

# TORPEDO ALLEY



Vol. 4, No. 6

June 2008

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## Newsletter of Charleston Base, United States Submarine Veterans, Inc.

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### USSVI Creed

*"To perpetuate the memory of our shipmates who gave their lives in the pursuit of their duties while serving their country. That their dedication, deeds, and supreme sacrifice be a constant source of motivation toward greater accomplishments. Pledge loyalty and patriotism to the United States Government"*



Base web page: [www.ussvich.org](http://www.ussvich.org)

National web page: [www.ussvi.org](http://www.ussvi.org)

#### Base Meeting:

June 12, 2008

Social hour 1800, General Meeting 1900

#### Location:

Fleet Reserve Association Branch 269, Low Country Home  
99 Wisteria Rd.  
Goose Creek, South Carolina. Phone 843-569-2962

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#### Special Officers

Special Officers	Phone Number
Chief of the Boat	Marty Sessler 843-871-1536
Public Affairs	Richard Cleeve 843-899-4563
Publicity	Open
Sub Vets WWII	Barnwell Chaplin 843-762-6945
Nuclear Historian	Rick Carlson 843-875-4030
Veterans Affairs	Jim Morrison 843-832-9716
Chaplain	John Nichols 843-873-5897
Membership	Carl Chinn 843-875-3098
Holland Club	Terry Trump 843-873-9563
Little David Project	Rick Wise 843-875-5559
Roving Reporter	Rick Wise 843-875-5559
Scholarship	Jim Yates 843-873-0246
Newsletter	Carl Chinn 843-875-3098
Storekeeper	Paul Viering 843-797-2623
Alcohol & Gaming	Dave Mueller 843-553-2775

Base Officers	Phone Number
Commander	Steve Nelms 843-563-7115
Vice Commander	Carl Chinn 843-875-3098
Secretary	Rick Collins 843-851-3490
Treasurer	George Lisle 843-559-4242



#### Minutes of the May 2008 meeting

Attendance for the May 8, 2008 meeting was 90

**Opening Ceremony:** Base Commander called the meeting to order. A Quorum was present and the meeting was commenced at 1900.

**Introductions:** New people were introduced; George Whitton, Ron Kozlowski, Herman Nix. Welcome aboard.

**Secretary:** Secretary Ronnie Kerstetter asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from last month. A motion was made and seconded. Minutes approved.

**Fleet Reserve:** No report

**Holland Club:** The Holland Club was established by USSVI in May 1964 to formally recognize its members who have been qualified in submarines for 50 years or more. Terry Trump, Charleston base Holland Club coordinator assisted by Lee Allison and Jack Stevenson welcomed 3 new inductees into the Holland Club. Congratulations to Marshall Henderson, Willie Jones and Robert Holzel.

**Membership:** Carl Chinn reports that Charleston Base has 292 members as of tonight. See Carl for an application or for changes in home address, e-mail, phone, etc. Carl will update both the National and our local base databases.

**Treasurer:** George Lisle gave the treasurer's report.

**Storekeeper:** No report

**Chaplain:** May Report: Cards were sent as follows:

- To Bob Chinn during his recent hospitalization and after he went home wishing him well and a quick recovery. He is home recuperating and went through a bone marrow biopsy this past Monday.
- To the family of Ralph Schmalz giving our condolences on his death. Ralph was not a member of the base.
- To Tom Lindberg wishing he well as he goes through radiation treatments.
- To Rich Sparger sending him our condolences on the recent death of his sister.
- To Dave Rein wishing he well as he goes through some rough spots in his recovery. He was in the hospital for a short time but he is home now.
- To Mike Stuffle as he fights the infection in his blood stream and then the recovery from the amputation of his leg. Mike's other leg was amputated on Wednesday, April 30<sup>th</sup>. He will be going to a rehab center very soon.
- To Gary Brown who had eye surgery on both eyes. Gary is not a member of the base.

Jerry Coutu had a leg removed.

We received an email from the Sturgeon Base about the death of our shipmate George Foster, TCMC(SS), who died on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. I have sent the base commander an email asking for an address for the family so that we can send them a card from USSVI Charleston Base.

Several 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.

If you know of shipmates or spouses from other bases who are having a difficult time, had surgery, etc. and would like for USSVI Charleston Base to send them a card please send their name and address to the Chaplain via email or phone call.

May 8, 1945 was VE Day.

**Scholarship:** Jim Yates announced scholarships for this year. The Admiral James B. Osborn Memorial Scholarship is funded by the Charleston Base Submarine Veterans Incorporated. The scholarships will be awarded to Tri-County high school seniors and disbursed as a one-time \$500 award payable to the recipient. This year's recipients were Darren Feltner, Corey Seacrest, Aubree Lindamood, Nicholas Bostic, and Elaine Alford. Scholarship applications can be found on our website. Please buy the Charleston base challenge coins and donate to the scholarship account to help support this annual award

**Public Affairs:** Need a replacement for the Publicity Coordinator.

**Sub Vets WWII:** Sy Maybie invited everyone to the next Swamp Fox Chapter meeting at Ryan's Family Steak House 1314 North Main Street in Summerville on Thursday on June 19, at 1200 (noon).

**Veteran's Affairs:** Jim Morrison is our VA contact but was not here tonight. Nick Nichols talked about VA taking over Naval Hospital when the Navy moves out. Survivors benefit plan change, TriCare For Life change. Details and other information on the VA web link on Charleston Base website, [www.ussvicb.org](http://www.ussvicb.org)

**Little David:** Newspaper article in the Berkeley Independent describing United States Submarine Veterans Charleston Base members who recently spent two days maintaining the replica of the CSS Little David located at the Berkeley Museum in Moncks Corner. Rick Wise is the base coordinator.

**Newsletter:** If you are not getting your newsletter call Carl Chinn.

**Alcohol & Gaming:** No-neck was not present. Buddha thanked Neck for all the work he does for social nights which helps to fund the Charleston Base.

**Chief of the Boat:** May 10 base picnic

May 29<sup>th</sup> Summerville medical center flag retirement. The float really looked good at the convention.

Victory House visit, taking the float and cooker to the VA home in Walterboro to serve the Victory House guests a meal and provide entertainment, moved to September.

Thank you to Rodney McKanna and Jerry Stout your work with Submarine Day.

Mothers Day at Fleet Reserve Lowcountry Branch 11:30-2.

FRA elections one week from today.

Memorial Day, May 26<sup>th</sup>, ceremony at Parks Cemetery on 17A in Summerville

**Base Commander:** Buddha thanked Jerry Stout for doing an excellent job as District Commander and working to make sense with National. Buddha thanked all involved with building a ramp for Jerry Coutu so that he can gain wheel chair access into his home.

**Nuclear Historian:** No report

**Old Business:** None

**New Business:** None

**Good Of The Order:** The depth charge drawing was held. The winner was David Bonow.

Thanks to Steve Morris for loan of a 900 pound ice machine.

Thanks to Tom Britton for giving The After Battery the left over beverages from a reunion in Myrtle Beach.

Thanks to Ed Bowels for the shrimp and crab legs and the donation to the scholarship fund, Ed was given hymn salute.

Thank you to Ben Heber and Mike Emerson for having the float looking good and heading up the parade float project.

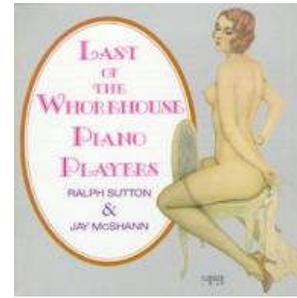
Motion approved to pass the hat to reimburse money paid for concrete pad and ramp for Jerry Coutu. Motion passed to pay any remaining money owed for pad and ramp from Charleston Base general fund. Approved.

The Base Commander adjourned meeting at 2020.

**\*\* End of the minutes for May 2008 \*\***

**District Commander:** Jerry Stout is on the ballot for the Eastern Region Director. Eastern District will split into a Northern Region and a Southern region. National elections, we will vote on a rewrite of National constitution and bylaws.

**Vice Commander Report:** No report



*"Don't tell mom I'm a submariner, she thinks I play piano in a whorehouse."*



Becker	Brown, A.	Burton	Grabowski
Hance	Heinle	Jones, W.	Kirtley
Kratz	Loveday	Lowe	McDonald, B.
Morris	Murphy	Rein	Schaffer
Smith, P.M.	Spotts	Suddeth	Williams, J.
Yates, J.			



June 12 – Monthly meeting, vote on 2 proposed amendments to our bylaws



June 14 – Flag Day

June 15 – Fathers Day

### **Battle of Midway 66th Anniversary – June 4-7 1942**

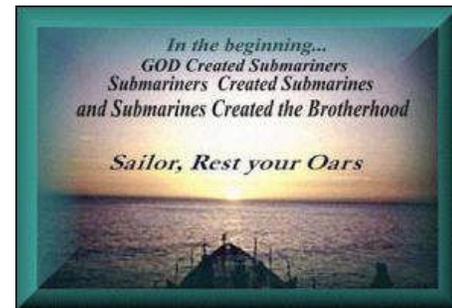
*"They had no right to win. Yet they did, and in doing so they changed the course of a war ... Even against the greatest of odds, there is something in the human spirit - a magic blend of skill, faith and valor -- that can lift men from certain defeat to incredible victory."* -- Walter Lord, author, from Battle of Midway inscription on World War II Memorial, Washington, DC.

Each year the Navy commemorates the nation's victory at the Battle of Midway – a victory which not only turned the tide of the war in the Pacific, but also marked the dawn of the U.S. Navy's global prominence and the coming of age of carrier aviation. For more on events leading up to and including the historic battle, visit [www.navy.mil/midway/](http://www.navy.mil/midway/)  
Midway's Place in History

- America needed to win – just six months after the attack at Pearl Harbor, Midway stood between our enemies and Hawaii, home of the U.S. Pacific Fleet. The Japanese were poised to press their advantage, intent on destroying the Pacific Fleet and threatening the

### **June Submarines Lost:**

USS S 27	SS 132	June 19, 1942
USS R 12	SS 89	June 12, 1943
USS Herring	SS 233	June 1, 1944
USS Gudgeon	SS 211	June 7, 1944
USS Golet	SS 361	June 14, 1944
USS Bonefish	SS 223	June 18, 1945
USS O-9	SS 70	June 19, 1941



### **Submariner Combat Death**

Last month saw the death in combat of one of our own, a submariner serving in Afghanistan as an individual augmentee (IA). LT Jeffrey Ammon was a member of the staff of Commander Navy Region Northwest and had been sent to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Tragically, LT Ammon was killed on May 20th by an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) while working as a member of the Afghanistan Provincial Reconstruction Team in Ghazni, Afghanistan. Prior to his assignment to Navy Region Northwest, LT Ammon had served on USS ALABAMA (SSBN 731). LT Ammon was on his second consecutive tour in Afghanistan, having volunteered to stay on to finish critical work to repair the country's infrastructure.

Commander Navy Region Northwest will hold a memorial service for LT Ammon from 1400 to 1530 on Wednesday, June 4th. The service will be held at the "Bangor Brickyard," which is the stepped brick outdoor pavilion just outside of the Uniform Shop here at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor. The foul weather contingency is Bangor Plaza (the Trident Ballroom where we hold our monthly meetings).

The family has indicated that members of various Navy-related service organizations such as the Naval Submarine League are welcome and encouraged to attend. Any death is tragic, but this one hits close to home. I urge the members here in the Puget Sound area to join me in attendance to show respect to our

west coast of the United States.

- Midway was a dramatic victory against a greater force. Facing Japan's 11 battleships and four carriers, the U.S. came to the fight with no battleships and just three carriers...Enterprise, Hornet and Yorktown.
- During the battle, Japan lost four carriers, a heavy cruiser, three destroyers, and some 291 planes. The U.S. lost the Yorktown, a destroyer and 145 planes. Japan's losses, both at Midway and at Coral Sea, did much to restore the balance of naval power in the Pacific, and Japan was never able to recover from the loss of many of her best aviators during the two battles. For more information, please visit [http://www.navy.mil/navydata/navy\\_legacy\\_hr.asp?id=7](http://www.navy.mil/navydata/navy_legacy_hr.asp?id=7)

### Navy.mil Web Site "Shifts Colors

WASHINGTON (NNS) -- The Navy's official Web site, Navy.mil, launched several enhancements on May 14, with improvements and upgrades that extend beyond its cosmetic appearance. The new design features a modular layout, as well as increased interactivity and enhanced access to information within the site.

"We hope the new design will give greater visibility to the news and the information that people look for," said Bill Spencer, creative director of Navy.mil. "This is just another refinement of our original idea."

The key changes to the site, however, are the introduction of Navy.mil Underway, a low bandwidth version of the site suited for ships on deployment -- and Navy.mil Mobile -- which allows Sailors to access the site from a mobile device such as a cellular phone.

"The Underway page allows those with low bandwidth to get the information they need from the site," said Spencer. "The core of this update is to push Navy information to multiple platforms, whether on a desktop, at sea, or on a mobile device."

Given the fact that Sailors are serving around the globe at sea and ashore, the new sites will make it easier for them to stay informed on what's going on around the fleet.

"The introduction of the mobile and underway sites provides greater access for Sailors to get the news when and where they want," said Capt. Gordon Hume, Naval Media Center commanding officer.

Navy.mil was recently recognized as a 2008 Webby Award "Official Honoree" and also received the Department of Defense Thomas Jefferson award for Web design.

To navigate Navy.mil Underway, visit [www.navy.mil/underway/](http://www.navy.mil/underway/)

### Navy To Begin Testing Periscope Camera That Provides 360-Degree View

By Geoff Fein, *Defense Daily*, April 15, 2008

This summer, the Navy will begin testing a prototype advanced camera for Los Angeles-class submarine periscopes that will provide a 360-degree scan of the surrounding waters. Developed by Massachusetts-based RemoteReality, the prototype will also provide nighttime views using an infrared sensor, Dennis McGinn, chairman and chief executive officer, told *Defense Daily* in a recent interview.

One idea behind the company's prototype is to enable submarines to get a quick 360-degree view, thus avoiding prolonged exposure by the boat's periscope.

McGinn, a retired vice admiral, said that his experience in anti-submarine warfare (ASW) exercises demonstrated that a large percentage of submarines were detected either by visual sighting or radar detection of a periscope or the wake of a

fallen comrade and to support the family in this time of need.

The family has established a memorial fund in LT Ammon's honor at Navy Federal Credit Union for those wishing to make a memorial contribution.

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### Good Day To Remember Those US Submariners

(NEW ZEALAND HERALD 25 APR 08)

On Anzac Day thoughts turn to those who gave their lives during various wars over the last century. But there is one group which has never been given recognition for what they achieved in World War II and that is the United States submariners, 3505 of whom lost their lives, including 374 officers.

When one analyses what they achieved there is no doubt they did more than any other group to defeat the Japanese and save Australia and New Zealand from being invaded.

The reason is simple - they sank more than 60 per cent of the Japanese merchant marine fleet. Without these ships, not only was the Japanese advance stifled, their occupying troops lost their supply lines and they virtually could not be evacuated like the British were at Dunkirk to fight in other battles.

Additionally with the loss of shipping, Japan found it very difficult to supply the homeland with raw materials from the conquered territories.

After the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, the US instigated a policy of restricting supplies to Japan. This ultimately led to the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941.

The Japanese advance over the next five months was nothing short of staggering - Hong Kong, the Philippines, Burma, Borneo, Malaya, Thailand, Indo-China (Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam) and Singapore on February 15, 1942 where 80,000 troops surrendered (the largest surrender of British military personnel in history) were occupied. Ships played a most important part in this role.

The Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) was occupied in March and Darwin first bombed on February 15, 1942. The farthest Japanese advance was Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands by July 6. The farthest advance in Burma was on May 8, 1942, which was the second day of the Coral Sea battle - their first setback, followed by the Battle of Midway on June 3-6.

Without a huge marine fleet this advance would never have been possible. Over the next two years the US Navy submarine fleet went to work.

Fortunately they had cracked the Japanese naval code so they virtually knew their every move. The Japanese had also failed to destroy the enormous naval fuel-oil installations at Pearl Harbour when Admiral Nagumo did not go ahead with the third wave of air strikes.

Admiral Nimitz, Commander in Chief of the US Navy Pacific Fleet, said that had the tanks been destroyed the war would have been prolonged by two years as it would have immobilised every ship in the Pacific Fleet.

The Japanese had no long-range anti-submarine aircraft and probably their destroyers were not that well equipped to deal with submarines. The problem for the American Navy was where to base the submarines. Darwin was ruled out because the harbour was considered too shallow. Finally Fremantle (near Perth) was chosen and obviously that was too far away

periscope.

"Submariners, from a self-protection standpoint ...defensive standpoint...try to maintain their stealth profile to minimize the time they have something sticking up above the waves," he said.

But the primary driver for RemoteReality's system is to help boats avoid incidents such as the 2001 collision between the USS Greenville (SSN-772) and the Japanese fishing vessel Ehime Maru near Oahu, Hawaii.

"Part of the board of inquiry that was done afterward determined [the Greenville] had gone up to periscope depth, but because of a combination of the water conditions and the limitations of the field of view, the scan rate around the horizon by the periscope, they had missed the presence of the ship and they assumed that nothing was there," said McGinn, who was the deputy chief of naval operations for warfare requirements and programs before retiring.

"With a system like ours they would have been able to get that quick look...as they were positioning for the maneuver they were going to do and then they would have detected [the Ehime Maru]," he added.

Right now submarines have various sensors on the periscope, but they all have the common characteristics of a limited field of view, McGinn noted. "With our day/night periscope system on there, you put the periscope up and have an instantaneous picture all the way around the horizon...360-degrees, without having to turn the periscope or the camera to compensate for the limited field of view."

The image can then be displayed in a panoramic view on a flat screen monitor--divided into two 180-degree, undistorted, views, McGinn said.

RemoteReality is working with the Naval Undersea Warfare Center (NUWC) in Newport, R.I., on installation and testing of the prototype.

"It's in the process [of being installed]," McGinn said. "The key milestone we are pleased to see, they are going to take it out to sea in the Pacific in June."

The day/night 360-degree camera consists of two optic system lenses that provide the 360-degree panoramic view. One sensor is for daytime, visual light while the other is for infrared. The signal is then fed down to existing display systems in the submarine's command center, he added.

"We have worked with NUWC as far as the best way to integrate the product of these sensors into the existing displays," McGinn said.

RemoteReality has been using common off-the-shelf modules to avoid a situation where the submarine has this wonderful sensor, but there is a horrible integration problem, McGinn said.

"We eliminate the integration problem right up front by the approach we have for using existing software modules," he added.

"One of the things we are really proud about, as a small high tech company, we were able to meet very, very stringent standards. The real estate on a submarine periscope is precious, and the challenge is to get the right size package that is compatible with other sensors and electronics, and the mechanical gear in that very, very limited space," McGinn said. "We were able to do that very smoothly, right on time, and the relationship with the Navy engineers at NUWC and the program office has just been superb."

The company has also been exploring surface and land uses for this technology too, McGinn added.

They have been working with the Coastal Area Protection System program office at Panama City, Fla. McGinn said the technology is deployed down there.

"It has a lot of great capability [that] it brings to the mission area of coastal area protection, harbor protection--from both a security standpoint and safety and monitoring standpoint," he said.

The technology has also been deployed on Humvees, and McGinn sees the potential for the camera's use on Bradley Fighting Vehicles and Abrams Tanks to improve situational

for the Japanese to attack with aircraft. It was a long haul for the submarines to the areas where Japanese ships were active to the north but on the surface, diesel-powered submarines have a tremendous range.

Obviously they would sail on the surface for most of their operations to and from Fremantle. Evidently Japan never found out where the submarines were based. The Fremantle base had 125 American, 31 British and 11 Free-boat Dutch submarines. The Americans deployed 288 submarines during the war so nearly half operated from the Fremantle base.

Japan started the war with six million tons of shipping and of course built more as the war went on. US submarines sank 1314 of their ships of more than 1000 tons each, plus 700,000 tons of naval ships including eight aircraft carriers, a battleship and 11 cruisers.

They did 416 patrols and fired 14,500 torpedoes. Out of a total of 52 subs lost, 48 were lost operating from the Fremantle base. American submariners made up only 1.6 per cent of the US naval manpower but they had the highest loss rate of US Armed Forces with 22 per cent killed.

At the German Naval Museum at Laboe, northeast of Kiel, there is a memorial to the 3505 American submariners and a memorial to the 31,000 German submariners who lost their lives out of a total of 39,000 men who served in their U-boats. The Germans built 1154 U-boats and lost 800.

More than 50,000 allied Merchant Seamen lost their lives, many as a result of U-boat activity. They, too, have never been given true recognition for what they achieved in the Atlantic and the sacrifices they made.

Last year while in Los Angeles I spoke to a group of American submariners. Many did not know of their predecessors' achievements in the war and none knew there was a base in Fremantle.

They are going to make a concerted effort to bring this oversight into prominence when remembrances are held. Their sacrifices certainly saved us from invasion. Anzac Day is now also the time to remember those 3505 dead submariners of the US Navy.

(David Clemow of Auckland is a retired Air New Zealand pilot, previous technical director of the Airline Pilots Association and a qualified meteorologist.)

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### From District Commander

Charleston Base Members,

I just returned from Norfolk, Virginia where I represented you at the Eastern Region Annual Conference that was held in conjunction with two memorial services. On Friday, I was in attendance at the Memorial Day Submarine Veterans WWII Tolling of the Boats and the induction of the USS Parche SSN-683 into the Submarine Atlantic Fleet Hall of Fame. A former skipper of the Parche was the guest speaker. I was able to meet several WWII Veterans from the Tidewater Chapter and even met the State Commander from New Mexico. On Saturday, I attended the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the loss of the USS Scorpion SSN-589. This service was very well attended and was the most moving ceremony I have attended in remembrance of our shipmates on Eternal Patrol since joining USSVI ten years ago. The guest speaker was Admiral Donnelly, COMSUBFOR, formally COMSUBLANT. The daughter of the COB, who is now a Captain in the Medical Corps, was

awareness and driver vision enhancement.

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### VA Claim Delay Update 02

Due to an influx of new claims and the antiquated rules by which the Department of Veterans Affairs must process claims the average processing time has risen from 174 in 2006 to 188 days in 2007. As of APR 08 the number of claims outstanding was 650,000. The Department of Veterans Affairs projects that the number of claims will surpass one million by the end of fiscal year 2008. In an effort to reduce the backlog Congressman John Hall (D-NY-19) on 23 APR introduced HR 5892, the "Veterans Disability Benefits Claims Modernization Act of 2008". This bill is to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to modernize the disability benefits claims processing system of the VA to ensure the accurate and timely delivery of compensation to veterans and their families and survivors, and for other purposes. The legislation specifically focuses on:

- Clarifying combat related disabilities;
- Readjusting the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities;
- Changing the VBA's work credit and management systems;
- Improving employee certification and training;
- Improving quality assurance measurements;
- Expediting fully-developed claims and improving VCAA notice requirements;
- Ensuring partial ratings for qualifying veterans
- Allowing substitution of qualifying survivors;
- Enhancing information technology; and
- Providing surer appellate justice adding matters related to the jurisdiction of the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims to provide

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### Admiral Osborne Scholarship Fund

How about helping out the scholarship fund? We are offering a Charleston Base Challenge Coin for sale. ALL proceeds go into the scholarship fund.

Coins only cost \$7 each. Available for an additional \$1 is a protective plastic capsule.

To get your coin(s) see Jim Yates, Julian Villegas or Carl Chinn.

Make sure you have one for "when you get challenged"! Buy several for great gifts!




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### VA Veterans Book 2008 Edition Available Free

The VA recently published their Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents Booklet for 2008. An easy-to-read reference guide, it provides the most current information about your earned benefits. You can download the 153 page booklet at the following web site:

<http://www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/fedben.pdf>

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responsible for the entire event. Weather was picture perfect. The reading of the Sailors lost on Scorpion was conducted by the Junior/Senior Sailors of the year. The 21-gun salute and taps was very moving. I was extremely proud to have been there.

Highlights from the conference are:

National Election Master – The upcoming election will not involve the Base Commanders. You will have the opportunity to vote on-line or with a paper ballot. You will be receiving a letter with the ballot and the proposed rewrite to the National Bylaws and Constitution and two proposed changes to the Holland Club. In addition, all of the National Officers are up for election or reelection. I am running against George Boyle for Southeastern Regional Director. Please vote!

Eastern Region Realignment: There are now five districts in the Southeast Region. Charleston Base is now Southeastern Region District Two. The intent will be that a Regional Convention will be held in St. Augustine, Florida in April 2009, in addition to a Regional Conference of all District Commanders.

Membership: There is no longer a grace period for National. Charleston Base eliminated this period last year. Pay your dues now and do not wait until the fall. Salute with Pride and vote in the upcoming election, Jerry K. Stout, ERS2 Commander

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### TriCare User Fee Update 26

At a 16 APR subcommittee hearing in which major military associations presented their annual wish lists of improvements in pay, allowances and other benefits, Sens. Ben Nelson (D-NE) and Lindsey Graham (R-SC) said they might be willing to support modest TriCare fee increases, but will not back a Pentagon proposal seeking TriCare fee increases of as much as 400% for some retirees. Nelson and Graham are the chairman and ranking Republican, respectively, on the Senate Armed Services personnel subcommittee. Representatives testifying on behalf of the military associations expressed a willingness to accept fee increases that are no more than the size of the annual military pay raise or the annual cost-of-living adjustment in military retired pay, which gives Nelson and Graham some maneuvering room. Both indicated they will work on providing better health coverage to service members who are discharged from active duty without medical retirement pay. Steve Strobbridge of the Military Officers Association of America said capped fee increases were acceptable - as long as they are part of a broader policy that makes clear that co-payments, deductibles and enrollment fees for TriCare users should not be determined simply by health care budget shortfalls. "We realize it is unrealistic to have no increases, ever," said Strobbridge, who co-chairs the Military Coalition, a group of more than 30 military-related associations. The Pentagon estimates TriCare fee hikes would save about \$1.9 billion in the 2009 defense budget. If the committee adopts lower fee increases or rejects any increases, it would have to make up the funding gap somehow.

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### VA Retro Pay Project Update 11

In OCT 06, the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) and the Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) initiated the process of providing retroactive compensation for more than 133,000 disabled recipients of either Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC) or Concurrent Retired Disability Payment (CRDP) and VA compensation. Since then, more than 85,000 additional retirees have



Remember Dad!

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### Shift Colors Newsletter Keeps 650,000 Retirees Connected By NPC

The Navy Personnel Command Communications office has published the 50th-anniversary edition Shift Colors, the newsletter that stays connected to nearly 650,000 Navy Retirees.

Shift Colors started in 1955 with a four-page spread of plain, typed text addressing important issues to Navy retirees. For the past half century, Shift Colors has provided retirees and their family members with up-to-date information pertaining to pay and benefits, with continual updates from TRICARE; Defense Finance and Accounting Service; Morale, Welfare and Recreation; and Navy Personnel Command's (NPC) Retired Activities Office.

The 50th Anniversary issue of Shift Colors gives readers a look back at 1955 with a five-page spread featuring stories and photos submitted by fellow readers.

The NPC Communications office publishes Shift Colors three times per year, ensuring information being passed on to readers is accurate and up-to-date with the latest changes in retiree benefits. At the same time, it provides a fact-filled reference for family members to use to gain a better understanding their benefits and responsibilities. Shift Colors can be accessed through the NPC website on the Shift Colors web page (<http://www.npc.navy.mil/ReferenceLibrary/Publications/ShiftColors/>).

The Shift Colors web page provides the latest issue, back issues beginning from 2002, reunion listings, information up-dates, ready reference contact information, and retiree seminars.

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## The Scuttlebutt

### The After Battery

- Heard recently...Picture this, one gimp threatening another: Neck to Clyde Peters, "Clyde, am I gonna have to come over there and kick your ass?"
- Another gimp one last week at The After Battery: Neck to "Big Ed" Simokat, "Am I gonna have to jerk you outta your truck and kick your ass?"

### Elsewhere

- At a helping a shipmate working party: Marty (holding a piece of wood) to Neck (operating a nail gun): "Geez Neck, for a minute there I thought you were down there giving me a blow job!" Seems to be a violent pattern here concerning one of our members. Any suggestions?

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### Benefits

been identified by the VA as potentially eligible for retroactive payment. As of April 20, DFAS reported that nearly 179,000 accounts have been processed, with approximately 39,000 remaining. Of those, more than 16,000 are new cases. But about 23,000 of the most complicated cases from the originally identified group are still being worked. The joint process gives priority to the original cases, but those remaining require multiple laborious computations. In many cases, these can only be done by hand, because the individuals have had several VA rating changes and have switched back and forth between CRDP and CRSC payments with annual changes in the relative value of the two programs - due to the rating changes or the ramp-up of CRDP payments, or both.

DFAS has reported that by 31 MAY, it will complete its review of the initial 133,000 files of disabled retirees. The number of contractors hired and trained to work the files has climbed to 233 from 51 since DEC 07. So far, DFAS and the Department of Veterans Affairs have paid a combined \$308 million in back payments to disabled military retirees. Both continue to identify new retirees that may be eligible for retroactive compensation and are working to developing automated changes that will expedite that process. On a separate topic, medical retirees with less than 20 years of service will soon be able to have their CRSC applications adjudicated for disabilities incurred as a result of combat or combat related events. DoD expects to release guidance to the military services by the end of this month or in early May. MOAA will keep you informed as soon as the guidance is published.

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### Social Security Offset Eliminated

As March came to an end so did the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) Social Security Offset. As a result of Public Law 108-375, the Social Security Offset for annuitants was eliminated effective April 1, 2008. The law provided for a phased-in elimination which began October 1, 2005, and ended March 31, 2008, with the last Social Security Offset deduction.

Prior to October 2005, at age 62 the SBP annuity was reduced because the beneficiary became eligible to receive the retiree's Social Security benefits. Effective April 1, 2008, annuitants that had their annuity reduced by the Social Security Offset now have the offset removed. Annuitants that were eligible for the minimum annuity percentage of 35 percent prior to October 2005 are now entitled to the full 55 percent of the base amount. Annuitants who were receiving the Supplemental Survivor Benefit in addition to the basic benefit will also be paid at the new rate of 55 percent. The minimum annuity percentage is now 55 percent for all annuitants. For example: with a \$1,000 base amount the annuitant should see an increase in monthly annuity to \$550 (55% x \$1,000).

This change occurred on your May 1, 2008 payment.

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### TRICARE Offers Free Courses

For those who want a better understanding of the TRICARE benefit, [TRICARE University](#) is offering a free on-line public course. No registration is required. From anywhere at any time, on-line "students" can learn about a wide range of topics such as eligibility,

From pay to the GI Bill, from home loans to health care -- learn about the benefits you qualify for as a U.S. servicemember, veteran, or retiree.

From pay to the GI Bill, from VA home loans to health care, your career in the Navy or Naval Reserve has earned you valuable military benefits.

Whether you're on active duty, a veteran or retiree, we make using your military & Veteran benefits easy.

Also includes a huge Reunion finder (and, remember you can look up 'your' boat at [www.ussvi.org](http://www.ussvi.org) to find info on your next reunion.)

[http://www.navyinsider.com/navy\\_veteran.html](http://www.navyinsider.com/navy_veteran.html)

### TFL Hospital Coverage

The retired enlisted Association (TREA) has learned that some hospitals are playing games with Medicare and as a result, some TriCare users are ending up owing hospitals large amounts of money. The rule that if medical care providers accept Medicare they must accept TriCare apparently is not always applicable. It turns out that the hospitals still accept TriCare, and they still accept Medicare payments if the patient has previously been treated in that hospital. However, they are not accepting any new Medicare patients. Thus, if the TriCare insured has not previously been a patient at that hospital, the patient ends up having to pay the Medicare portion of the bill out of pocket. The Medicare portion for TFL beneficiaries is normally 80% but under these conditions payment under TriCare Standard should apply the same as it does for overseas users. They pay 25 % of the bill in addition to the \$150 deductible since Medicare provides no coverage outside the USA. Although this seems very unfair and is really "playing games" with Medicare and with patients, it is legal. Accordingly, Medicare eligibles need to make sure anytime they are having scheduled hospitalization that the hospital will take both TriCare and Medicare if they are a new patient in that hospital. If not, verify with your TriCare regional office if TriCare Standard rules will apply. Also, it might be prudent to check with your local hospital what their policy is in the event you will have to use them for emergency treatment in the future.



medical benefits, TRICARE programs, pharmacy, dental, on-line resources, and TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS). To learn and understand the benefit, click on the link below to go directly to the public course or log on to the TRICARE website and click "on-line training" to select the TRICARE Public course. TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) is an additional selection under the public course.

<https://www.tricareonline.com/welcome.do>

### VA REGULATIONS CHANGE UPDATE 01

The Veterans Affairs Department is engaged in a massive project to rewrite benefit claims regulations using plain language with the goal to make them clearer and more consistent. For example, VA used its plain language policy on 12 APR, when it issued a proposed rule for claims dealing with disability and death benefits. The new rule also covers claims based on new and material evidence, claims based on hospitalization, and requests to increase benefits. In the introduction to the new rule, VA officials said the purpose of the plain language project was to reorganize "compensation and pension rules in a logical, claimant-focused and user-friendly format." Steve Smithson, deputy director for the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission at the American Legion, said the term plain language will be interpreted by what he called "the VA mind-set. . . . It's as plain as they are going to get." The department started the Regulation Rewrite Project in 2002 in response to recommendations made in the VA Claims Processing Task Force Report, which was released in OCT 01. The project is a "huge, complex task dealing with thousands of regulations" in Part 38 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Smithson said. VA is attempting to make this mass of regulations more understandable by putting them in one coherent area rather than spreading them all over the place.

Gerald Manar, deputy director of the Veteran of Foreign Wars' national veterans service, said, as he understands the rewrite process, the new plain language code eventually will contain electronic hooks, which will make it easier to search regulations and link from one to another. Manar said he considered the term plain language to be somewhat misleading, because VA regulations are complex and quite hard to understand, although the new regulations may have less legalese. VA could end up with wordier regulations, he said, because it could take longer explanation to make benefits requirements clearer. He drew an analogy between the old and new way of writing regulations, saying trying to understand the rewritten regulations could create a headache treatable with only two aspirin, while trying to comprehend the old regulations may have resulted in a headache that would have required an entire bottle to treat. Manar predicted that the new regulations would be a boon to lawyers representing veterans who have disputed compensation claims because the lawyers will view new language and definitions as a basis for litigation. The House on 14 APR passed a bill requiring federal agencies to use plain language in commonly-used forms. The legislation covers tax, benefit and Social Security forms, grant applications and other public documents, but not federal regulations.