a thorough examination of photographs, objects recovered from the bottom, and records of the sub's construction and maintenance, a Court of Inquiry concluded that THRESHER's troubles likely began with the joints in her saltwater piping system, many of which had been brazed rather than welded. (Welding involves the heating to melting and direct joining of two pieces of metal, whereas brazing uses another material, one that melts at a lower temperature, to "glue" two pieces of metal together. In THRESHER's case, a silver alloy was used as "glue.") It has been theorized that at least one of those joints failed, permitting seawater to leak into the boat and short out an electrical panel which in turn triggered a scram, or shutdown, of the reactor. Without a means of propulsion, THRESHER, gaining weight as water flooded in through the failed joint, began to sink.

THRESHER's crew then tried to blow their main ballast tanks to propel the boat to the surface. They may have been hampered in their efforts by moisture freezing in strainers installed in high-pressure air-reducing valves in the blow system. Without that air there was no way to clear the water from the ballast tanks; without the reactor there was no way to fight the weight of the water and drive the boat to the surface.

Onboard SKYLARK, there was initially little cause for alarm. The two vessels met up at 0635 and THRESHER indicated that she was beginning her deep-dive test at 0747. As planned, the boat

checked in with SKYLARK every fifteen minutes. All was well until just after 0900 when THRESHER sent a muddled message: "Have positive up angle," LT(jg) James Watson, SKYLARK's navigator, recalls hearing. "Attempting to blow up [execute an emergency blow]." But transmissions over the underwater telephone were often difficult to understand and the C.O. did not sound panicked. SKYLARK cleared the sub to surface at 0914. There was no reply. A minute later SKYLARK asked the sub to report her course and position relative to the rescue ship. Again, silence. The C.O. then asked several times, "Are you in control?" Nothing came back until a few moments later when another garbled message came through. The SKYLARK crew could discern only two words: "test depth." Watson would later testify that he believed the word preceding those two was "exceeding."

"What then did you hear?" the questioner asked.

"We heard sounds that are familiar to me, from having seen ships blown up by torpedoes in World War II—the sound of a ship breaking up—like a compartment collapsing...a muted, dull thud," Watson replied. SKYLARK's sonar operators would liken the sound to that of "air rushing into an air tank." Nothing more was heard from THRESHER. SKYLARK's crew dropped several small grenades into the water starting at 1058; the sound of their explosions was supposed to indicate to the boat that the surface vessel had lost contact with her and wanted her to either check in via the telephone or surface. But she never called or came back up.

This first loss of a nuclear-powered submarine devastated the naval community, including Groton, CT, where the sub was home ported, and Portsmouth, NH, where the she was built. The men who went down on THRESHER did not die in vain. The tragedy prompted the navy to reexamine deep-diving submarine design, institute a quality-assurance program known as SUBSAFE which "provides a maximum reasonable assurance of the integrity of submarine design, systems and materials via Design Review, Shipboard System Testing and Objective Quality Evidence (OQE) that all materials and components meet drawing and specification requirements." Operating procedures for submarine reactors were changed to allow use of heat energy stored in plant components to provide propulsion while the reactor plant was restarted following an emergency shutdown.

It is impossible to know how many lives have been saved by the changes that were made after THRESHER's loss, just as it is impossible to know exactly what happened on board the boat that spring morning. But it is safe to say that submariners are safer now because of the sacrifice that was made by their shipmates half a century ago.

The FRA red ticket drawing was won by Al Dempster

The depth charge was won by Rick Wise. He donated \$100.00 to the Scholarship fund.

**Benediction:** Chaplain Nick Nichols gave the benediction.

**Meeting Adjourned:** Following the benediction by Nick Nichols, the Base Commander adjourned the meeting at 2023.