

# TORPEDO ALLEY



Vol. 6, No. 5

May 2010

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



### 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 of America and its constitution.”*



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

#### Base Meeting:

May 13, 2010  
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

Special Officers		Phone Number
Chief of the Boat	Rick Wise	843-875-5559
Public Affairs	Ed Stank	843- 569-6012
Veterans Affairs	Jim Morrison	843-832-9716
Chaplain	John Nichols	843-873-5897
Membership	Carl Chinn	843-875-3098
Holland Club	John Lookabill	843-797-2991
Scholarship	Julian Villegas	843-871-6135
Newsletter	Carl Chinn	843-875-3098
Storekeeper	Ken Fuhr	803-413-3657
Webmaster	John Nichols	843-873-5897
Historian	George Scharf	843-873-3318

Base Officers		Phone Number
Commander	Paul Viering	843-797-2623
Vice Commander	Carl Chinn	843-875-3098
Secretary	Rick Collins	843-851-3490
Treasurer	Terry Trump	843-873-9563

## Minutes of the April 2010 meeting

Attendance for the April 8, 2009 meeting was 105

**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; Gordon Smith RMC SS, FTB1 SS Jim Reid, QM2 SS Paul Jameson, MS1 SS Herman Stiles, Craig L. Farr, and there were numerous visitors from the Tinosa reunion. Welcome aboard.

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

**Treasurer:** Terry Trump gave the treasurer's report.

**Storekeeper:** Please pick up what you ordered and pay for it. I have orders for 3 people.

**Chaplain:** Cards were received as follows:

Received from the Konetzni family:

*"Nick and Shipmates of the Charleston Base --- Thanks for your support and prayers during our time of need! We will never forget our son Kyle but in addition we will always cherish our friendship with "bubbleheads." Thanks and warm regards---Al & Missy Konetzni"*

Cards were sent as follows:

**Roger Rader.** Roger passed out at our meeting in January and was taken to the hospital. He had low potassium and sodium levels. He is doing well now.

**Tammara Butler.** Tammara is Rich Stump's daughter who is fighting aggressive breast cancer. She will be having surgery at the end of February.

**Soupy Campbell.** Soupy had prostate surgery on 27 January. He is home and doing well.

**Dot Campbell.** Dot is Soupy's wife and is having some health problem.

**Steve Curry and Donna Curry & family.** Steve's brother and Donna's husband, Tom, lost his battle with prostate cancer on 5 February.

**Tom Lufkin.** Tom had rotator cuff surgery and is recovering well.

**Bill Bates.** Bill had a mini-stroke after our last meeting. He is home and doing well.

**Brian Steffen.** Brian's wife, Debra, died suddenly from a massive heart attack on 6 February. Brian is a member of Palmetto Base in Columbia and a dual member of Charleston Base. Additionally, he is the Palmetto Base Sr. Vice Commander, Treasurer and Storekeeper.

**Marty Sessler.** This past Tuesday Marty had a heart cath in preparation for repairs to his aortic aneurysm. They discovered a 99.9% clogged artery and installed two stints. He now has to wait for 30 days before he is able to have the aneurysm repaired and his gall bladder taken out. He

**Webmaster:** Gave report on what is new on the website.

**Scholarship:** We have 7 applications as of today, the deadline is April 15th.**Veteran's Affairs:** No report

**Fleet Reserve:** The reserved seat for the next Honor Flight was won by Crystal for her father.

**District Commander:** Not present

**Vice Commander Report:** Gave report on SubBall, WW2 vets are free and the food is buffet style. He also whined about his missing pen.

**Holland Club:** No report

**Membership:** We have 320 members.

**Little David:** Working party Wednesday, April 14th @1000.

**Newsletter:** No report

**After Battery:** No report

**Chief of the Boat:** 1. Upcoming events will be sent out on e-mail.

2. Grits festival parade April 17th line up at 1000.

3. Friday April 23 NPTU picnic at Marrington Plantation.

4. Picnic Saturday May 29th @ the After Battery.

5. SouthEast regional convention April 25th till 29th.

**Base Commander:** Base elections in May. The Secretary and Vice Commander are up for election.

**Nuclear Historian:** Explained new terms for political correctness and today's Nucs.

**Old Business:** Rick Sparger gave a big thanks to all who helped with the oyster roast. He also complained about how the Base Commander pronounces his name.

**New Business:** None

**Good Of The Order:** Representatives from the Haddo base invited all Charleston base Subvets to the Cleveland Tennessee Armed Forces Day parade on May 7th, the longest continuous Armed Forces Day parade in the country.

Saturday May 8th is the 3rd annual Victory House car and truck show.

May 9th is the wear your Dolphins to work day.

April 11th is Submarine Day.

From Larry Starland: "all dual members may join with the FRA's ceremony during funeral services."

The depth charge drawing was held with \$320 to the winner. The winner was Dusty Rhodes of the Tinosa

requests that you call him before you go visit at his home.  
**Jon Sutton.** Jon is recovering at home from a recent heart surgery.

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.

**Historian:** I have all the newsletters on a CD, will try to get the pictures on CD's also. If you have pictures please let us borrow them to copy.

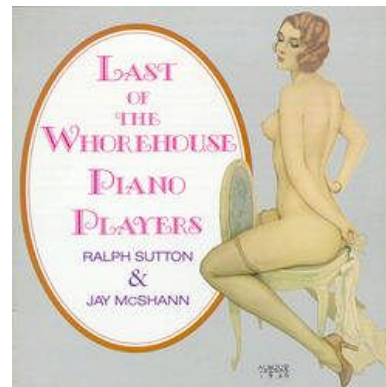
**Public Affairs:** He has a disc from Lee Allison's newscast and will try to put it on the web.

**Sub Vets WWII:** Stacy Powell gave the date for next meeting which is 15th of April at Ryan's' in Summerville @ 12 pm. Lee Allison has calendars and lost boat cards for sale.

reunion. Dusty gave \$50 back to the Charleston Base scholarship fund.

The Base Commander adjourned meeting at 2010.

**\*\* End of the minutes for April 2009 \*\***



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



Bailey, M	Birdwhistell	Caroll	Clarkin
Conrey	Copeland	Fenton	Fuhr
Fuqua	Gallagher	Habegger	Hill
Houston	Job	Kozlowski	Lufkin
McCollem	Mullins	Nichols	O'Meally
Paris	Pickett	Sparks	Steffen
Strickland	Sutton	Taylor	Wieda



May 13 – Monthly meeting

May 15 – Submarine Birthday Ball

May 22 – Fleet Reserve picnic at Short Stay

May 29 – Charleston Base picnic at The After Battery; starts at Noon. \$5 each and bring a dish.

### May Submarines Lost:

USS Runner	SS 275	May 28, 1943
USS Lagarto	SS 371	May 3, 1945
USS Squalus	SS 192	May 23, 1939
USS Stickleback	SS 415	May 29, 1958

Run silent, run deep  
 For freedom we fought to keep  
 How we spent so many days  
 Beneath the shimmering waves  
 A terrible foe we fought  
 And gave our lives; and freedom bought  
 Now our souls forever lie  
 Restlessly beneath the waves  
 So silent now, so deep  
 For it is not enough for you to weep  
 For we shall not have died in vain  
 Lest you forget for what we gave  
 We gave our lives, freedom to save  
 For if you forget our deeds  
 Then we shall never sleep  
 Though we lie so silent, so deep

*Al Alessandra, 2005*

### Giving Back to Vets

By Dave Lindorff, May & June 2010

Last Memorial Day, Sue Christensen had a revelation. A retired nurse administrator, Christensen, then 83, was laying a wreath at the veterans' monument in East

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## From Our Webmaster

Shipmates...as Webmaster I am constantly looking for pictures and web links that might pique your interest. I've just come across one concerning the Library of Congress (LOC). As you know the LOC is our country's storehouse of historic information. This is a great website that can hold your interest for hours and days (if you have that much time to spare.) I did find one area of particular interest to our organization. The Stories from the Veterans History Project makes accessible to all the personal accounts of American war veterans so that future generations may hear directly from veterans and better understand the realities of war. I hope you enjoy this website as much as I have to this point.

Below is one section from the website concerning "Submarines - The Silent Service".

I've also placed this link on our Charleston Base website.

Explore the Library of Congress from home

The Library of Congress was founded on April 24, 1800. It was designed to be the research arm of Congress. The public can visit, but only government officials can check out material. The Library of Congress has a copy of all media published in the United States. Its collection currently contains more than 21 million books. Altogether, over 141 million works of all types are housed there. With advances in technology, that information is starting to go online. The Library is steadily beefing up its digital collections. These are freely available on its Web site. These collections include American historical documents and international documents. More than 1 million historic images can be browsed. Collections of maps, manuscripts, newspapers, and legislation are all available. It's a fun way to explore America's history!

Working and living in a confined space beneath the ocean (and sometimes the Arctic polar cap) demands a special kind of person. The Navy's submariners are all volunteers, carefully tested and screened and able to perform any job aboard, including steering the massive boat. During World War II, U.S. submarines sank more Japanese ships than did U.S. surface vessels and planes, but at a high cost: a twenty percent casualty rate. In the Cold War, nuclear submarines prowled the oceans, gathering intelligence or poised to launch a missile on command.

<http://www.loc.gov/vets/stories/ex-war-submarines.html>

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## Navy Policy Will Allow Women To Serve Aboard Submarines

From Commander, Submarine Forces Public Affairs NORFOLK, Va (NNS) -- The Department of the Navy has announced a policy change that will allow women to serve on submarines. The change was considered by Congress after Secretary of Defense Robert Gates formally presented a letter to congressional leaders Feb. 19, 2010

Norriton, Pennsylvania, when she heard a speaker at the remembrance ceremony say that many vets suffer lingering problems from their wartime service—and don't realize they could receive help from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). "It suddenly hit me," recalls Christensen. "For 57 years I've suffered from panic attacks. Could it be from my time in the Navy?"

After the ceremony she approached the speaker, John Nowak, who works with the Montgomery County Office of Veterans Affairs in suburban Philadelphia. She explained that she had been a Navy nurse in a plastic surgery clinic at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, during the Korean War. Her duties included patching up the disfigured faces of young Marines who had just returned from the front. Did he think that this experience could account for her suffering?

Nowak suggested she visit his office, where she met with the director of veterans' services, who referred her to a counselor at the VA Medical Center in nearby Coatesville, Pennsylvania. There, she was diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and given a 30 percent disability rating, a disability-compensation payment of nearly \$5,000 a year, and free psychological counseling.

Thanks to this support, the veteran nurse has begun to heal. "I'm already doing much better," she says. "I finally feel like a full person."

Christensen is one of 23 million veterans in the United States today, some 8 million of whom receive VA benefits. But congressional sources and critics say that many other deserving veterans are not availing themselves of assistance. Some, like Christensen, simply don't know they are eligible for benefits. "It never occurred to me that the VA could do anything for me," she says, noting she had never served in a war zone.

As Christensen learned to her advantage, Congress has expanded veterans' benefits—including disability compensation, pensions, and health care—over the past two decades and has eased eligibility standards. This is a vitally important development. For many veterans, VA benefits could mean the difference between a life of abject poverty or a secure old age. For others it can mean the difference between suffering from an undiagnosed service-related illness or receiving treatment from a specialist in war trauma.

## So, what are the benefits available to veterans? Disability compensation

Misconceptions about this program abound. First of all, a service-connected disability need not be a combat injury. Any injury suffered or aggravated while in uniform can be considered—even injuries incurred while traveling to or from National Guard duty. Second, compensation payments are unrelated to



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notifying them of the Department of Navy's desire to reverse current policy of prohibiting submarine service to women.

"There are extremely capable women in the Navy who have the talent and desire to succeed in the submarine force," said the Honorable Ray Mabus, Secretary of the Navy. "Enabling them to serve in the submarine community is best for the submarine force and our Navy. We literally could not run the Navy without women today."

On July 28, 1994, Congress was notified of policy changes to expand the number of assignments available to women in the Navy. At that time, opening assignments aboard submarines to women was deemed cost prohibitive and assignments on submarines remained closed.

Currently, women make up 15 percent of the active duty Navy – 52,446 of 330,700. Integrating women into the submarine force increases the talent pool for officer accessions and subsequently the force's overall readiness, ensuring that the U.S. Submarine Force will remain the world's most capable for ensuing decades.

"The young women that have come up to me since we announced our intention to change the policy have such great enthusiasm," said Adm. Gary Roughead, Chief of Naval Operations. "Knowing the great young women we have serving in the Navy, as a former commanding officer of a ship that had a mixed gender crew, to me it would be foolish to not take the great talent, the great confidence and intellect of the young women who serve in our Navy today and bring that into our submarine force."

"Today, women earn about half of all science and engineering bachelor's degrees," said Vice Adm. John J. Donnelly, Commander, Naval Submarine Forces. "There are capable women who have the interest, talent, and desire to succeed in the submarine force. Maintaining the best submarine force in the world requires us to recruit from the largest possible talent pool."

Implementing the policy change will begin by assigning three female officers in eight different crews of guided-missile attack (SSGNs) and ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs). The assignments involve two submarines on the East Coast and two on the West Coast, each of which is supported by a Blue and Gold crew. More living space is available aboard these platforms which will require no modification, permitting the Navy to move quickly on integrating female officers in submarines.

"We need to open up the aperture for submarine officer selection to maintain our current selectivity," said Rear Adm. Barry L. Bruner, Commander, Submarine Group Ten and leader of the Women in Submarines Task Force.

"The key to making this significant change happen successfully will be correctly carrying out the plan and also ensuring that we educate the force and their families." SSGNs provide the Navy with an unprecedented combination of strike and special operation mission

income, and they are also available, at a reduced level, to surviving spouses. Monthly payments are based on the degree of disability, which can range from 10 percent (for tinnitus, for example) to 100 percent (unable to work or function normally), as determined by a doctor and subject to appeal. A 30 percent disability rating currently merits \$376 per month in compensation (\$421 if the veteran is married); vets who are 100 percent disabled receive \$2,673 per month (\$2,823 if married). To view compensation levels for various disability ratings, visit the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#).

Representative John Hall (D–New York), who chairs the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs for the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, says the VA has a new attitude regarding disabilities. Under previous administrations, he explains, VA evaluators were encouraged to reject all but the most serious cases involving service-related disabilities. Today, led by Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki (a Purple Heart recipient with a prosthetic foot), the department is reaching out to vets with disabilities. This means, says Hall, that World War II–, Korea–, and Vietnam-era veterans who may have been turned down by the VA in the past should reapply—especially because the department is now much more aware of (and sympathetic to) service-connected illnesses such as PTSD and ALS, or Lou Gehrig's Disease.

#### **Pensions for war veterans**

Although pensions were designed to help low-income veterans, the big surprise here is how much vets are allowed to deduct from income to determine if they meet the qualifying threshold. The Veterans Benefits Administration allows veterans to subtract all care-related costs, including the costs of assistance with activities of daily living, nursing home care, and Medicare premiums. If the net income at that point is below \$11,830 for a single vet (or \$15,493 for a married one), the VA will provide a pension to bring the veteran's income up to that level.

Another common misconception is that pensions go only to people who served in wars overseas. In fact, the pensions are available to anyone (other than those dishonorably discharged) who served even a single day during wartime, even if that service was stateside.

What's more, wartime periods extend beyond the end of hostilities (for a definition of wartime periods, visit [U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs Periods of War page](#)).

Widowed spouses of war veterans may also be entitled to pensions, even if they later remarried.

#### **Health care**

Eligibility to receive health care at any of the VA's 1,400 hospitals, clinics, and care centers is based on an income test (except in the case of veterans who have

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capability within a stealthy, clandestine platform, while SSBNs are specifically designed for extended strategic deterrent patrols. There are currently 14 SSBNs and four SSGNs in the Navy's inventory, each with two crews assigned.

The female officers would be assigned after completing the 15-month submarine officer training pipeline, which consists of nuclear power school, prototype training, and the Submarine Officer Basic Course. The SSBNs are billeted for 15 officers and 140 enlisted, while the SSGNs have a crew allotment of 15 officers and 144 enlisted.

"We have created a well-thought-out plan to phase in the female officers to the selected SSGN and SSBN submarine crews," added Donnelly. "Enabling these bright and talented female officers to serve will be a great asset to our submarine force, our Navy, and the strength of our military."

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## Military Discounts Update 02

All these businesses offer military discounts; all you have to do is ask:

<u>Restaurants</u>		
Arby's	A&W	Back Yard Burgers
Burger King	Captain D's	Chick-Fil-A
Cotton Patch	Denny's	Dunkin' Donuts
Farmers Boy	IHOP	Java Café
KFC	Long John Silver	Pancho's Mexican Buffet
Pizza Hut	Quizno's	Sizzler
Sonic	Taco Bell	Whataburger
<u>Services</u>		
AT&T	California Cryobank	Geico
Jiffy Lube	Meineke	Sears Portrait Studio
Travel and Leisure	Blockbuster	Movie theaters
Ripley's attractions and museums	Professional Sports teams	
<u>Products</u>		
Apple Computers	AutoZone	Barnhill's
Bass Pro Shop	Bath and Body Works	Big 10 Tires
The Buckle	Champs Sports	Copeland's Sports
Dell	The Discovery Channel Store	Dress Barn
The Finish Line	Foot Action	Footlocker
Gadzooks	GNC	Goody's
Great Party	Happy Harry's	Home Depot
Hot Topic	Jockey	Lerner
Lowe's	Michael's	NAPA Auto Parts
New York & Company	Pac Sun	Payless Shoes
Play It Again Sports	Pure Beauty	Sally Beauty Supply
Spencer's Gifts	Suncoast	Timberland Outlets
Wilson's Leather		

Cell Phone Service Discount - All Federal employees are able to get a 15% discount on their personal cell phones by calling their carrier and mentioning the "Federal Telecommunications Act of

service-connected disabilities) and is not limited to veterans who served during wartime. The current national health-care income cap is \$32,342 for a single veteran, \$38,812 for a married vet. But this figure is adjusted for higher-cost regions, using the geographic means test (GMT) established by the [Department of Housing and Urban Development](#). The GMT can push those limits much higher; in San Francisco, for instance, the income limit for eligibility is \$69,685 for a single veteran.

Again, all family medical expenses, including Medicare premiums, are deducted in calculating income. Veterans with disability ratings of 50 percent or higher receive free care at the VA. In today's VA system each veteran is assigned a specific primary care doctor who tracks that patient's treatment—a big improvement over the old days, when vets were assigned whichever doctor was available when they came to the clinic.

### In-home care

Another surprise. Limited homemaking services and assistance with basic health needs, provided by private companies contracted by the VA, are available to all veterans who need in-home care and who meet the income test (subject to availability in the area where they live). Unless there is a hardship finding, single veterans with an income above \$29,402 (\$35,285 if married) may be assessed a \$15 copay if medical services are provided. Also available: respite care to provide a break for a spouse or family members who are caring for an eligible veteran. Depending on income, copays range from \$0 to \$90 per day.

### Assisted living

Vets and their spouses who reside in an assisted living facility may qualify for an aid and attendance pension/allowance to help pay for the costs of additional care. This benefit is based on the level of disability. The income thresholds for eligibility are \$19,736 for a single vet in assisted living or \$23,396 for a couple, after all allowable deductions.

### Prescription drugs

Here's how good the VA drug plan is: all drugs are provided free or for an \$8 copay, depending on income. "So veterans may not need any Part D plan at all," says Tom Pamperin, acting associate deputy undersecretary for benefits and programs at the VA. Additionally, pension recipients are exempt from copays for VA health services, including drugs.

### Nursing home care

The VA owns and runs 132 nursing home facilities, and contracts with another 2,500 private homes in locations where it doesn't own one. Congress has mandated that the VA find a place for those veterans with disability ratings of 70 percent or higher. Vets with lower disability ratings are eligible as well, but they could be placed on a waiting list because of limited availability in

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1996 - Discount to Federal Employees Past and Present." You will need to know the military member's supervisor's name, phone number, and full address, so that his/her military status can be verified. Use the following contact numbers:

- Cingular - 800-319-6393
- Sprint - 877-812-1223
- T-Mobile - 866-646-4688
- Nextel - 800-639-6111
- Verizon - 800-865-1825

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### **Plans To Allow Women And Gays, Ban Smoking Shake World Of Navy Submarines**

Imagine 150 fraternity brothers packed into a container the size of a three-bedroom house. Announce you are breaking hallowed traditions by taking away their cigarettes and admitting women. Then lock the doors and push the container deep into the sea, for months at a time. That's what the Navy, after decades of contemplation and controversy, has decided to do with its Submarine Force, an elite fraternity of 13,000 active-duty sailors that has been patrolling the oceans for 110 years.

As of Dec. 31, smoking aboard the entire submarine fleet will be summarily banned -- no small hardship for the estimated 35 to 40 percent of sailors who are nicotine addicts and can't exactly step outside whenever they want a puff.

Barring intervention by Congress in the next few days, the Navy has also said it intends to let women join submarine crews by the end of 2011, a move that isn't going over well with many active-duty and veteran members of the Silent Service, the stealthy nickname of the force.

On top of all that, the military is girding for another social revolution that might take some getting used to inside the cheek-to-jowl confines of submarines: allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in the ranks.

"The Silent Service is right now very much a boys' club," said Joe Buff, a military commentator and the author of six pulp fiction thrillers involving submarine adventures. "They're always bellyaching, and they always hate change. But I think the men are going to be better at all these changes than they're willing to let on."

One active-duty lieutenant said he personally supported the changes but worried about the effect on crews, who have long relied on tobacco and male banter to ease the boredom of serving in a confined space. "There's very few avenues of stress relief," he said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he didn't want to be seen as challenging official policy. "You can smoke, or you can hang around and get creative with the conversation."

Navy and Pentagon officials said the timing of the changes was coincidental but necessary. The Navy has been thinking about adding women to submarine crews since 1993, when female sailors began serving on surface warships. The military also has long expressed concern

many areas. Most states also operate veterans' nursing homes, some with more lenient admission requirements.

### **VA-guaranteed mortgages**

Many veterans—and many mortgage lenders—wrongly think you can take out only one VA mortgage in a lifetime. The fact is, you can get multiple mortgages, but usually just one at a time, and you must have paid off the old one. These VA mortgages provide 100 percent financing—no need for a down payment. Older vets seeking to buy a unit in a senior-housing community may find this benefit useful—particularly in these days when home values are depressed and mortgages, especially mortgages with no down payment, are harder to come by. (The cost of the required funding fee—typically 2.15 percent—can be added to the total mortgage amount, so it isn't necessary to pay this fee up front.)

In determining eligibility for all veterans' benefits, the VA is less restrictive than Medicaid regarding personal assets and income. Federal aid (such as food stamps or Supplemental Security Income) is not counted. Also, unlike with Medicaid, the VA's goal is to keep people in their own homes, so homes and cars are not counted as assets. Veterans are generally allowed to have \$80,000 in household savings and investments and still qualify for pensions and health care. There is also no "look-back" period for signing over assets to relatives. One word of advice, though. Navigating the VA bureaucracy can be tricky. Even registering with the VA can be daunting for some (you'll need to have your discharge papers in hand or ask the government to locate them). Fortunately, every state and most municipalities and counties in the nation have an Office of Veterans Affairs, staffed with trained people who can help you register and make your case for benefits.

Various veterans' organizations—the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars, among them—do this, too; lawyers certified by the VA tackle more complex issues.

Even the VA itself recommends that people take advantage of such outside help. "I would encourage people seeking VA benefits to utilize the free services of veterans' organizations or county veterans' affairs people," says Pamperin. "It's a good idea to have an advocate."

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### **Retiree On Base Dining**

Thanks to the Air Force's Food Transformation Initiative (FTI), retirees at six bases will soon be able to use military food service establishments previously reserved for active-duty Airmen. Retirees will pay the same market price as everyone else, and there will not be an added surcharge on top of the menu price. The six Air Force bases participating in the initiative are Elmendorf AFB, Alaska; Patrick AFB, Fla; MacDill

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about the health risks of second-hand smoke on submarines, where the percentage of smokers is far higher than in the U.S. adult population at large.

Submarine commanders have been trying to reassure their crews -- as well as lawmakers -- about the changes. The Navy announced the smoking ban April 8 and said it would offer programs to help sailors kick the habit by the end of the year. After making noises last fall about letting women join the Submarine Force, the Defense Department formally notified Congress in February of its intentions. Congress has until the end of this month to weigh in, but so far it appears the decision is fait accompli.

As commander of Submarine Group 10, based at Kings Bay, Ga., Rear Adm. Barry L. Bruner has acknowledged in his blog that anxieties persist. "I have listened to concerns and understand that there will [be] some difficulties," wrote Bruner, the leader of the Navy's task force on integrating women into sub crews. "However, I have no doubt that it is the absolutely right thing to do and we are working hard to ensure a smooth transition."

Not all bubbleheads, as submariners are commonly known, are convinced. Of all the pending changes, the introduction of women seems to be igniting the strongest reactions, according to interviews with active-duty and veteran sailors. The complaints often fall into two categories: first, that female sailors will invariably become pregnant, potentially compromising missions during which submarines can remain submerged for months at a time; and second, that submarines are not built for the mixing of the sexes, given the tight passageways, shared berths and lack of privacy.

Joseph Shook, a retired submariner from Texas, responded to Bruner's blog with defiant comments, arguing that "over 99% do not wish to see it happen, all knowing it will not work as envisioned by whatever idiots have thought it up." Some of the backlash stems from a desire to preserve one of the few remaining public institutions in America where adult men can openly act like, well, young adult men.

(Women sometimes board submarines as guests or as technicians on short-term assignments but are not assigned to crews.)

John A. Mason, a bubblehead who served in the Navy from 1977 to 1994, said he plans to submit to Congress written comments he has collected from 380 people opposed to adding women to sub crews. He said he has nothing against female sailors in the rest of the Navy but that underwater is another matter.

"Hormones do not shut down just because you go out to sea and submerge for many months at a time," wrote Mason, 53, of Comer, Ga. He said sailors rely on various coping mechanisms to deal with the stress of extended deployments, including man hugs, rear-end patting and other rituals; another veteran cited a tradition in which submariners who cross the equator for the first time are required to strip to their underwear.

AFB, Fla; Fairchild AFB, Wash; Little Rock AFB, Ark; and Travis AFB, Calif. This pilot program not only opens food establishments to all members of the base community, but customers will also see changes to food and beverage options, resulting in greater quality and variety, said Air Force Services Agency officials. Diners will see an overall increase in the variety and availability of healthy menu options on base. FTI will reinvigorate Air Force dining by hiring a contractor to transition to hybrid facilities on bases that will be open to the entire base populace, much like common business and university campuses, services officials said. Many base dining facilities have use rates of less than 50 percent. Instead of closing these facilities, Air Force plans call for transforming operations. This transformation will preserve the mission of providing meals to Airmen and bringing positive changes to the way Airmen are fed on base, services agency officials said. While services officials are excited about the forthcoming changes, they emphasized things will not happen immediately and that each base will be different. The first phase of the program is about improving menu options, they said, and the total transformation will take time. Opening the transformed dining venues to retirees and base employees will restore a sense of community because everyone will be able to eat together, Mr. Floyd said.

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### **Navy Chief Says No Big Resistance To Women On Subs**

WASHINGTON — Navy Secretary Ray Mabus says he's getting little or no resistance inside the Navy since announcing he's going to let women serve aboard submarines.

Mabus says sailors and officers don't seem worried about ending the long-standing ban. He says the experience of female sailors aboard surface ships shows that men and women can work in close quarters. Submarines are among the few remaining places where military women are prohibited.

Mabus also says he's hearing little complaint within the Navy about his recent order banning smoking aboard subs.

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### **Sailor Found Dead Aboard Sub Nebraska**

*By Philip Ewing, Navy Times, April 22, 2010*

A sailor was found dead Monday aboard the ballistic-missile submarine Nebraska at sea, according to a Navy spokeswoman, marking the third death aboard the ship in the last five years.

Machinist's Mate Fireman William Mack, 21, was found dead in the submarine's berthing spaces while the ship was underway in the Pacific Ocean. The cause is under investigation, said Lt. Kellie Randall, a spokeswoman

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"Serving on board a submarine is not a place to be if you are self-conscious or have any doubts about your sexuality," Mason added. "Silliness, male-bonding, and what might be considered inappropriate or 'politically incorrect' behavior in a civilian environment are all useful techniques that allow a sailor to endure the difficult living conditions and time away from their families and mainstream life."

The Submarine Force plans to integrate women in phases. Female officers will join first and in groups, largely to prevent the likelihood of sexual harassment. The inaugural class will consist of women who graduate this year from the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis; those who sign up will attend the Navy's submarine school in Groton, Conn. and receive other training before joining crews. At first, their service will be limited to fleet ballistic missile subs, also known as "boomers." They are larger than the Navy's fast-attack submarines, which will be harder to outfit with separate berths and bathrooms for women.

The Pentagon announced in February that it was also preparing for the integration of gay men and lesbians into the military, responding to President Obama's call to end the "don't ask, don't tell" policy that requires them to keep their sexual orientation a secret. That change appears to have submariners less riled than the admission of women or the smoking ban.

"Everybody knows there are already homosexuals on our force, and I don't think them being open about it will change anything on a boat," said another active-duty lieutenant who spoke on condition of anonymity. The lieutenant, a nonsmoker, said he would be grateful for the chance to breathe easier; although submarines are equipped with an extensive system of air filters, studies show they don't screen out all tobacco-related substances. But the officer said that, taken together, all of the changes might be too much, too soon for others to handle.

"I'm worried that if you add women and remove smoking, some people will say, 'Too much is changing; this isn't what I like, and I'm going to get out,' " he said. "I don't think you can remove cigarettes and add women and it not have some effect on the retention rate."

Navy officials said they don't anticipate a problem. In fact, they said one motivation in enabling women to serve on submarines is to increase their pool of potential recruits; it's not always easy to persuade people to live and work underwater for months at a time in a cramped, steel tube. "We literally could not run the Navy without women today," Navy Secretary Ray Mabus said Wednesday, pointing to the decision 17 years ago to allow women to serve on warships. The decision to open the Silent Service to women, he added, was "probably long overdue."

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for Submarine Group 9; she said there was no damage to the ship and there had not been an accident. Mack's mother, Susan, of South Pittsburg, Tenn., told Navy Times on Thursday she had not yet been told what happened to her son, or exactly where the ship was when his body was found.

"He died at 10 a.m. That's all I know. I asked them, 'Where did my son die?' and they said, 'Ma'am, you will never know.'"

The Nebraska sailed March 18 from Naval Submarine Base Bangor, Wash., on a normal deterrence patrol. It surfaced this week "off Hawaii," Randall said, to take aboard agents from the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, who conducted an investigation for about 36 hours. Nebraska then met up with another boat, as was scheduled, to deliver people as part of an exercise. Mack's body and the NCIS agents were transferred to the second boat, Randall said.

Nebraska, in the hands of its Gold Crew, will continue its patrol without a replacement crew member.

Mack is the boat's third sailor to die aboard since 2005. On Jan. 6 of that year, Machinist's Mate 3rd Class Aaron Scrimiger, 25, hanged himself in the machinery spaces while the ship was in port. On Sept. 20, 2008, Machinist's Mate 3rd Class (SS) Michael Gentile was killed after being "entangled and pinned" as he worked on the rudder machinery while Nebraska was at sea. Susan Mack told Navy Times that her son wanted to be a college professor; he was planning to study history at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

"Poor little Will," she laughed, "in all his vacations he never knew about Disneyland - he thought we were supposed to go to old cemeteries and courthouses and historic things like that."

He hadn't been quite ready for college when he finished high school, so he elected to join the military. It was a choice between the Army and the Navy, she remembered.

"The Navy's been so good to our family. That's how all my uncles were educated. And Will loved Annapolis - we visited Annapolis when he was a little kid, and he used to say, when I get married I want to get married at Annapolis, with the crossed swords and everything.' And I reminded him of that, so he said, 'You're right, that's the good one - the Navy's the good one.'"

He enlisted Dec. 3, 2008, and reported to Nebraska Aug. 4, 2009, records show. He was on his first deployment.

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