

# TORPEDO ALLEY



Vol. 8, No. 7

July 2012

## United States Submarine Veterans - Charleston Base Newsletter

### 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 Meeting:

July 12, 2012 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

Base Officers	Click to email	Phone Number
Commander	<a href="#">Carl Chinn</a>	843-875-3098
Vice Commander	<a href="#">Jerry Stout</a>	843-871-9533
Secretary	<a href="#">Theron Irving</a>	843-817-5118
Treasurer	<a href="#">Terry Trump</a>	843-873-9563

Special Officers	Click to email	Phone Number
Chief of the Boat	<a href="#">Rick Sparger</a>	843-553-5594
Public Affairs	<a href="#">Larry Starland</a>	843 863-8474
Veterans Affairs	<a href="#">Jim Morrison</a>	843-832-9716
Chaplain	<a href="#">John Nichols</a>	843-452-3189
Membership	<a href="#">Carl Chinn</a>	843-875-3098
Holland Club	<a href="#">John Lookabill</a>	843-797-2991
Scholarship	<a href="#">Julian Villegas</a>	843-871-6135
Newsletter	<a href="#">Steve Morawiec</a>	843-410-0131
Storekeeper	<a href="#">Ken Hutchison</a>	843-553-0935
Webmaster	<a href="#">John Nichols</a>	843-452-3189
Historian	<a href="#">George Scharf</a>	843 873-3318

### Minutes of the June 2012 meeting

Attendance for the June, 2012 meeting was 110.

**Opening Ceremony:** The Base Commander called the meeting to order - a quorum was present and the meeting started at 1900.

**Introductions:** Bill Fitzpatrick, Randy Riley, Mitch Yawn, Kevin Anderson, Phillip Marks. Welcome aboard.

**Secretary:** Asked for a motion to accept the minutes as published in the newsletter. Seconded and the motion was carried.

**Treasurer:** Terry gave report for the month of May.

### Admiral Osborn Scholarship Presentations:

Congratulations and Bravo Zulu to the following recipients: Joe Sottile (\$300.00), Sponsor Calvin Cochrane (Grandfather); Jessica Ford (\$1000.00), Sponsor William Ford (Father); Warren Ray Sparks (\$750.00) Sponsor Ray Sparks (Grandfather).

**Vice Commander:** Jerry Stout, the newly elected VC was introduced and made no report. He is looking forward to working with the base.

**Storekeeper:** No Report.

**Scholarship:** Curly Houck's wife donated a set of carved wooden dolphins to raffle.

**Public Affairs:** Pictures sent to the Post & Courier were rejected as out of focus. It must have been the Pusser's Rum.

**Chaplain:**

- **Richard 'Fox' Binkley, TM2 (SS) US Navy**, departed on EP on March 19<sup>th</sup>. On May 22<sup>nd</sup> we were able to assist the family with scattering his ashes in Charleston Harbor in a small service that included a bell tolling. Marty Sessler, Mike Emerson and Gary Williams assisted me in this ceremony. The family was very grateful for this and also for the funds raised to pay for the boat. After paying for the fuel and giving the boat crew a donation, I'm returning more than \$60 to the scholarship fund in Richard's name.
- **Gary Semler, MMCM (SS) US Navy (Ret.)**, departed on EP on March 19<sup>th</sup>. A memorial service will be held at the After Battery on Saturday, June 23<sup>rd</sup> at 1300. All Hands are invited to attend. Please wear your vests. More information will be coming via email early next week.
- **Sam Strickland, TM2 (SS) US Navy**, departed on EP on Monday, June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012. I did not learn of his death until receipt of an email from the National Office last night. I was able to talk to his daughter this afternoon and explain that the base will not be able to participate in the service on Saturday. I have offered our services to conduct a Memorial Service at a later date, which she said would be ok. She will call in the next couple of weeks to set something up. Please wear your vest if you are able to attend the family visitation or the funeral services. This info was in the email sent on Wednesday evening.  
**Family Visitation:** Saturday, June 16, 2012, 1-3pm, CAROLINA MEMORIAL FUNERAL HOME 7113 Rivers Avenue  
**Funeral Service:** Saturday, June 16, 2012, 3pm, CAROLINA MEMORIAL FUNERAL HOME **Burial** will follow at Carolina Memorial Park.
- **Steve Everett** went to the VA on June 1<sup>st</sup> with chest pain. He had a heart catheter that showed no problems. After changing his meds he was released.
- **Pauline Stank, Ed's wife**, is still in Duke and not doing well. She has been on a ventilator for the past three months and cannot be taken off for more than a few minutes at a time. Ed reports that she is very depressed and has no interest in anything. Please pray for Pauline, Ed and

the family as they go through this difficult time.

- **Chrissy Everett, Steve's wife**, received a stent in mid-May and is recovering well.
- **Lee Allison** had a hip operation on June 4<sup>th</sup> at the VA. He is recovering at home and is doing well.
- **Karen Kopcznski, Don's wife**, was in Trident during May with an asthma-related breathing issue. She is home and doing well.
- **Rick Sparger** had knee surgery on June 5<sup>th</sup> at Summerville Medical. He is home doing well and going through rehab.
- **Harry Roumelotis, Bill Neff's father-in-law**, passed away on May 21<sup>st</sup> after a long fight with cancer.
- **James Weir, Gene Weir's brother**, had an artificial assist unit put in to help his heart until a heart transplant can be done. He is doing well.
- **Bob Bruce** went to the VA on May 28<sup>th</sup> not feeling well. He had a prolonged stay while tests were conducted and was able to go home on June 5<sup>th</sup>.
- **Lee Lookabill** was in the hospital for a few days with an infection. She is home now and doing well.  
**Ernie Barwick**, who was hit by a carjacker, is with us tonight. He is doing extremely well.

The following shipmates departed on Eternal Patrol this past month. None were members of Charleston Base. Online memorial entries were made and cards sent from the base to the families if the address was known.

- **FT1, Submarines, Lynn Smallwood, US Navy Retired**, departed on Eternal Patrol on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012 here in Charleston. Lynn was a member of the USS THORNBAC (SS 418) Association. He was not a member of USSVI.
- **EMCS, Submarines, Charles Berger, US Navy Retired**, departed on Eternal Patrol on June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012 here in Charleston. Charles was not a member of USSVI.
- **LT, Submarines, Robert H. 'Bob' Gross III, US Navy Retired**, departed on Eternal Patrol on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012 in Bluffton, SC. Bob qualified on the JOHN MARSHALL SSBN 611 in 1965. He was a life member of Groton Base and USSVI.
- **Captain, Submarines, George Fister, US Navy Retired**, departed on Eternal Patrol on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012 in Fairfax, VA.

Capt. Fister was Commanding Officer on TUNNY SSN 682 from 1982-1984. He was not a member of USSVI.

- **RADM, Submarines, Thomas Evans, US Navy Retired**, departed on Eternal Patrol on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012 in Arlington, VA. RADM Evans was Executive Officer on GATO SSN 615 and Commanding Officer on BATFISH SSN 681. He was not a member of USSVI.
- **Captain, Submarines, Leland Mitchell, US Navy Retired**, departed on Eternal Patrol on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012 in Poquoson, VA. He was not a member of USSVI.

**Webmaster:** Please visit our site at:

<http://www.ussvicb.org/>

Please get your photograph taken if you haven't already done so. Also, please complete your Page 2 if you haven't done so.

**Veteran's Affairs:** No report

**Little David:** No report

**Holland Club:** No report

**SUBVETS WWII:** Roger standing in for Lee. Lee had a hip replacement and is still in a lot of pain. Next meeting will be Thursday the 21<sup>st</sup> of June at Ryan's in Summerville. Papers have been received from National to shut down this year. Local Swamp Fox Chapter will remain active as part of Charleston Base. Great turn out for this meeting of our esteemed WW II members.

**Historian:** No report

**District Commander:** All hands are reminded to read about the upcoming national elections in the current copy of the American Submariner. Candidates' resumes and bylaw amendments are also available. Please read the amendments carefully and vote accordingly.

**Nuclear Historian:** This story of how our longhaired mess cooks love is put in the proper perspective. This involves the elderly submariner's love of chocolate chip cookies and his last dying effort to consume some of his favorites being baked by his loving mess cook. Smells wafting from the kitchen gave him the final strength for that last final effort to consume these delectable tasty items. After a long arduous trip he espied his goal. Reaching for them his hand was smacked rather smartly by his mess cook and reminded that these items were for his final wake. So much for everlasting love!!!

**Fleet Reserve:** Breakfast will be served on Sunday 17 June for Father's Day for \$5.00.

**Chief of the Boat:** Jimmie Legg delivered the plaques and pictures to the Razorback Base in Little Rock, AR - they were well received.

Well done to those members who attended the Memorial Day service. Photographs were taken with guest speaker U. S. Representative Tim Scott.

Remember Flag Day and what this banner represents for our country. Well done to past Vice Commander Marty Sessler whose tireless efforts have enhanced our continued success as the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest base in the country.

**Base Commander:** Echoed the BZ for Marty. His efforts on our float have restored it to fine shape.

We are going to establish a new position - Public Events Coordinator (parades, memorials, float maintenance, etc.). Anyone wishing to take on this effort should contact the executive board.

All hands are reminded to step up and take on some of these jobs instead of letting a small percentage of our 300+ members to do it all. Well done to those who have recently volunteered to do these jobs.

Steve Morawiec has relieved me as newsletter editor. Contact him at:  
[steven.morawiec@comcast.net](mailto:steven.morawiec@comcast.net)

Exec Board recommendations for National Office are:

Senior Vice Commander: Bill Andrea  
Secretary: John Clear  
Treasurer: Richard McPherson.

Ken Hutchinson served with Len Heiselt, who is running for National Secretary, and he is his recommendation.

Many of the candidates are running unopposed.

**Old Business:** None.

**New Business:** A free breakfast will be held for SubVet Chiefs by the NPTU active duty CPOs and the newly selected Chief Petty Officers at 6AM on 11 September 2012. Please support this event, as it is incumbent on retired CPOs to carry on the true traditions of the CPO community that have been passed down through the years. This is truly a great experience and these youngsters

deserve our participation.

The USS Clamadore is in sad shape. Volunteers are needed to help clean up the boat. Pending recent news stories about turning the boat into a new reef, a working party may not be needed. The USS Clamadore coordinator is Tom Lufkin. Contact him at [tom@tlufkin.com](mailto:tom@tlufkin.com)

From the After Battery: A memorial for MMCM (SS) Gary Semler will be held at the After Battery @ 1300 on Saturday 23 June followed by a cook out and fellowship.

Please look for any WW II or Korean Vets for the Honor flights to Wash DC.

**Good Of The Order:** The Old Fort Baptist Church will be holding a patriotic ceremony on Sunday, July 1<sup>st</sup> at 1730. Our flag detail will conduct a flag ceremony. More information here:

<http://www.oldfortbaptist.org/#/calendar-and-events/celebrate-america>

**Depth Charge:** Drawing winner Bob Isaman donated \$100 to the Scholarship Fund.

**Meeting Adjourned:** The Base Commander adjourned the meeting at 2000.

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***" I have spread the mantle of my nation over the ocean, and will guard her forever. I am her heritage, and yours. I am the American Sailor."***

### July Submarines Lost

USS S 28	SS 133	July 4, 1944
USS Robalo	SS 273	July 26, 1944

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### July Happenings

July 4 – Independence Day Local Celebrations:  
[North Charleston](#)  
[Charleston Patriots Point](#)  
[Summerville](#)  
[Folly Beach](#)

July 12 – Regular Monthly Meeting

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### July Birthdays

Bognar	Deal	Donofrio	Fox
Freshour	Gunnis	Higgins	Jenkins
Keller	Kennedy	Leal	Menefee
Owens	Petersen	Scott	Simpso
Smith, J.	Smith, P.	Snyder	Stanfield
Stoll	USA	Whatley	

***"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness".***

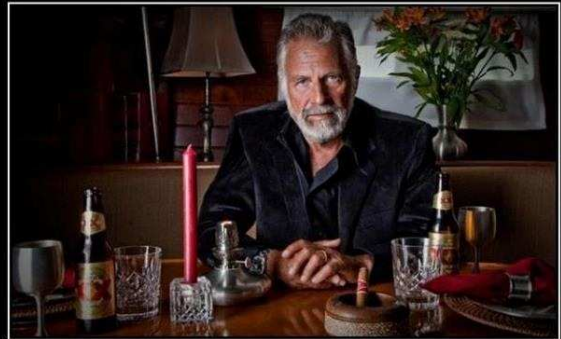
***The Declaration of Independence July 4, 1776***

***" There, I guess King George will be able to read that."***

***John Hancock***

***On signing the American Declaration of Independence***

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**I DON'T BOW TO MANY MEN**

But when I do, it's normally to a Submariner



## Submarine News

### First Qualified Female Submarine Supply Officer Receives Supply Dolphins

BREMERTON, Wash. - A Sailor assigned to USS Ohio (SSGN 726) became the first female supply officer to qualify in submarines, June 22.

LT Britta Christianson of Ohio's Gold Crew received her Submarine Supply Corps dolphins from the Gold Crew Commanding Officer Captain Rodney Mills during a brief ceremony at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility (PSNS & IMF).

"I'm very proud of Lt. Christianson's accomplishments today," said Mills, "and I'm glad to welcome her to the elite community of dolphin-wearing submariners, past and present. She is a superb supply officer, an excellent watchstander, and she will be critical to ensuring the ship's success during our upcoming deployment."

Ohio is currently undergoing maintenance at PSNS & IMF, having returned to the Pacific Northwest in March after a 14-month forward deployment to the U.S. 7th Fleet area of responsibility.

Christianson, a native of Chippewa Falls, Wis., joined the Gold Crew in November 2011 during Ohio's deployment. She is one of 13 women - four supply officers and nine submarine line officers under instruction - assigned to Ohio and USS Maine (SSBN 741) at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor, Wash. Twelve other women are assigned to USS Wyoming (SSBN 742) and USS Georgia (SSGN 729), based in Kings Bay, Ga.

To receive her Supply dolphins, Christianson - already a qualified Naval Flight Officer and surface supply officer - was required to demonstrate knowledge in basic submarine operations and engineering fundamentals, perform damage control functions, and qualify as a diving officer of the watch (DOOW).

"I was honored to be given the opportunity to serve aboard a submarine, so receiving my dolphins is like icing on the cake for me," said Christianson. "It was a lot of hard work, but at the end of the day, two things bring us and our submarine home safely: knowledge of the submarine and our ability to execute the mission, and that basically sums up what dolphins are all about. I owe a lot of my thanks to my captain, chiefs and crew members who trained me and helped me to learn my boat."

Prior to reporting to their boats beginning in November 2011, Christianson and the other women assigned to Ohio, Maine, Wyoming and Georgia graduated from the Submarine Officer Basic Course in Groton, Conn. In addition, the submarine line officers under instruction graduated from the Naval Nuclear Power School at Charleston, S.C., and underwent naval nuclear prototype training.

Ohio and USS Michigan (SSGN 727) are homeported at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor and forward deployed to Guam.

## USS Triton Bell Rings On

Recruit Training Command (RTC) held a dedication ceremony in the USS Triton recruit barracks here May 17 welcoming a new quarterdeck fixture, the ship's bell, that served on two submarines named Triton.

"It has brought a lot of closure," said 95-year-old Elna McKenzie Roop, wife of Torpedoman 1st Class Lloyd McKenzie, who went down on USS Triton (SS 201) in World War II. "The father of my two oldest children was lost with the first Triton."

The ceremony honored veterans and families from both Tritons (SS 201 and SSN 586), which served during World War II and the Cold War, respectively. The ship's bell, which now resides on the quarterdeck of the Triton at RTC, was used in both submarines, prior to the loss of SS 201 during World War II and during the decommissioning of SSN 586 in 1969.

The ceremony featured a former Triton Commanding Officer, retired Capt. Robert Rawlins, and a former Chief of the Boat, retired Master Chief Harold Weston, along with Capt. Steven Bethke, commanding officer of RTC. Retired Rear Adm. Peter Chabot, a former USS Triton (SSN 586) crewmember and Rear Adm. David Steindl, commander of Naval Service Training Command, were also in attendance.

"It's really an emotional experience for all of us," Rawlins said. "I think for the families, very emotional. And to have a barracks named after the Triton, it's really wonderful. I spent 25 years in the submarine force, in one job or another. I really appreciate everything that's going on here."

Steindl said the bell was a bridge between past Sailors and the more than 37,000 recruits who graduate from RTC each year, many who will be berthed in the Triton barracks.

## USS Mississippi Commissioned

The Navy commissioned USS Mississippi (SSN 782), the ninth Virginia-class attack submarine, during a ceremony in Pascagoula, Miss., June 2

Mississippi, built under a unique teaming agreement between General Dynamics Electric Boat and Huntington Ingalls Industries - Newport News, delivered to the Navy in just over 62 months - the fastest delivery yet for a Virginia class submarine. All Virginia class submarines currently under construction are on track to deliver early to the Navy.

"Mississippi's commissioning is the culmination of a very successful construction process for our Navy/industry shipbuilding team," said Rear Adm. (sel.) Michael Jabaley, Virginia-class program manager and vice commander, Naval Sea Systems Command. "Mississippi was delivered to the fleet a year ahead of her contracted date, and was the most combat ready



Virginia class submarine to date as determined by the Navy's Board of Inspection and Survey."

In time-honored tradition, the ship's sponsor Allison Stiller, deputy assistant secretary of the Navy (ships), issued the order to, "Man our ship and bring her to life!" With the order, Mississippi's crew ran aboard and placed the submarine in commission.

"The Submarine Force and the fleet have eagerly anticipated this day," said Rear Adm. David Johnson, program executive officer for submarines. "USS Mississippi provides the Navy with unique and unparalleled capabilities and joins the fleet at a time when submarines are being called upon to perform vital national security tasking around the globe."

## **U.S. Navy Officially Names USS Indiana Submarine**

For the first time since the late 1940's, Indiana will have a ship named after it.

U.S. Navy Secretary Ray Mabus came to Indy to announce the new attack sub, USS Indiana. Though the ship won't be in the water for a while, Mabus says it might be ahead of schedule. "Right now it's scheduled to come into the fleet in 2017, but these have been coming in ahead of schedule, so I'm hoping it will be here quicker."

This is the third ship to take Indiana's name, including the famous World War II battleship that fought in the South Pacific.

## **Maine Shipyard Investigates Small Fire Outside Nuclear Submarine Damaged in Blaze Last Month**

KITTERY, Maine — A Maine shipyard is investigating what caused a small fire outside a nuclear-powered submarine that was severely damaged by another blaze last month.

The fire was reported about 7 p.m. Saturday in the dry dock where the USS Miami is located, The Portsmouth Naval Shipyard said.

A shipyard employee doused the fire with a portable extinguisher before the shipyard's fire department arrived, and the ship's reactor was never in danger, officials said. No one was hurt. The shipyard did not release additional information.

The latest fire was reported less than four weeks after a May 23 fire heavily damaged the submarine while it was in dry dock for an overhaul. That fire damaged the torpedo room, crew quarters, and command and control areas in the front of the submarine, but the nuclear propulsion components at the back of the sub were spared.

The Navy has estimated repair costs at \$400 million.

The fire started when an industrial vacuum cleaner sucked up a heat source that ignited debris inside the vacuum, officials say.

In the aftermath of the fire, the Navy directed all public shipyards to empty their industrial vacuum cleaners after each shift or remove them from ships.

The Naval Sea Systems Command is reviewing all models of vacuum cleaners now used aboard ships and will issue a directive by the end of June on which models are authorized for use.

The Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Fire Department responded to a report of another potential blaze aboard the USS Miami submarine on June 6, but it turned out to be a false alarm.

## **Iran Taking Initial Steps Towards Making Nuclear Submarine**

TEHRAN - Iran has claimed that it had begun work on designing the country's first nuclear-powered submarine, a technology possessed by a select group of nations.

Senior Iranian naval commander, Rear Admiral Abbas Zamini, said the country was at an "initial" phase of manufacturing atomic submarines. The Admiral claimed that the country had made "astonishing progress" in developing and acquiring civilian nuclear technology for various power-generation, agricultural and medical purposes, and said such advancements allow Iran to think of manufacturing nuclear-fueled submarines, Iran's Fars News Agency reported.

The comments by the Lieutenant Commander of the Navy for Technical Affairs came as Tehran is at odds with the Western nations over its nuclear program, with Washington suspecting it of developing weapons technology.

The agency said that Iran had success in repairing heavy submarines and had ability to carry out full or partial repairs of submarines. He pointed out that using nuclear power to fuel submarines is among the civilian uses of the nuclear technology and all countries are entitled to the right to make such a use.

Only an elite group of nations -- the US, Russia, France, Britain and China possess the technology to build a nuclear-powered submarine. India too is nearing the official induction of its indigenous nuclear-powered submarine 'INS Arihant'.

## **Navy Secretary to Host USS Colorado Naming Ceremony**

Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus will host a ship naming ceremony in honor of USS Colorado, June 25, at 2 p.m. MST at the Colorado State Capitol Building in, Denver, Colo.

Colorado, a Virginia-class submarine designated SSN 788, is the fourth ship to bear the name and the third to be named for the state. The second ship was a battleship that stood as the lead ship of her class, participated in the Tarawa invasion and suffered two kamikaze hits while supporting the landings at Leyte Gulf in November 1944.

This next-generation attack submarine will provide the Navy with the capabilities required to maintain the nation's undersea supremacy well into the 21st century. Virginia-class submarines will have enhanced stealth, sophisticated surveillance capabilities, and special warfare enhancements that will enable them to meet the Navy's multi-mission requirements.

The future USS Colorado will have the capability to attack targets ashore with highly accurate Tomahawk cruise missiles and conduct covert long-term surveillance of land area, littoral waters or other sea-based forces. Other missions include anti-submarine and anti-ship warfare; mine delivery and minefield mapping. It is also designed for Special Forces delivery and support.

SSN 788 will be built at Electric Boat in Groton, Conn and will be 7,800 tons and 377 feet in length, have a beam of 34 feet and operate at more than 25 knots submerged. It is designed with a nuclear reactor plant that will not require refueling during the planned life of the ship, reducing lifecycle costs while increasing underway time.

Virginia-class submarines are built under a unique teaming arrangement between General Dynamics Electric Boat and Huntington Ingalls Industries-Newport News.

## **SUBVETS NEWS & VIEWS**

### **Why should I vote? by T. Michael Bircumshaw**

Great Question. I suppose that the first reason is because you can. There are a multitude of countries where that right is not available. I ask you to take a look at those countries without a vote and check out their respective human condition to that of countries where a person can vote.

It seems like if you have the right to vote and you do not choose to exercise it then you may as well give up the right to have anything to say about the way the country or the organization is run. You just pay the taxes or the dues and suffer whatever consequences are levied upon you by the ruling party. You become a person deprived of voice or input, you made the initial choice to not be involved.

On the other hand if you do vote then you are clearly endowed with the right to criticize, offer suggestions, applaud, or as those who did not vote, you can just sit quietly and accept that which is handed out,

democracy offers you that choice.

Voting (even for an uncontested position) gives you the opportunity to say thank you or to put in a bit of moral support for those who do step up and offer their time and effort to make the organization better and to keep it growing and staying on the tracks in pursuit of our future.

Voting is the mainstay of the democratic principles under which we live. It is the very foundation of our society and I am thinking that getting in on the basic principles of your organization or your country will enhance your desire to know more about each one and probably contribute in some small or greater way to making them better, for you and for those who will succeed us all.

In the case of USSVI our successors are the youngsters, from E-1 to O-10, that are now standing the watches from the conn to the messcook who will someday relieve us all.

Please vote, it really does matter and you can do it with the ballot from the American Submariner or more easily from your home PC, no envelope and "forever" stamp needed.

Thank you for your service both in and out of USSVI.

Best,  
Michael

P.S. The polls are open 24/7, why not take time to vote?

## **AVAILABILITY OF ROOMS FOR 2012 USSVI CONVENTION by James A Fox**

IF YOU HAVEN'T BOOKED YOUR CONVENTION ROOM YET PLEASE READ AND HEED!!!!

Since the Marriott and Sheraton are sold out, arrangements have been made at the Courtyard by Marriott for additional rooms. The Courtyard by Marriott is about 350 yards from the Sheraton and about 500 yards from the Marriott. There are rooms blocked out from 2 thru 8 Sept at the same \$109 rate. Parking is included in the room rate. The room block is set up and reservations can be made at any time.

If making reservations by phone, call the hotel at 757-963-6000 or toll free at 800-894-7956 and ask for the USSVI reunion group. Online, reservations can be made at [here](#) and entering group code SUBSUBA for rooms with a king bed, and SUBSUBB for rooms with 2 Queen beds. A couple of extra rooms are being held the day before and after.

In Marriott's booking system, Courtyard by Marriott is unable to change the general hotel information on the confirmation pages, SO when you book, you will probably get a message on your confirmation advising that the parking fee is \$19 per night. That is the

standard rate, but guests booked with the group will get complimentary parking!

They did check meeting room availability and right now they have meeting rooms available, so they should definitely be able to work out a hospitality room a couple nights for boat reunions.

## **Navy & Veteran News and Other Gouge**

### **How to locate someone who is or was in the Navy**

The Navy does not keep track of anyone once they've left the Navy. Individuals may serve an initial obligation of a certain number of years and then be discharged, or they may remain for more than one tour and then be discharged, or they may remain until eligible to transfer to the Fleet Reserve or to retire.

To locate retirees, limited service is available through the World Wide Locator (address above). Correspondence will be forwarded, if possible, to the retiree since individuals' addresses are not releasable by law under the Privacy Act. Also, many times the address is not known.

For those individuals who left the Navy prior to being eligible for retirement or transfer to the Fleet Reserve, there is no formal way of trying to locate them. You may try the last place they called home and see if there are any records with either that local government or in the local newspaper's files, or you may just place an advertisement in any of the many veterans' organizations magazines.

Visit [http://www.navy.mil/navydata/nav\\_legacy.asp?id=168](http://www.navy.mil/navydata/nav_legacy.asp?id=168) for more information.

### **Requesting a copy of Your Military Service Record (DD Form 214 & SF-180)**

Military personnel records can be used for proving military service, or as a valuable tool in genealogical research.

Most veterans and their next-of-kin can obtain free copies of their DD Form 214 (Report of Separation) and other military and medical records. Use this website to get started:

<http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/>

### **Senior Discounts**

Here's an opportunity to save some \$\$

YOU must ASK for your discount!

#### **RESTAURANTS:**

Applebee's: 15% off with Golden Apple Card (60+)  
Arby's: 10% off (55+)  
Ben & Jerry's: 10% off (60+)  
Bennigan's: discount varies by location (60+)  
Bob's Big Boy: discount varies by location (60+)  
Boston Market: 10% off (65+)  
Burger King: 10% off (60+)  
Chick-Fil-A: 10% off or free small drink or coffee (55+)  
Chili's: 10% off (55+)  
CiCi's Pizza: 10% off (60+)  
Denny's: 10% off, 20% off for AARP members (55+)  
Dunkin' Donuts: 10% off or free coffee (55+)  
Einstein's Bagels: 10% off baker's dozen (60+)  
Fuddrucker's: 10% off any senior platter (55+)  
Gatti's Pizza: 10% off (60+)  
Golden Corral: 10% off (60+)  
Hardee's: \$0.33 beverages everyday (65+)  
IHOP: 10% off (55+)  
Jack in the Box: up to 20% off (55+)  
KFC: free small drink with any meal (55+)  
Krispy Kreme: 10% off (50+)  
Long John Silver's: various discounts (55+)  
McDonald's: discounts on coffee everyday (55+)  
Mrs. Fields: 10% off at participating locations (60+)  
Shoney's: 10% off  
Sonic: 10% off or free beverage (60+)  
Steak 'n Shake: 10% off Monday & Tuesday (50+)  
Subway: 10% off (60+)  
Sweet Tomatoes: 10% off (62+)  
Taco Bell: 5% off; free beverages for seniors (65+)  
TCBY: 10% off (55+)  
Tea Room Cafe: 10% off (50+)  
Village Inn: 10% off (60+)  
Waffle House: 10% off every Monday (60+)  
Wendy's: 10% off (55+)  
White Castle: 10% off (62+)

#### **RETAIL & APPAREL:**

Banana Republic: 10% off (50+)  
Bealls: 20% off first Tuesday of each month (50+)  
Belk's: 15% off first Tuesday of every month (55+)  
Big Lots: 10% off  
Bon-Ton Stores: 15% off on senior days (55+)  
C.J. Banks: 10% off every Wednesday (60+)  
Clarks: 10% off (62+)  
Dress Barn: 10% off (55+)  
Goodwill: 10% off one day a week (date varies by location)  
Hallmark: 10% off one day a week (date varies by location)  
Kmart: 20% off (50+)  
Kohl's: 15% off (60+)  
Modell's Sporting Goods: 10% off  
Rite Aid: 10% off on Tuesdays & 10% off prescriptions  
Ross Stores: 10% off every Tuesday (55+)  
The Salvation Army Thrift Stores: up to 50% off (55+)  
Stein Mart: 20% off red dot/clearance items first Monday of every month (55+)

#### **GROCERY:**

Albertson's: 10% off first Wednesday of each month (55+)  
American Discount Stores: 10% off every Monday (50+)



Compare Foods Supermarket: 10% off every Wednesday (60+)  
DeCicco Family Markets: 5% off every Wednesday (60+)  
Food Lion: 6% off every Monday (60+)  
Fry's Supermarket: free Fry's VIP Club Membership & 10% off every Monday (55+)  
Great Valu Food Store: 5% off every Tuesday (60+)  
Gristedes Supermarket: 10% off every Tuesday (60+)  
Harris Teeter: 5% off every Tuesday (60+)  
Hy-Vee: 5% off one day a week (date varies by location)  
Kroger: 10% off (date varies by location)  
Morton Williams Supermarket: 5% off every Tuesday (60+)  
The Plant Shed: 10% off every Tuesday (50+)  
Publix: 5% off every Wednesday (55+)  
Rogers Marketplace: 5% off every Thursday (60+)  
Uncle Guiseppe's Marketplace: 5% off (62+)

#### TRAVEL:

##### Airlines:

Alaska Airlines: 10% off (65+)  
American Airlines: various discounts for 65 and up (call before booking for discount)  
Continental Airlines: no initiation fee for Continental Presidents Club & special fares for select destinations  
Southwest Airlines: various discounts for ages 65 and up (call before booking for discount)  
United Airlines: various discounts for ages 65 and up (call before booking for discount)  
U.S. Airways: various discounts for ages 65 and up (call before booking for discount)

##### Rail:

Amtrak: 15% off (62+)

##### Bus:

Greyhound: 5% off (62+)  
Trailways Transportation System: various discounts for ages 50+

##### Car Rental:

Alamo Car Rental: up to 25% off for AARP members  
Avis: up to 25% off for AARP members  
Budget Rental Cars: 10% off; up to 20% off for AARP members (50+)  
Dollar Rent-A-Car: 10% off (50+)  
Enterprise Rent-A-Car: 5% off for AARP members  
Hertz: up to 25% off for AARP members  
National Rent-A-Car: up to 30% off for AARP members

##### Over Night Accommodations:

Best Western: 10% off (55+)  
Cambria Suites: 20%-30% off (60+)  
Clarion Motels: 20%-30% off (60+)  
Comfort Inn: 20%-30% off (60+)  
Comfort Suites: 20%-30% off (60+)  
Econo Lodge: 20%-30% off (60+)  
Hampton Inns & Suites: 10% off when booked 72 hours in advance  
Holiday Inn: 10%-30% off depending on location (62+)  
Hyatt Hotels: 25%-50% off (62+)

InterContinental Hotels Group: various discounts at all hotels (65+)

Mainstay Suites: 10% off with Mature Traveler's Discount (50+); 20%-30% off (60+)  
Marriott Hotels: 15% off (62+)  
Motel 6: 10% off (60+)  
Myrtle Beach Resort: 10% off (55+)  
Quality Inn: 20%-30% off (60+)  
Rodeway Inn: 20%-30% off (60+)  
Sleep Inn: 20%-30% off (60+)

##### ACTIVITIES & ENTERTAINMENT:

AMC Theaters: up to 30% off (55+)  
Bally Total Fitness: up to \$100 off memberships (62+)  
Busch Gardens Tampa, FL: \$3 off one-day tickets (50+)  
Carmike Cinemas: 35% off (65+)  
Cinemark/Century Theaters: up to 35% off  
U.S. National Parks: \$10 lifetime pass; 50% off additional services including camping (62+)  
Regal Cinemas: 30% off  
SeaWorld Orlando, FL: \$3 off one-day tickets (50+)

##### CELL PHONE DISCOUNTS:

AT&T: Special Senior Nation 200 Plan \$29.99/month (65+)  
Jitterbug: \$10/month cell phone service (50+)  
Verizon Wireless: Verizon Nationwide 65 Plus Plan \$29.99/month (65+).

##### MISCELLANEOUS:

Great Clips: \$3 off hair cuts (60+)  
Super Cuts: \$2 off haircuts (60+)

***USSVI Charleston Base has not checked out or verified any of these discounts. - Editor***

## On The Web

### Some Websites and Blogs of Interest to USSVICB Members

[Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center Charleston](#)

[Navy Times](#)

[The Stupid Shall Be Punished](#)

[Submarinesailor.com](#)

[Commander Submarine Force Blog](#)

[Virtual Tour of USS Pampanito SS 383](#)

[On Eternal Patrol.com](#)

(email your favorite links for publication to [steve](mailto:steve))

## Navy History

### **The Sculpin's Lost Mission: A Nuclear Submarine in the Vietnam War** **By Admiral Charles R. Larson, U.S. Navy (Retired), with Captain Clinton Wright, U.S. Navy (Retired), and Paul Stillwell**

One would expect that Cold War "special ops" involving U.S. nuclear-powered submarines are shrouded in secrecy. Other American sub activities during that era, however, are also hidden, one for a very strange reason.

In 1971, after he had spent two and a half years of duty in the White House as naval aide to President Richard Nixon, Commander Chuck Larson was ready to go back to sea. He was ordered to be executive officer of the attack submarine Sculpin (SSN-590), under Commander Harry Mathis. For several months the boat went through workups off the coast of southern California to prepare for a deployment to the western Pacific. That deployment included active participation in the Vietnam War.

After leaving the West Coast in January 1972, our first assignment was a classified special operation that lasted about two months. It went very well. The mission helped us hone our ship-handling and intelligence-gathering skills, and made us confident in our capabilities, and feel good about the way the ship was operating. Although it is still classified after all these years, it's safe to say that it was intelligence-gathering targeted against the Soviet Union.

Years later, Sherry Sontag and Christopher Drew's book, *Blind Man's Bluff* (New York: Public Affairs, 1998), described Cold War submarine operations. Because of security concerns, I can't specifically discuss the contents, but the book is a good read.

After the special operation, the Sculpin went into Yokosuka, Japan, for some liberty, and my wife, Sally, met me there. I had grown my beard while at sea and that, combined with my black hair and pale complexion after the extended period underwater, made me look, according to Sally-like Rasputin, the mad tsarist Russian.

In March, shortly after we began our second operation, patrolling the South China Sea, we were diverted for a specific mission. The U.S. government believed supply trawlers were operating out of Hainan Island, off the southern coast of the People's Republic of China. They were running arms, ammunition, and supplies from the northern part of the Gulf of Tonkin down to the Vietcong in the IV Corps region, the southernmost portion of Vietnam. U.S. forces discovered this when ground troops caught the enemy in the act of off-loading a trawler on a South Vietnamese beach. The incident sparked a big firefight, creating the legend that the trawler crews were elite forces willing to fight to the death. It also initiated a concerted effort to stop

the traffic by convincing the enemy that it could not succeed.

Each of the trawlers could carry about 100 tons of munitions. Several suspect ships were photographed, so we knew generally what they looked like, but as long as they were in international waters, we had no means to interdict them other than to turn them around by making low passes with a P-3 Orion patrol plane or a close approach by a surface ship. This was complicated by the fact that so many legitimate trawlers like them were in the area. Several gunrunners had been turned around, but this would not stop the at-sea resupply effort.

To convincingly discourage the effort, it would be necessary to destroy them in the waters off South Vietnam before they could land their cargo. The plan that evolved was to use a submarine to follow one from Hainan to South Vietnam and finger it for our forces to destroy. We were selected for this mission.

#### The Pursuit Begins

We took up a patrol station off Hainan on 10 April. After referring to a book with images of the different types of trawlers and what we could expect, we picked up our quarry on 12 April. The wardroom was divided on whether she was a good prospect. However, the ship resembled photographs of other known suspects, and her projected track was taking her toward the west coast of the Philippines, which did not make sense for a fisherman. So we took off in trail. Not long thereafter, the trawler turned to the south, and that was the clincher for us. She had an extremely distinctive shaft rub and propeller sound, which our sonarmen could easily discriminate from background noise. We relied completely on passive sonar to avoid being detected. The active sonar in the Skipjack-class submarines wouldn't have been reliable because of the reverberations in shallow water.

The ship we followed was probably 200 feet long, a large trawler, certainly suitable for open-ocean fishing. We did, of course, identify her by periscope before we started to trail, but we weren't able to follow her totally by periscope and maintain visual contact. We didn't want to take the chance of having our periscope seen in the flat, calm waters of the South China Sea. Also, she was making a speed of advance through the water of about 11 knots. That meant that if we were going to do our periscope operations every now and then, get out radio messages, and do our required housekeeping evolutions, we were probably going to have to run an average of about 18 or 20 knots submerged to keep up with her. We also had to include time for ocean analysis and tactical maneuvering to make certain we were staying with the correct target.

One more challenge was that the trawler was heading south, right through the "dangerous ground." On charts of the South China Sea, an area about 180 nautical miles wide and 300 miles long is simply labeled dangerous ground. Our charts had one track of soundings through that area-taken in 1885. We

assessed that the terrain was fairly level, but the depth was 200 feet or less in most of this area. So we were in a position of running up to 20 knots in 200 feet of water, with between 30 to 80 feet under the keel at that high speed. Our ship could react very quickly to plane (control surface) movements, so we had only our most experienced officers of the deck, diving officers, and planesmen on station. Our chief petty officer diving officers controlled the ship's depth by supervising the planesmen. They did a superb job.

As the trawler headed south, she vectored a little to the east and went into an area in the dangerous ground where we couldn't go. Up to then, although we were in the dangerous area, we felt secure in knowing the bottom was fairly level. But now she went into an area that was littered with rocks, shoals, and shipwrecks. I wondered then if the trawler's crew was smart enough to do what we called a "sanitization move"-go where even surface ships wouldn't follow. She doubtlessly believed that if she went through there she would come out the other side well clear of any tailing vessel.

I was absolutely convinced that the trawler was unaware of our presence (that became clear later when we intercepted a radio message). We believed the ship's course change was simply a safety move. While we were able to use our fathometer to plot the bottom and know the depth under our keel, the device looks only directly down; it doesn't look ahead. We were genuinely worried about what we couldn't see ahead-an undersea mountain, a wreck, or something else.

#### Lost and Found

When the trawler had entered the dangerous ground, we requested cover from an on-call P-3 Orion. Although we were under the operational control of the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) in Saigon, we had the ability to call the shots on the scene. We wanted the aircraft to remain covert, so it would not scare the trawler back into port by making low passes near her. During the ship's voyage through this very shallow, wreck-strewn portion of the dangerous ground, the plane, remaining at high altitude to minimize the chance of being seen, kept track of her by radar and visual observation. We dodged around the area by hauling off to the west, then south, and finally back to the east, to an area where we predicted the trawler would emerge, still in the dangerous ground. As the P-3 turned the contact over to us, the trawler appeared just about where we thought she would. We picked her up from the distinctive shaft rub and propeller sound and got in close enough to get a good positive periscope observation. We then went back in trail.

As we headed south in the South China Sea, we approached a new hazard. We found a large number of oil-drilling platforms near the coast of Borneo. We first became aware of this hazard through the prolonged tracking of a diesel contact, which prompted the CO, Commander Harry Mathis, to go up to periscope depth

for a look. We spotted an uncharted platform. If the rigs were operating, that was no problem; we could plot the location of their noisy diesel engines. We found some charted, some not, some operating and others not.

Our concern, of course, was about those uncharted and not running. We made frequent periscope observations to avoid the platforms, which forced us to run faster to maintain the quarry's speed of advance. We continued south at higher speeds for longer periods of time, sometimes with barely 20 to 30 feet of water beneath the Sculpin's keel.

As our target passed between the Great Natuna Islands, we made an end run around North Natuna. After that, our quarry was on a beeline for the Gulf of Thailand, passing through the busy sea-lane between Hong Kong and Singapore. The density of the large shipping traffic in this lane was incredible. Crossing it was like running across a busy freeway. It was night time, and sonar was useless amid all the traffic noise, so we crossed at periscope depth following our quarry's stern light, maneuvering to avoid the large ships bearing down on us from both directions.

The Gulf of Thailand presented a new challenge. The water was hot, 86 degrees Fahrenheit, and shallow, averaging 110 feet deep, and the bottom was flat. The surface was a dead calm mirror with fishing buoys and nets everywhere, not to mention small fishing boats of every description. It was also very hazy and so hot that the horizon was somewhat obscure. Such were the wartime circumstances that our operation order authorized us to operate in water as shallow as six fathoms. Who says nuclear-powered submarines can't operate in the littorals?

#### How Invisible?

During this time we half-jokingly talked about "the hump." We were trying to visualize what the Sculpin looked like on the surface, running at 20 knots, with maybe only 40 feet from the top of the sail to the surface. We visualized a hump-the water displaced above the boat's hull-roaring through the South China Sea like a mini tidal wave, with observers wondering what it was. We assumed the ship left some sort of trail but were certain one would have to be very close to be able to see it.

An incident when I had command duty got my attention. I brought the Sculpin up to periscope depth and saw what I thought was a periscope going by. My first reaction was, "Holy smoke, there's another submarine up here." Then I realized it was a small water-saturated log that was floating vertically. Just for a moment I thought there were two submarines staring at each other and wondered which one was going to blink first.

As the trawler moved farther south, she made a distinct turn to the west and then to the northwest. We were absolutely sure she was a gunrunner, going in to land and off-load her ammunition. Then, two

things happened. We were ordered by MACV to photograph our target and alerted to prepare to execute a provision in our operation order for us to sink our target with torpedoes.

The photographic mission meant leaving our trail position and speeding up ahead of the target to take pictures as the trawler cruised by. The risk of detection was great because of the flat calm sea and our hump as we repositioned at high speed. To avoid this, we had to go as deep as possible. Commander Mathis selected 90 feet keel depth, leaving 20 feet between the keel and the bottom. We limited periscope exposure to 6 inches for less than ten seconds. We did get good pictures and apparently were not detected, although one photograph revealed three men on deck looking in our general direction. The depth control skill of our diving officer chiefs was extraordinary.

#### Where'd She Go?

Immediately after the trawler made the northwest turn, and just before we communicated with higher authorities, we lost contact for about two hours. Up to that point, our target had been somewhat predictable, cruising on a straight course to the northwest near the center of the Gulf of Thailand about 100 miles off the coast of South Vietnam, with the familiar shaft rub being tracked by sonar. It was night with a full moon, and we saw her lights through the periscope. The horizon was indistinguishable. Suddenly, sonar reported she had stopped, and while the CO watched, the trawler turned off her lights. Blind and deaf, we then lit off the radar and made several sweeps that revealed nothing. This was not too surprising. When a radar hasn't been used in months and is not tuned, taking it out and rotating it a couple of times doesn't guarantee a high probability of picking up a small target. We were not sure whether she had stopped for the night or was moving away in a new direction at slow speed. We reported the lost contact, which threw the operational command authority in Saigon into a panic. They had been moving South Vietnamese naval forces along the coast to maintain a blocking position based on our updates, so the whole operation threatened to unravel. Commander Mathis and I huddled and decided: "Well, we've got to assume that she's making a run toward the border up there. Let's just go down and run as fast as we can and get about 30 miles ahead of her predicted track and set up a barrier."

So we moved up and waited for her farther up into the Gulf of Thailand. We made that sprint at 20 knots with 20 feet under the keel. At first daylight, we contacted our on station P-3 aircraft and described our quarry, particularly her white color. We requested that the Orion's crew search the area from where we lost contact to the Vietnamese coast. They reported several widely separated contacts; only one of them was white. The CO authorized a low-altitude identification pass, and the P-3 made a positive ID. They reported to Saigon, and we closed the target. As we neared, we regained that familiar shaft rub and when we took

another periscope look, it was her-positive identification, both sonar and visual.

Originally, MACV requested authorization for us to sink the target with our torpedoes, but this was not approved. For years I assumed that the National Command Authority in Washington, D.C., disapproved the request. However, several years later, Harry Mathis, who by then was a captain, was commanding officer of the Submarine Base Pearl Harbor. He regularly played tennis with retired Admiral Bernard "Chick" Clarey, who had been commander-in-chief Pacific Fleet at the time of our operation. Admiral Clarey remembered the operation very well because he and Admiral John McCain, commander-in-chief Pacific, had followed our progress closely in daily briefings. Admiral Clarey told Mathis that he had argued vehemently in favor of having us shoot, but Admiral McCain was not convinced it would work. Instead, South Vietnamese naval forces were called in to do the job on 24 April.

#### High-Seas Drama

The surface forces-led by a South Vietnamese destroyer escort-challenged the trawler, which hoisted a Chinese flag and an international flag signal designating they were fishing. The South Vietnamese commander was hesitant to take action because he was concerned about creating an international incident. Fortunately, we established communications with the U.S. liaison officer on board the destroyer with the UQC underwater telephone. His first question was whether we could verify this ship as our trawler. We told him, "Absolutely, this is the one without a doubt." We then went to periscope depth to observe.

The trawler tried to convince the South Vietnamese destroyer that she was an innocent fishing vessel. We spoke once again with the liaison officer and with higher authorities and said: "We are absolutely sure that this ship came out of Hainan flying a PRC (People's Republic of China) flag. We have tracked her 2,500 miles to this position, and in our opinion she is a gunrunner making a run toward the border and certainly is not a fisherman. We can verify who she is, which should allow us to take whatever action is appropriate."

As we later learned from the intercepted communication, the trawler at one point said, "I think there is a submarine out there." This was the first indication that the trawler crew was aware of us as we coordinated with the destroyer. Based on our identification, the destroyer escort ordered the trawler to stop, and when she failed to comply, began making intimidating runs at her, finally opening fire from a standoff position with her 3-inch guns. The trawler was hit and began burning, running in a circle as if the rudder was jammed hard over.

We watched through the periscope, and our crew gathered in their mess to watch on the TV monitor. Suddenly, with a thunderous roar, clearly audible through the Sculpin's hull, the trawler exploded and

disintegrated as its cargo detonated. Flames leaped hundreds of feet in the air, accompanied by the cheers of our crew.

At this moment, Commander Mathis asked the crew over the 1MC for a moment of silence. Enemy or not, they had perished doing their mission. Later, we were pleased to learn that 16 of the trawler crew had been rescued and they spoke Vietnamese, not Chinese. The captain and the navigator were among them and able to provide valuable intelligence about their operations. One of the few casualties was the political officer.

Our communication with command headquarters, through the loitering Orion during the urgent final search, was vital. Only later did we learn that, because of atmospheric conditions, the communications link with Saigon consisted of the P-3 aircraft on station relaying to another P-3 revving up its engines on the ground at its airbase while parked next to a phone booth. A flight crew member would run out to the phone and relay the messages between Saigon and us.

One other significant factor made the mission possible. It could only have been done by a nuclear-powered submarine. That experience gave me great admiration for the diesel-boat crews and skippers of World War II. We had more margin for error than they did because of their speed limitations owing to low battery capacity. If we made a mistake on the Sculpin, we could make it up through speed and repositioning, which couldn't be done with a diesel boat. Certainly our speed came in handy, not only in the basic trail, trying to stay up with a ship doing 11 knots and do all the things we had to do, but also during that period when we lost them. We were able to run quickly forward, reposition up the track, and get a chance to pick them up again. But that blackout period was a low point. We had trailed the ship 2,300 miles and thought we'd lost her.

#### Hidden Valor

The trawler's crew verified that their ship was a gunrunner. They had on board enough arms and ammunition to supply the Vietcong in IV Corps for at least 60 days. Her destruction thus made a significant contribution to the safety of U.S. and South Vietnamese troops in the area and set back the enemy's military operations there.

The surviving crew were North Vietnamese. They were split up, with U.S. and South Vietnamese intelligence each interrogating half and their stories compared. It was determined that the navigator's responses were credible because he provided interrogators with exactly the same track we plotted.

The United States learned much about the North Vietnamese at-sea resupply strategy. It also learned that the trawler crews were not elite forces that would resist until death. One engineer told of being at his station when the political officer came to the engine room hatch, told him the enemy had arrived, and ordered him to stay at his post. The engineer, no

doubt considering the nature of the cargo, said, "I immediately went on deck and jumped into the water."

It was an unusual operation. We spent more time submerged inside the 100-fathom curve than any U.S. submarine since World War II. Crew training, equipment reliability, ship control, navigation, sonar, communications, propulsion plant-everything and everyone performed superbly. We could not have asked for anything more. For that operation the Sculpin earned the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, the only U.S. submarine during the entire Vietnam War to receive that award.

The Sculpin was also nominated for the submarine combat patrol pin, and our individual awards for the combat "V." If that had been approved, she would have been the first submarine since World War II to get the combat patrol pin. Instead, the nomination was disapproved somewhere up the chain of command. I assume it was probably rejected by a World War II submariner who thought the operation wasn't nearly as hazardous as what he did during his war, and it didn't measure up. I can't argue with that, but the crew had great hope that they could proudly wear the pin for their contribution, particularly to the safety of our troops. Another consideration, however, might have been that those pins would have raised questions and possibly compromised an operation that was still classified.

We covered a huge distance in trail during that operation. Someone asked me later how I slept at night. I said, "With a pillow under my head, up against the bulkhead in case we hit something."

Admiral Larson went on to serve on active duty for 40 years. His senior position was as commander-in-chief of all United States military forces in the Pacific. Captain Wright served 26 years on active duty. He was commanding officer of USS Puffer (SSN-652) and operations officer for Commander Submarine Group Seven. Mr. Stillwell, the former editor of Naval History and the U.S. Naval Institute Oral History Program, has written the "Looking Back" column since 1993.

#### Cold War Records

This article is the result of merging my notes and recollections with those of Clint Wright, who stood a good many watches as Sculpin's officer of the deck during the pursuit of the trawler. Clint also gained access to the unclassified versions of the submarine's deck logs. Other OODs during the operation included Lieutenants Dick Snaider, Jim Gabala, Alan Beam, and Charlie Krupnick.

Getting our joint account through security review was an interesting challenge. Clint's original motive was to publish an article, because he wanted the Sculpin Sailors to get credit for what they did. My motive was to try and get it cleared for my oral history, so at least part of our special operations could be made public to my family and to other interested people. We jointly pursued this effort, dealing with the director of Naval



Intelligence and several people who used to work for me. The first thing we discovered was that there were absolutely no records of the Sculpin's operations. They had all been destroyed.

This highlights weaknesses in the Naval Intelligence Command's record keeping. As far as we can determine, the Navy had its standard Cold War intelligence gathering, what we called "special operations," which were classified and compartmentalized. Those reports appear to have been preserved. But because the Sculpin's Vietnam operation was not in that category-it was a more conventional, although extremely unusual, operation and didn't have the protection of that system-the reports were purged at some point when the government discarded old records. There is just no official record of this operation.

In putting this story together and sending it forward for clearance by the Navy Department, I think we did a double service. We not only got it cleared so those who served in the Sculpin during this time can receive credit, but we made this operation public and prevented it from being lost forever. At some point, an old Sculpin Sailor would have wanted to talk about it, and there would have been no way to find the records. So I'm very pleased that we were able to do that for our fine crew.

—Admiral Charles R. Larson

Footnote: I was on board and typed all the reports and award recommendations at the time, so I was aware of the entire operation as it unfolded, more so than most including Radio, Sonar, Navigation, Diving Stand; just about everyone except the CO, XO, & OPS.

I found out some 35 or so years after this op, thru Adm Larson, that the munitions discussed in article were being sent from Hanoi thru South Vietnam for North Vietnamese Communist soldiers on the Cambodian/Vietnam border. A superior force (by something like 10 or 12 to 1) of NVC had surrounded an American unit (don't remember if Marines or Army); however, the NVC were unable to take advantage of their superiority due to a scarcity of munitions.

The NVC force were virtually out of munitions. This trawler was re-supplying the force to attack the American unit. After the destruction of the trawler, the U.S. force was able to extract with practically no casualties.

Even though all boat sailors did their part and most never get recognized - It is satisfying to know, even decades later, that we helped save U.S. lives.  
Jim Hunnicutt

## Brothers of the 'Phin

I chanced upon a sailor once with an emblem on his chest. It appeared to be two angry sharks on a trash can for a rest.

His white hat was wrinkled and dirty; his neckerchief tied too tight and he had only one eye open as he staggered through the night.

He was young and scrawny and wiry; with knuckles cracked and oozing. I could tell from the way he looked and smelled he'd spent the night whorin' and boozin'.

But as he pulled abreast, he squared his hat and said "Sir, do you have a light? I'm due back aboard by quarter to four or the COB will be settin' me right."

As I fumbled around for my lighter as he pulled some smokes from his sock, "and I'll be damned lucky to make it," he muttered, "'Cause I'm steamin' against the clock."

Through the flame of my well-worn Zippo I could see a smile on his face. "But, you know - it was damn well worth it. That 'Bell's' is a helluva place."

He sucked the smoke deep down in his lungs and blew smoke rings up towards the moon. Then he rolled up his cuffs, pushed his hat to the back and said "Maybe there'll be a cab soon."

In spite of the time he was losing He was wanting to shoot the breeze so we sat on the curb, like two birds on a perch, as he talked of his life on the seas.

I asked about the thing on his chest and he looked at me with a grin. Then he squared his hat, snubbed out his smoke and said "I'm a Brother of the 'Phin."

"I'm one of the boys who go under the sea where the lights from above don't shine; where mermaids play and Neptune is king, and life and death intertwine."

"Life on a boat goes deep in your blood and nothing on earth can compare, to the feeling inside as she commences a dive going deep on a hope and a prayer."

"I've sailed some fearsome waters down below the raging main and I've heard that old boat creak and groan like the wheels of a railroad train."

"It's the one place on earth where there ain't no slack and where you don't have more than you need; where each man is prince of his own little space and each lives by the submarine creed."

"There ain't much I've done in this fickle life that would cause other men to take note, But I've walked in the steps of some mighty fine men who helped keep this country afloat."

"They slipped silently through the layers down below that raging main while  
up above enemy men-o'-war laid claim to the same domain."

"Brave sailors were they in their sleek boats of steel silently stalking  
their prey and closing in for the kill."

"They died as they lived, unafraid, proud and free - putting all on the line to  
secure your liberty."

"Their bones now rest in glory, down in Neptune's hallowed ground. But their  
souls stand tall at the right hand of God awaiting the klaxon's next sound."

"So, it's more than a 'thing' that I wear on my chest it's a badge of the  
brave, proud and true. It's a tribute to those who have gone here before  
riding boats that are still overdue"

"It's the "Dolphins" of a submariner worn proudly by the few,  
who've qualified at every watch and touched every bolt and screw."

"They know the boat on which they sail like they know their very soul  
and through the fires of hell or the pearly gates they're ready for each  
patrol."

"But when in port they take great sport standing out from all the rest. For  
deep inside they burn with pride for the dolphins on their chest."

Then he stood erect, squared his hat & pulled his neckerchief down to the  
'V'.

He rolled down his cuffs, put his smokes in his sock and squinted back  
towards the sea.

"I can hear them diesels calling so I'd best be on my way.  
We'll be punchin' holes in the ocean when the sun peeks over the bay."