

TORPEDO ALLEY



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March 2013

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:

April 11 2013 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	Carl Chinn	843-875-3098
Vice Commander	Jerry Stout	843-871-9533
Secretary	Rick Wise	843-875-5559
Treasurer	Terry Trump	843-873-9563

Appointed Officers	Click to email	Phone Number
Chief of the Boat	Rick Sparger	843-553-5594
Public Affairs	Ed Stank	843 863-8474
Veterans Affairs	Jim Morrison	843-832-9716
Chaplain	John Nichols	843-452-3189
Membership	Carl Chinn	843-875-3098
Holland Club	John Kratz	843-873-0238
Scholarship	Julian Villegas	843-871-6135
Newsletter	Steve Morawiec	843-410-0131
Storekeeper	Ken Hutchison	843-553-0935
Webmaster	John Nichols	843-452-3189
Historian	George Scharf	843 873-3318

Minutes of the February 2013 Meeting

The attendance for the February 14, 2013 meeting was 96.

Opening Ceremonies: Base Commander Carl Chinn called the meeting to order. A quorum was present and the meeting started at 1902. He wished everyone a Happy Valentine's Day and gave an opportunity for A Gang and Torpedomen to show their love for each other. Ed Stank accepted the opportunity and presented a Valentine to John Kratz.

Introductions: The following were new attendees to Charleston Base meetings: Charles Satterfield MT1/SS, Qual Boat USS George Bancroft SSBN 643, William C. "Butch" Bryar EN/MM1/SS, Qual Boat USS Tigron SS 419.

Secretary: Base Secretary Rick Wise called for a motion from the floor for the minutes for the January Meeting as published in the newsletter to be approved. A motion was made and seconded and approved on a voice vote.

Treasurer: Base Commander Carl Chinn read a report from Base Treasurer Terry Trump for the month of January 2013. Carl announced that a change was being made in the near future to allow the use of credit and debit cards to pay for base items such as tickets, membership and items from the storekeeper. This is entirely voluntary and because there is a fee for the use of the cards that fee will be charged to the member.

Vice Commander: Base Vice Commander Jerry Stout announced that it was his birthday and received an appropriate response from the members.

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

- John Dasch, a former base member, underwent lung cancer surgery this afternoon. The surgery went well. He will be in the VA ICU for several days. His daughter, Diane, will keep us updated on when John is able to have visitors.
- Harry Feller was in the hospital this week. Went to the ER on Monday and was sent to Roper for tests on his heart due to a very high pulse. He was becoming exhausted very easily. Harry was not able to be here tonight.
- Lee Lookabill is on chemo again. After a bout with pneumonia this past weekend she has been put on O2 24/7.
- Kathy Smith, Smitty's wife, is in Heartland West Ashley for rehab after her back surgery. Smitty reports she will be there another 1-2 weeks and is walking well at this point.
- Jackie Kirk, Harry's wife, is home recuperating from stomach surgery in January. She is doing well.
- Fred Woodley had a serious eye infection that resulted in some vision loss. This is the same eye he got battery acid in on the boat. He's been told that the vision loss is probably not permanent.
- My wife, Linda, broke her ankle and is now getting around in a cast. She's doing well.
- "Doc Hill" is back to taking treatments except this time it's for his prostate.
- Ev Fuhr, Ken's wife, is doing well as she awaits her transplant. She is having difficulties keeping her blood sugar stable.
- Rodney McKanna had an outpatient procedure done on his stump this past Monday.
- Roberta Eagerton, Bob Snyder's sister-in-law who lived with them, passed away recently. She was a WWII veteran having served in the WACs.
- Bill Buxton has stopped his chemo treatments. As reported in November Bill has liver cancer.
- Mike Emerson has been diagnosed with bladder cancer.
- Dave Rein is having his chemo treatments and it was reported that he is working about an hour each day.
- Clyde Peters is still in Mt. Pleasant Manor Nursing Home, 921 Bowman Rd, Rm 323.
- Tim VeArD is the Chief Technical Officer for USSVI and is responsible for the operation of the National website. National sent out an email that reads in part: "After losing his right lung 2 ½ years ago and then being on chemotherapy for 13 months, Tim's battle is coming to an end. I'm sorry to tell you the cancer has spread to his liver, spine and other places. Doctors have given him 6 months." Anyone that would like to can send a card as follows: Tim & Lynda VeArD, 2240 Laks of Melbourne Dr., Melbourne FL 32904.
- Paul Gonya departed on Eternal Patrol on 30 January. He served on the WOODROW WILSON Commissioning Crew. Paul was not a member of USSVI or Charleston Base.

NOTE: Please get your mug shot taken if you have not already done so. Also, please complete your Page 2 if you haven't already done so. Copies are on the SK's table.

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.

I am working to get as many copies of the Polaris Magazine (The Submarine Veterans of WWII) on the website as well as copies of the American Submariner and the Shift Colors.

Public Affairs and Submarine Veterans of WWII: PAO and President of the Swamp Fox Chapter Ed Stank announced that the Marrington Elementary School Fifth Graders have invited the Submarine Veterans of WWII to a dedication. The tentative date is 8 March with a time to be determined. He made a

plea for Charleston Base members to join the Swamp Fox Chapter of the Submarine Veterans of WWII as Associate Members. The next Swamp Fox meeting is 1130 on Thursday Feb. 21 at Ryan's on 17A in Summerville, SC. Annual membership is \$15. He also announced the USS Nathan Hale SSBN 623 Reunion at Branson, MO on September 19 – 22, 2013.

Membership: Membership Chairman Carl Chinn reported that we are down to 309 members.

Newsletter and Recreation Committee: Newsletter editor Steve Morawiec reported that the January newsletter electronic and print versions have been sent out. The Oyster Roast is scheduled for 9 March at the Cooper River Partners Picnic Facility. A request was made for volunteers to help.

Veterans Affairs: No report.

Storekeeper: Base Storekeeper Ken Hutchison said he would be ordering a new batch of 2013 calendars since he had sold out and should have them at the March meeting. He reported that base member Mike Slattery bought Gary Semler's motorcycle. Ann Semler would also like to sell a 1996 25' Holiday Rambler Travel Trailer with a cover for \$4000. The interior has recently been re-done. Contact Ken if you are interested.

Kaps For Kids: Mike Knaub had to resign as Kaps For Kids Coordinator because he is moving out of state. Ed Stank is temporarily taking those duties. The base needs someone to volunteer for the job.

Fleet Reserve: Larry Cox reported that the National President of the FRA was in the building and asked Larry to ask base members who are not members of the FRA to please join. The Southeast Regional President of Ladies Auxiliary of the FRA will be at the Auxiliary meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 19. The National President of the FRA will be at the FRA meeting at 1900 on Thursday Feb. 21. The FRA picnic will be May 17 & 18 at Short Stay. The FRA Regional Convention will be held Aug. 21 – 25 in Myrtle Beach, SC. The national convention is Oct. 15 – 20 in Chattanooga, TN.

Holland Club: Holland Club Chairman John Kratz requested that all Holland Club Torpedomen help him thank Ed Stank.

Scholarship: Scholarship Committee member Ricky Collins reported that the forms and information for this year's scholarship are on the website. The due date for the applications is 15 April.

Little David Project: Little David Coordinator Rick Wise stated this year's upkeep working party should be around the end of March.

Nuclear Historian: The Nuclear Historian Rick Carlson said he had missed some meetings due to home maintenance and that reminded him of this story:

A Nuc ET wakes up in the hospital bandaged from head to foot. The doctor comes in and says, "Ah, I see you've regained consciousness. Now you probably won't remember, but you were in a huge pile-up on the freeway. You're going to be ok, you'll walk again and everything, but your penis was severed in the accident and we couldn't find it."

The man groans, but the doctor goes on, "You've got \$9000 in insurance compensation coming and we now have the technology to build a new penis. They work great but they don't come cheap. It's roughly \$1000 an inch." The man perks up.

"So," the doctor says, "You must decide how many inches you want. But I understand that you have been married over thirty years and this is something you should discuss with your wife. If you had a five incher before and get a nine incher she might be a bit put out. If you had a nine incher before and only invest in a five incher now, she might be disappointed. It's important that she plays a role in helping you make a decision." The man agrees to talk it over with his wife.

The doctor comes back the next day. "So, have you talked with your wife?" "Yes I have," says the man. "And has she helped you make a decision?" "Yes" says the man. "What is your decision?" asks the doctor.

"We're getting granite countertops."

District Commander: District Commander Paul Viering stated that the SE Regional Convention is being held in Charleston at the Sheraton Hotel on Goer Drive, North Charleston, SC on April 7 – 11. The registration forms are on the USSVI-CB website. The USS George Bancroft SSBN 643 is having a reunion on April 18 – 21 at King’s Bay, GA.

Public Events Coordinator: Events Coordinator Marty Sessler reported that the H. L. Hunley Memorial Service will be held on Sunday, February 17 at the Sunrise Presbyterian Church, 3222 Middle Street, Sullivan’s Island, SC. There will be reserved seating on the stage for SubVets who attend.

At 1500 on March 3rd there will be a Massing of the Colors on the parade grounds at the Citadel in Charleston. We will be carrying the USSVI flag. Muster is at 1430 and dress is the vest uniform (khaki pants, blue long sleeved shirt, vest and ball cap) with submarine or dark tie. If you don’t have a vest, come anyway and wear your dolphins.

He also reported that the Savannah, GA St. Patrick’s Day Parade will be held on Saturday, March 16 this year. We must be lined up by 1230.

On April 10 at 1000 we will hold a combined Amberjack Memorial Service, Submarine Birthday service and memorial service for the Southeast Regional Convention at the Lost Boat Memorial, Cold War Submarine Memorial, Mt. Pleasant, SC. The uniform is the vest uniform with tie. If you don’t have a vest, come anyway and wear your dolphins.

Chief of the Boat: COB Rick Sparger said that everything we have in storage is available for use by base members. A new checkout log has been created for members to sign out equipment. Contact the COB, Carl Chinn, Marty Sessler, Rick Wise or anyone on the Executive Board to get the equipment. There will be a meeting on the status of the Clamagore tomorrow, Saturday, February 16, 2013 at 1000 at the FRA. The Oyster Roast is on 9 March. We finally got our picture with Tim Scott in the American Submariner.

Base Commander: Base Commander Carl Chinn said Steve Morawiec had donated some item to the base to be auctioned off at the next meeting - these included a yellow plastic SSBN bathtub toy, a diesel submarine shaped pencil sharpener, a 1944 Blue Jackets Manual, and a book printed in 1942 titled He’s In Submarines Now.

We had another donation of 4 ball caps and a picture of a submarine as well as a brass colored ballast block from the USS Daniel Boone SSBN 629. Proceeds will go to the Scholarship Fund.

The nominations for Base Commander so far are Ed Stank and Rick Wise. The nominee for Base Treasurer is Steve Morawiec. If you would like to run for or nominate someone for one of the positions let Carl know. Nominations can be taken up to the night of the election.

If you have someone you would like to nominate for the 2012 Distinguished Submariner for Charleston Base let Carl know. Deadline for nominations is the end of February.

Old Business: None

New Business: Thom Beach announced that registration for the SE Regional Convention was free for the WWII SubVets. The tour of the NNPTU is awaiting permission from Naval Reactors. The tour of the Hunley is a longer tour than is offered to the general public. The speaker for the banquet is CAPT Rusty Pickett, USN (ret.).

Good of the Order: The Charleston Submarine Ball will be held at the Marriot Hotel, 170 Lockwood Blvd, Charleston, SC 29403, on Friday, April 12. Ticket price for SubVets is \$20 per person - WWII Vets are free. The website for information is charlestonsubball.org The dress for SubVets is the vest uniform with tie.

NNPTC COPA is taking the lead on SC Submarine Service Tags. They will be holding fundraisers to raise the \$3000 needed for the tags.

The base gave a standing ovation to the five WWII veterans present at the meeting. Base member Don Meadows (writing under the name D. Clayton Meadows) announced that a part of the sales of his submarine novels *Of Ice and Steel* and *Epitaph* will be donated to the Scholarship Fund.

An announcement was made that they were including a heritage portion in the training at Nuclear Power School and a request was made for volunteers from the base to assist.

Depth Charge: Prior to the drawing COB Rick Sparger asked the base to thank Gary Williams, Charlie Hudson and Walt Deal for their work selling the depth charge tickets. The base responded in normal submariner fashion. The depth charge winner was Richard Alfano. He donated \$100 to the Scholarship Fund.

Meeting Adjourned: The Base Commander adjourned the meeting at 2010.

March Submarines Lost

USS Perch	SS 176	March 3, 1942
USS Grampus	SS 207	March 5, 1943
USS Triton	SS 201	March 15, 1943
USS Tullibee	SS 284	March 26, 1944
USS Kete	SS 369	March 20, 1945
USS Trigger	SS 237	March 26, 1945
USS F-4	SS 21	March 25, 1915
USS H-1	SS 28	March 12, 1920

March Birthdays

Allen	Anderson	Baciocco	Deschaine
Holycross	Legg	Luther	McLuskey
Mook	Northrop	O'Saben	Rosselot
Sessler	Snyder	Spear	Williams

THE VOICE INSIDE YOUR HEAD

I always do my best to have a clear conscience toward God and Men. Acts 24:16 (HCSB)

Your conscience is an early-warning system designed to keep you out of trouble. When you're about to do something that you know is wrong, a little voice inside your head has a way of speaking up. If you listen to that voice, you'll be okay; if you ignore it, you're asking for headaches or heartbreaks, or both.

Whenever you're about to make an important decision, you should listen carefully to the quiet voice inside. Sometimes, of course, it's tempting to do otherwise. From time to time, you'll be tempted to abandon your better judgment by ignoring your conscience. But remember: a conscience is a terrible thing to waste. So instead of ignoring that quiet little voice, pay careful attention to it. If you do, your conscience will lead you in the right direction---in fact, it's trying to lead you right now. So listen . . . and learn.

A Prayer for Today

Dear God, You've given me a conscience that tells me right from wrong. Let me trust my conscience, and let me live according to Your teachings, not just for today, but forever. Amen.

Adapted from "Courage for my Daily Walk"

Charleston Subvets In The News

REMEMBERING H. L. HUNLEY AND USS HOUSATONIC – 149TH MEMORIAL SERVICE

18 Feb 2013 – Photos and story by Steve Morawiec



A memorial service, marking the 149th anniversary of the loss of the Confederate submarine H. L. Hunley and the loss of the Federal sloop-of-war USS Housatonic, was held last evening at the Sunrise Presbyterian Church on Sullivan's Island, SC.

The service, which honors the eight submariners lost on Hunley and the five crewmembers lost on Housatonic, also recognizes the first successful attack and sinking of a vessel by a submarine.

Last evening's event was sponsored by the Confederate Heritage Trust (CHT) and supported by representatives from the CHT Member Groups, the Charleston Police Pipes and Drums, and the Charleston Base of The United States Submarine Veterans (SUBVETS).

Master Chief Electronics Technician (Submarines) (Ret.) Carl Chinn, the Charleston Base SUBVETS Commander, presented a history of the evolution of the submarine force from H. L. Hunley's historic encounter 149 years ago to today's modern submarine.

South Carolina's Lieutenant Governor, the Honorable Glenn McConnell gave the memorial address. Lieutenant Governor McConnell has been an ardent supporter of H. L. Hunley's restoration and preservation.

Representatives of the Charleston Base Submarine Veterans participated throughout the ceremony.



In addition to the Base Commander's opening remarks, Charleston Base SUBVETS presented a white rose to each lady in mourning. The ladies in mourning were re-enactors who posed as wives and sweethearts of the lost Confederate and Federal sailors.

At the conclusion of the service, Master Chief Quartermaster (Submarines) (Ret.) Ken Hutchison and Senior Chief Torpedoman's Mate (Submarines) (Ret.) Richard Sparger led the procession from the church to Breach Inlet.

A solemn and quiet crowd followed these retired submariners to the site where H. L. Hunley departed on her last voyage. Two wreaths were placed at the water's edge to honor those lost on Hunley and Housatonic as onlookers tried to keep dry eyes. The hymn, Amazing Grace, played by the Charleston Police Pipes and Drums complemented the processional.



An 18-gun salute and three volleys of artillery fire by members of the CHT Member Groups completed the service. The crowd enthusiastically sang Dixie and took in the lovely mid-winter's night sky.

MASSING OF THE COLORS AT SUMMERALL CHAPEL, THE CITADEL

4 Mar 2013 – Photos and story by John Nichols

On Sunday, March 3, 2013, five members of Charleston Base participated in the 14th Annual Massing of the Colors (MOTC) at Summerall Chapel, The Citadel, in Charleston SC. The MOTC is held each year on the first Sunday in March and is presented by The General Westmoreland Chapter of The Military Order of the World Wars and The Citadel. MOTC is a colorful, dignified, patriotic ceremony dedicated to the memory of those members of the Military Services who gave their lives to preserve our liberties and to honor those who have served and those who are serving.



Twenty-nine units presented their colors during this moving tribute, with The Citadel Summerall Chapel Color Guard being pre-eminent in the posting and retiring of the colors. The guest speaker was Colonel James A. Cannon, USAFR (Retired), who we all know better as Charleston County Sheriff Al Cannon. After the speaker, two Citadel cadet buglers played Echo Taps and Mrs. Peggy Sineath led those present in a medley of patriotic songs.

Charleston Base members in attendance were (left to right): Nick Nichols, Marty Sessler, Carl Chinn, Theron Irving, and Jerry Stout. Marty and Carl carried the Charleston Base colors into the Chapel and placed them on the Chapel Altar.

FOUR WORLD WAR II SUBMARINE VETERANS VISIT MARRINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
9 Mar 2013 – Photos and story by Steve Morawiec



World War II veterans Lee Allison, Doc Hill, Willie Jones, and Stacy Power (l to r) humorously started off on the wrong foot during their visit to Marrington Elementary School on the Naval Weapons Station in Goose Creek, SC. As if they knew this sign awaited them, their 'late for watch' arrival, prompted this formal portrait in front of the school.

All kidding aside, these four members of Charleston Base were on a serious mission. For the last month, Marrington's fifth graders have been studying World War II – and, to bridge the decades and the generations, Allison, Hill, Jones and Power would share their individual experiences and memories with the students.



Doc Hill related his memories of December 7th, 1941 (Pearl Harbor Day) when he was stationed at San Diego with the U.S. Marines. Stacy Power explained his amphibious service during the war and Willie

Jones, with much sadness in his eyes, discussed the difficulties he experienced as an African American in the segregated submarine force and navy. Lee Allison shared several funny stories about his time as a baker and cook aboard his first submarine (if you haven't heard his chicken or meringue stories – ask him to tell them to you).



Mr. Hennessee, a World War II infantryman and Mr. Poston, a World War II B-17 waist gunner, shared their European Theater experiences. The 5th graders presented their guests with cards and gifts and many children had their photographs taken with the veterans.

Submarine News

US Nuclear Submarine to Participate in South Korea Naval Drill

A nuclear-powered submarine of the US is participating in a naval drill in South Korea amid rising tensions in the Korean peninsula sparked by North Korea's reported move to carry out a nuclear test.

The USS San Francisco (SSN-711), a Los Angeles-class nuclear submarine, has already arrived at the South Korean port city Jinhae, 410 kms from the capital Seoul.

Besides the submarine, two other American warships, equipped with missiles and torpedoes, have arrived in the nearby port city of Busan.

The vessels will take part in a joint naval drill by South Korea and the US. South Korea will be employing ten warships in the drill.

South Korea has said that the exercise was previously scheduled and is not a response to North Korea's recent threats.

However, officials are tight-lipped about details of the proposed drill. All that they have said is that the exercise is aimed at testing the combat readiness of both the countries.

"We are closely looking into whether [increased activity] is a manipulating tactic or preparations for a nuclear test indeed. The North is ready to conduct an atomic test at any time if the leadership makes a decision," said the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), Jung Seung-jo.

Jung added: "The upcoming drill, which had already been planned, is not targeted for (North Korea's) nuclear test."

Navy Mishaps, Mistakes Could Cost \$1 Billion

The past year has been a banner one for the U.S. Navy in at least one unhappy category — major mishaps. The number of major mishaps involving aircraft carriers, ships and submarines was higher than in recent years, and the unbudgeted repair bill is just one more factor squeezing fleet maintenance accounts in the middle of the service's fiscal crisis.

"As a result of mishaps at sea — ships and submarines — I have an \$850 million, unforecasted maintenance bill," Adm. Bill Gortney, commander of U.S. Fleet Forces command, said in a Jan. 28 interview.

"The chief of naval operations doesn't give me any extra money to take care of that," Gortney said. "What matters to me is mishaps cost lives, and I can't replace a sailor's life. And mishaps cost money to repair equipment. I can go buy new equipment, but it's expensive."

Gortney was referring to the repair costs for only four ships — the submarines Miami and Montpelier, cruiser San Jacinto and destroyer Porter. The combined, fleetwide repair bill for all mishaps isn't known, but it will be significantly higher than Gortney's number, perhaps closer to \$1 billion.

Some of the repair costs are known, and others aren't — subject, among other things, to ongoing damage assessments and contract negotiations.

The repair costs are being paid for from a variety of accounts, and they're not all from the same budget year, but it's just one more factor to add to the money squeeze on all the military services. Navy leaders have spent much of January warning of the negative impact of about \$4.6 billion in operations and maintenance (O&M) cuts should sequestration strike after March 1 and another \$4 billion O&M shortfall for the rest of fiscal 2013 should Congress fund the remainder of the year under a full-year continuing resolution.

The ship repair bill comes from a variety of mishaps and problems. The most spectacular — and expensive — was the arson fire on the submarine Miami in May. The Navy estimates the total bill to return the sub to service at around \$450 million, plus or minus \$50 million. A \$94 million planning contract was awarded in August, and planners hope to spread the rest of the bill over several budget years to lessen the impact. Sequestration threatens \$294 million of that in 2013, the service warns.

Another high-priced repair is needed for the destroyer Porter, damaged in August in a collision in the Arabian Gulf. More than \$2 million was spent in a foreign shipyard for cosmetic fixes, but full repairs will cost at least another \$125 million — the amount the Navy says is at risk should sequestration hit.

The submarine Montpelier, damaged in an October collision with the cruiser San Jacinto, needs at least \$41 million in repairs — another figure at risk from sequestration — but the full extent of the work is not yet determined.

Repairs to San Jacinto already have topped \$10 million, and may go higher, the Navy said.

Supplemental work needed for ships already in overhaul is also a factor. The Navy awarded at least \$128 million in supplemental work packages in 2012 for the aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt, now in the later stages of a three-and-a-half-year refueling overhaul. Re-delivery of the ship already has been pushed back from last December to June of this year, and completion is threatened by a full-year continuing resolution, the Navy has said.

While not in league with the extra work needed for Roosevelt, "emergent" work on a number of other ships in overhaul is also adding to budget problems.

Other repairs needed in 2013 were for the amphibious assault ship Essex, from a May collision with the oiler Yukon; a rudder replacement for the amphibious assault ship Kearsarge that cost at least \$10 million; the urgent flight deck resurfacing for the carrier Dwight D. Eisenhower, needed because the ship's

replacement, the carrier Nimitz, couldn't make its deployment date in order to replace a defective reactor pump.

The repair bill for Nimitz remains, publicly, a mystery. Navy authorities could not provide a cost estimate for the repairs, which are taking place at the ship's homeport of Everett, Wash. The carrier's strike group deployed in January without it, and the Navy doesn't expect Nimitz to deploy until sometime in the spring.

Eisenhower, in the meantime, is temporarily in Norfolk, Va., and will return in the early spring to the Middle East — missing a year-long drydocking overhaul that now needs to be rescheduled.

After all the problems last year, 2013 hasn't gotten off to the best start. The submarine Jacksonville wrecked a periscope Jan. 10 when it started to surface under a merchant ship in the Arabian Gulf. A more serious incident began Jan. 17, when the minesweeper Guardian grounded on a reef in the Philippines. By Jan. 28, Navy officials decided to break up the ship on the scene rather than try to salvage and repair it.

While a special action by Congress was used to pay for the initial assessment work on Miami, the Navy is still looking for options to pay for the other repairs, and the overall impact on maintenance budgets is still unclear.

USS Virginia (SSN 774) Returns to Groton



Virginia-class attack submarine USS Virginia (SSN 774) transits up the Thames River to return to its home port of Naval Submarine Base New London following a regularly-scheduled underway.

Navy Secretary calls impending defense cuts 'mindless'

If Congress does not come up with a budget agreement soon, big spending cuts will begin in March, including heavy reductions to the military. The so-called "sequestration" will hit the state of Washington, which has a big military presence.

Navy Secretary Ray Mabus, who visited Seattle Thursday, had a pretty blunt word for the impending military cuts, which could total \$9 billion for his department alone in 2013. He called them "mindless."

He's warning Congress and the country that real damage will be done.

"We will be a less-ready service," Mabus said.

Cuts will include key areas such as training and maintenance.

"It threatens us now, but it threatens in the future," he said. "You saw a good example of what can happen yesterday when the secretary of defense announced that the (USS Harry S.) Truman (aircraft carrier) and her strike group would be delayed going to Central Command."

Mabus said the Navy is willing to do some belt-tightening, but it should be less severe and less arbitrary.

"We get no say in how money is allocated," he said. "It's just sliced off."

Gov. Jay Inslee echoed the Navy secretary's warning about the sequester.

"These accidental, random cuts are not the way to do budgets," Inslee said.

Inslee joined Mabus in a ceremony Thursday honoring the country's newest attack submarine, which will be named for the Evergreen State.

"We really are very profoundly hopeful that we don't name this boat the USS Washington and then two weeks later sequester dollars so that we have layoffs here in the state of Washington," Inslee said. "That is not a result that is acceptable."

The USS Washington is the first Navy vessel to be named after the state since World War II. The sub will go into service in 2016. There is no Pentagon commitment yet about whether it will be stationed in the state.

Top Officers Relieved of Duty on Pearl Harbor-Based Submarine after Persian Gulf Collision

HONOLULU-The commanding officer and executive officer of a Pearl Harbor-based submarine have been relieved of duty a month after the periscope on the USS Jacksonville collided with a vessel in the Persian Gulf.

Cmdr. Christy Hagen, spokeswoman for the U.S. Pacific Fleet's submarine force, says Cmdr. Nathan Sukols and Lt. Cmdr. Lauren Allen were relieved after a disciplinary hearing in Bahrain on Sunday.

Hagen cited a lack of confidence in the pair's leadership, but gave few details. Both have been assigned to administrative duties.

On Jan. 10, the Jacksonville hit a vessel that kept moving and showed no signs of distress afterward. A periscope was damaged, and has since been repaired.

The Navy couldn't determine the boat's purpose or country of origin before it moved on. No one was injured.

Thresher Memorial Project Group Tops \$100K in Funds Raised

Funds raised for a memorial project honoring the 129 men who died aboard the nuclear submarine USS Thresher has surpassed the \$100,000 mark.

The Fabulous Find thrift shop, which donates its proceeds to different area nonprofit organizations each month, presented a \$2,625 check last Thursday to the Thresher Memorial Project Group.

An equal amount was donated to Traip Academy's Expanded Learning Opportunities Program at a reception at the 122 State Road shop. The Fabulous Find, also known as A Caring Community, is in the process of relocating to a larger space at 139 State Road.

More than \$106,000 in cash and in-kind contributions have been donated to the Thresher project so far, including a \$5,000 check from Northeast Credit Union. Meanwhile, family members of two other Thresher heroes pooled their funds to send donations of \$1,000 or more in honor of their loved ones.

This April 10 marks the 50th anniversary of the world's worst submarine disaster.

Last week's memorial donation had special significance for the Fabulous Find; Quartermaster First Class Julius Marullo Jr., a Navy sailor lost aboard the submarine, was the father of Board President Marcye Philbrook and husband of assistant manager Debby Ronnquist.

"I'm really happy that the Thresher Memorial Group is doing this, that they took the initiative," Philbrook said.

The tragedy had repercussions that extended far beyond family members, she noted. Even local residents who didn't have relatives aboard the submarine lost friends, neighbors and co-workers.

"It's important to the whole community," she said of the memorial. "It's not just us."

Marullo, a Texas native and Korean War veteran, left behind two young children when he died at age 29. Philbrook and her brother, Julius Marullo III, now both live in Kittery.

The family of Chief Hospitalman Joseph Andrew "Andy" Gallant Jr. has also collected a total of \$2,300 in memory of the Bradley native they knew as "Pito."

"By either nickname, he had long been a hero in the hearts of his sisters, brothers, nephews and nieces," wrote nephew Anthony Tremblay. "Whenever we talk about him today, it's his laugh and his love of family that we all remember most."

Gallant was due to retire at the end of April 1963 and had a job lined up at a nuclear power plant, according to his nephew. Unfortunately, his retirement was delayed because he had no replacement aboard Thresher. As a result, he was on the doomed submarine when it made its fatal final cruise in April 1963.

Gallant left high school early to enlist in the Navy toward the end of World War II. He was assigned to the Navy's Hospital Corps and served aboard several surface ships and submarines during his career, including the world's first nuclear submarine, the legendary USS Nautilus.

Gallant reported aboard Thresher in February 1961. When the submarine sank, he was survived by his wife Rose, six brothers and sisters, and his siblings' children.

"Because he and his wife had no children of their own, he showered his nieces and nephews with attention and love," Tremblay said. "His death left a gaping hole in our large and growing extended family, and even the youngest among us at that time felt his loss."

Shipyard inspector Fred Philip Abrams, born and raised in Kittery, had a phobia of drowning but overcame his fear in service to his country, said his daughter, Carol Norton.

"He was afraid of small places and terrified of the water, but he went on many sea trials before his final voyage," she said. "I can only imagine what his last tortuous minutes were like."

Abrams never swam in water deeper than his waist, but during World War II, he earned three Battle Stars and a rifle marksmanship medal while serving in Europe with the Seventh Army. His patriotism compelled him to serve his country any way he could, Norton said.

"Another lesson that dad taught us was to 'face your fears,' so that your fears did not control you, you controlled them," she said.

She and her brother Jim, a longtime employee of Kittery's school system, recently submitted a \$1,000 donation in their father's honor. The two were teens when their father died, leaving them behind with their mother, Sherley.

Amy Cairy of Northeast Credit Union in Portsmouth, N.H., said the institution originated at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in 1936. Ten individuals subscribed to one share each to establish what was then known as Portsmouth, NH U.S. Employees Federal Credit Union #1515.

"We have a long and proud history connected to the naval shipyard and serving members of the military," Cairy said. "As such, we would very much like to support the building of the USS Thresher Memorial."

A 129-foot flagpole in Kittery's Memorial Circle will be the centerpiece of the memorial, which is to be dedicated on the morning of April 7.

Russia Touts New Submarine

MOSCOW-Foreign customers have shown high interest in Russia's advanced Amur-1650 class submarine, state-run arms dealer Rosoboronexport said on Wednesday.

"Of the nine countries that are planning to modernize or develop their submarine fleets...three have already chosen the Amur-1650 project," Rosoboronexport's director Anatoly Isaikin said.

He did not name the countries in question.

The ongoing work on air-independent (closed cycle) propulsion systems for the submarine should further fuel the customers' interest, he added.

The Amur 1650 is one of several participants in a tender by the Indian Navy for six submarines with a total value of \$11.8 billion. The Amur 1650 is up against the Scorpene (France), Type 214 (Germany) and S-80 (Spain), among others.

The Amur has an armament of multirole torpedoes and anti-ship missiles, and can also effectively engage land targets with advanced cruise missiles, which may include the Indian-Russian Brahmos.

The Amur 1650 has the ability to remain submerged for over 25 days using its air-independent propulsion, five to 10 days longer than similar-class foreign boats.

Air-independent submarines, which usually use hydrogen-oxygen fuel cells, are quieter than conventional diesel-electric boats and do not have to surface or use snorkel tubes to breathe air, thereby exposing themselves to detection by radar and other sensors.

Devonport submarine HMS Tireless back in Plymouth after reactor coolant leak

A NUCLEAR submarine has been forced to return to its home base in Devonport after a coolant leak in the reactor compartment.

HMS Tireless initially returned to Faslane Naval Base in Scotland where the leak was inspected. The submarine was then sent back to Plymouth for repairs.

It is believed the Hunter-Killer sub had been exercising off the west coast when the leak was discovered.

Although HMS Tireless needs repairing, the Navy said there was "no intention" to carry out checks on the other operational Trafalgar class boats.

A Royal Navy spokesman said: "HMS Tireless returned to Devonport Naval Base for repair following a small coolant leak that was contained within the sealed reactor compartment.

"There is no intention to carry out additional maintenance or inspections on other submarines as a result of seeing this small defect in HMS Tireless.

"There is no risk to the public, the environment or the crew."

The spokesman also said it was "too early" to comment on the length of time repairs could take.

It is not the first time problems have arisen within the T-boat.

In 2010 it was revealed that inspections were undertaken on the entire fleet of Trafalgar class submarines after valves designed to release pressure from steam generators in an emergency were found to be blocked off aboard HMS Turbulent and HMS Tireless.

The problem arose because of the failure to remove 'blanks' fitted as part of testing during maintenance work at Devonport.

In 2007 two submariners aboard HMS Tireless were killed after an oxygen generator exploded while the vessel was submerged under the Arctic ice cap. HMS Tireless was also one of two T-Class boats put out of action for more than nine months after safety restrictions were imposed in September 2004. In 2000 the boat was also taken out of service when a fault appeared in the nuclear reactor.

The Navy will have four operational T-boats during repairs.

Sub Firings At 4 For 2013

Less than two months into the new year, the submarine fleet suffered its third and fourth firings of 2013 when the commanding officer and executive officer of attack submarine Jacksonville were relieved of command Feb. 10.

The firings stem from the sub's Jan. 10 collision with a civilian vessel in the Persian Gulf, said Lt. Cmdr. Lara Bollinger, a public affairs officer for Submarine Group 7.

Cmdr. Nathan Sukols, the CO, and Lt. Cmdr. Lauren Allen, the XO, were fired following an admiral's mast Feb. 10 in Manama, Bahrain, where the Jacksonville was in port as of Feb. 14.

The collision damaged one of the sub's two periscopes. Repairs, which cost \$2.7 million, were completed Feb. 1. The cause of the collision is still under investigation.

Both Sukols and Allen received nonjudicial punishment and were reassigned to administrative duties at Commander Submarine Force, Pacific Fleet, at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii. Both men declined an interview with Navy Times through SUBPAC public affairs. Rear Adm. Phillip Sawyer, commander of Submarine Group 7, also reviewed the actions of other crew members aboard the Jacksonville and "held accountable those whose actions did not meet the high standards we expect," Bollinger said. She declined to disclose how many sailors or officers were punished, as well as other details like ranks, positions and the nature of the punishments.

The first sub firing of the year also followed a collision.

Cmdr. Thomas Winter, CO of the attack submarine Montpelier, was relieved Jan. 4. His sub collided with the cruiser San Jacinto in October. The collision was caused by human error, poor teamwork by the Montpelier watch team and the commanding officer's failure to follow procedures for submarines operating at periscope depth, a Navy statement said.

The second relief of the year came Jan. 25 when Cmdr. Luis Molina, CO of the attack sub Pasadena, was relieved during the sub's overhaul in Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Maine. Navy officials have declined to discuss the circumstances relating to his release, but said leaders lost confidence in Molina's ability to lead Pasadena through the overhaul.

The high rate of sub reliefs so far this year does not represent any systemic issue with the sub force, said Cmdr. Monica Rousselow, a public affairs officer for Submarine Force Atlantic.

"There are 72 submarines, with a total of 90 submarine crews in the Navy, and the overwhelming majority of commanding officers are doing outstanding work, leading their crews on challenging missions around the world every day," she said in a statement. "Those removed from leadership positions prematurely constitute a very small percentage." Adm. Bill Gortney, head of Fleet Forces Command, told Navy Times earlier this month that investigations are key when it comes to mishaps.

"None of 'em are because it's an act of God," he said. "It's a series of events that is personnel-related or materiel-related, whether it's decision-making, supervisory or any of these reasons. We want to determine the root cause."

Search Begins for Famous World War II Submarine

One of the most celebrated submarines of World War II could soon be located 70 years after she was scuttled to avoid falling into enemy hands.

On Aug. 14, 1943, the H.M.S. Saracen was deliberately sunk by her crew near the town of Bastia, on the northern coast of the French island of Corsica, after being damaged in a clash with Italian warships. She has lain undisturbed at the bottom of the Mediterranean ever since, but now a new operation to find her wreck is under way.

The André Malraux, a state-of-the-art, \$13 million research vessel, departed from the French port of Marseille on Monday and is now combing the ocean floor in search of the lost British sub. France's underwater archaeological unit (DRASSM) is using side-scan sonar to locate the remains and will then deploy a robotic camera to examine her down in the depths.

"A copy of the resulting pictures and film will be sent to the Royal Navy Submarine Museum in Gosport for their archives," Terry Hodgkinson, a British author who has written extensively about the ill-fated vessel, told the U.K. Telegraph. "Some will also be sent to the family members of HMS Saracen's crew."

The 217-foot Saracen was one of the most successful Allied submarines marauding the seas of Europe. She torpedoed the Italian submarine Granito, the auxiliary submarine chaser Maria Angelette, the Vichy French tugs Provincale II and Marseillaise V, the Italian merchant ships Tagliamento and Tripoli and the German merchant vessel Tell, according to official records.

But on Aug. 13, 1943, she was mortally wounded by depth charges launched from the Italian corvettes Minerva and Euterpe; her superstitious captain, Lieut. Michael Lumby, insisted on waiting for a day to pass in order to avoid scuttling the ship on the unlucky Friday the 13th.

Two of the Saracen's 48 crewmembers died while attempting to flee the wreckage, meaning that her wreck is classed as an official war grave. Should the DRASSM find the submarine as expected, a bronze badge will be placed on top that bears the inscription: 'In memory of H.M.S. Saracen and her Crew who played a vital role in the Liberation of Corsica. Sank 14th August 1943.'

One sailor who managed to escape with his life was William T. H. Morris, who was captured and eventually moved to the infamous prisoner of war camp at Marlag und Milag Nord in Germany.

Morris was incredibly proud to serve on the Saracen and kept a fascinating logbook. One of his poems, called Here's to Us, includes the lines: "Here's to the gallant submariners; The boys with their torpedoes, by gad; Those cool, imperturbable, calm, indisputable; Nervy, inquisitive lads!"

USS Thresher to be honored with special postmark

April 10 marks 50th anniversary of nuclear submarine tragedy

The Portsmouth and Kittery, Maine, post offices are planning a special day to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the loss at sea of the U.S. Navy nuclear-powered submarine USS Thresher.

On Wednesday, April 10, Kittery Postmaster John Wickman, Portsmouth Postmaster Richard Provencher and their staffs will be on hand to stamp letters and postcards with a unique postmark documenting the occasion.

There will be two postmarks — 03804, zip code for the Eternal Patrol Station of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard; and 03904, the zip code for the Memorial Dedication Station in Kittery, Maine.

Specially authorized by the U.S. Postal Service, this postmark is a way to take home an inexpensive souvenir of the historical event.

The Thresher (SSN 593) was built at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and was commissioned in 1961. It was the first of its class and the most advanced seagoing vessel of its era. Designed to hunt and destroy Soviet submarines at the height of the Cold War, the Thresher was capable of diving deeper, quieter and deadlier than its counterparts.

The fast-attack submarine was lost April 10, 1963, during deep-dive trials more than 200 miles off the New England coast. The Navy ultimately concluded a piping failure caused the Thresher's nuclear reactor to shut down.

Once the vessel lost power, it sank toward the ocean's bottom before imploding from the sea's crushing water pressure, and 129 lives were lost. Today, it lies below 8,300 feet of water.

"We're expecting about 1,000 pieces of mail to be stamped during the first day or two," Provencher said. "We'll be doing this at the post office on Daniel Street, and we'll be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on April 10."

After the first couple of days, Provencher said, pieces of mail requesting a stamp will be stamped directly at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, put back into an self-addressed, stamped envelope, and mailed back to the sender at no cost.

"There will be a lot of collectors and old-timers from all around the country sending mail to be stamped," he said.

The Kittery Post Office will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on April 10.

There will be a ceremony at the shipyard that day, but because of security, members from the U.S. Postal Service may or may not be in attendance, said Tom Rizzo, spokesman for the U.S. Postal Service.

"The ceremony will be by invitation only," he said.

Customers wishing to receive the special postmark by mail have until 30 days after the event to send a self-addressed, stamped envelope containing the letter or envelope they want canceled to Postmaster, 80 Daniel St., Portsmouth, NH 03801-9998, or Postmaster, 10 Shapleigh Road, Kittery, ME 03904.

Breaking the Barrier: The Story of the Navy's first African American Submarine Commanding Officer

The Navy submarine community has an adage that says, "The number of surfaces must equal the number of dives." When submerged hundreds of feet beneath the sea, submarine Sailors have to put their differences, and sometimes even their rank, aside to ensure when they go under they can come back up – otherwise, everybody has a very bad day. The dynamic on a submarine is unique, but during a time when racial tensions were boiling over in America, adding a black officer to a submarine crew could have made things even more complicated. Somehow, Pete Tzomes made it work to his advantage, and that of the Navy's.

In May 1983, close to 30 years after Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a bus for a white man, Tzomes made his own splash in the history books, a sign of the changing times. On a spring day in Norfolk, Va., he would report for duty aboard USS Houston (SSN 713) as the first black commanding officer of a nuclear-powered submarine, a stark contrast to the life he envisioned for himself as a young man. "There were three things I was thinking about doing when I grew up: a professional baseball player, a garbage man or a pimp," laments Tzomes. "I had no role models. The reason that I thought about those is because I just thought that's how I can make money."

Born in 1944 in Williamsport, Penn., Tzomes is the older of two children born to James and Charlotte Tzomes. His mother instilled in him the value of hard work and discipline at an early age. In those days racism was not as overt in the North as the South. However, it was commonplace to hear the "N-word" thrown around. There was still a very distinct racist undertone. In fact, there was a street in Williamsport referred to as "N----r Hollow."

Even the neighborhood children provided a constant reminder that things were different for blacks. "Kids that were 10 or 11 years old would call my father by his first name, and that just used to bother me. And back in those days, that came with the turf. That was part of the way of keeping you in your place."

Regardless of his surroundings, his parents taught him to deal with racism and not to be sidetracked by it. "They taught me to live with it, not react, not get violent, because there would be better things to come especially after I grew up, just deal with it."

When Tzomes was in junior high school, he had an awakening of sorts about the direction he wanted to take his life. Midshipmen on a recruiting visit to his junior high school showed Tzomes and his classmates a Navy video called "Ring of Valor."

"It got my attention, and I started thinking that maybe I want to go to the Naval Academy."

But, in those days, blacks were viewed as inferior and not suitable to serve in prestigious positions. Tzomes learned this firsthand when he expressed interest to his school guidance counselor.

"I'll never forget those words. He says, 'Pete, why don't you concentrate on something reasonable? Negroes can't go to the Naval Academy.'"

Tzomes fired back at his counselor, "It didn't say that in the movie!"

The resistance didn't deter him. Instead, it lit a fire in Tzomes to make it into the academy.

To enter the Naval Academy, applicants had to receive a legislative appointment. The congressman in Tzomes' district gave a competitive exam to those seeking his appointment. His senior year of high school, Tzomes took the test but wasn't selected. Instead, he was an alternate. So Tzomes enrolled in Oneonta State University in upstate New York. However, he took the appointment test a second time, still only receiving an alternate spot, but because he had good grades he was selected to attend the Naval Academy as a qualified alternate.

In 1963, 250,000 people joined Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. for the civil rights march on Washington, D.C. That same year, in the face of Governor George Wallace physically blocking their way, Vivian Malone and James Hood stood their ground and were allowed to register for classes at the University of Alabama. Riots broke out in Birmingham, Ala. after four young black girls attending Sunday school were killed when a bomb exploded at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. Meanwhile, in Annapolis, Md., Pete Tzomes arrived at the U.S. Naval Academy campus.

"There were two [blacks] in my class and we still talk about that. You know, where were we when all this was happening? We were sheltered at the Naval Academy." Sheltered, but only to a degree. Although Tzomes was not subjected to the threat of lynching, vicious police dogs, or the unforgiving blow from a water hose, there were still those who brought their prejudiced views to Annapolis.

"At the Naval Academy in those days we had racial issues. Administratively, all of the rules were going to be right for blacks, but the way you got treated by upperclassmen and your classmates, that's different. I got called "n-----r" a few times while I was there. There were always the few who were like that. They didn't hide their feelings about you or about your race.

"When Dr. King got shot, there was some sort of news release, and we all heard about Dr. King getting shot. And one of my classmates who rowed crew at the academy ... very muscular, in very good shape, over six-feet tall, came up to me and says to me, 'Tomzy, what are your people going to do now your big leader's dead?' Just like that.

"And I told him, 'I know you're bigger than I am, but I'll tell you, I'll get one last kick in your crotch area and you'll never forget it. Get away from me!' And he did. But [he was] only one person. There were about 20 of us in our class, and he was the only person like that. That's typical of my experiences back in those days."

Tzomes would have to deal with prejudice and discrimination several more times throughout his time at the Naval Academy, but he overcame those challenges. The only thing worse than dealing with discrimination was when he found out he would not be able to become a pilot in the Marine Corps.

"I wanted to be a Marine pilot. And I went to take my flight physical my senior year; and, they said I was too short to fly. I was completely demoralized because that's all I wanted to do. But good grades open up all possibilities. I was on the equivalent of the dean's list at the Naval Academy, so I applied for the nuclear power program. I was the second black accepted into the nuclear-power program, and the first on submarines. It was prestigious."

Tzomes entered the submarine field, and after 12 months of nuclear-power training and six months of submarine training, he reported to the "blue crew" of the ballistic missile submarine USS Will Rogers (SSBN 659) in February 1969.

"When I got my commission in the 60s, it was not uncommon, especially in major ports like San Diego [and] Norfolk, white Sailors refused to salute black officers. Some would tell you, 'I ain't gonna take no orders from no n-----r officer.' I used to tell folks, 'Don't look at me. Look at what's on my collar.'"

"On my first submarine there were two blacks, a first class steward and a first class torpedoman. They looked at me with pride. You could see it in the way that they interacted with me. They were proud that there was a black officer that they can call 'sir.'"

Tzomes persevered through his career over the next 14 years. He was assigned to the pre-commissioning unit of the fast attack submarine USS Pintado (SSN 672). In December 1970, he served in division officer billets until completing his engineering officer qualification. In April 1973, Tzomes was assigned as engineering officer aboard USS Drum (SSN 672), where he served until August 1976. From September 1976 until September 1979, he was assigned to the nuclear propulsion examining board on the staff of then-Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor. In November 1979, he reported as executive officer aboard USS Cavalla (SSN 684), where he served for almost three years.

"Once I got through my first couple of submarines, it was like, 'You know this isn't that bad.' I liked what submarines did, especially when I started on fast attack, and I liked what they did on what we called 'spec ops' during the Cold War. That was exciting. I said, 'I want to command one of these.' If I was going to command one of these, I was going to be the first [African American] and I knew that."

While on his executive officer tour, Tzomes screened for a command position, with the knowledge that if he had a successful executive officer tour, he would attend commanding officer nuclear training and, ultimately, command his own submarine.

"The racial thing had nothing to do with motivating me except for the fact that I knew that if I got the command that I would be the first. But it wasn't, 'I want to be the first black commanding officer.' I want to be a commanding officer. This stuff is fun. I want to be in charge. This is what I want to do, just coincidentally I'm black."

In 1983, Tzomes took over as commanding officer of USS Houston in Norfolk and six months later, the submarine switched homeports to San Diego, where Tzomes received a hero's welcome.

"I'll never forget, it was 9 or 10 o'clock at night. I was just beaming. There were several folks from the black community in San Diego that made it a point. They were on the waterfront to greet me. It's kind of hard to describe. That just made me feel special."

By the 80s, the racial paradigm in American had shifted, and the experience Tzomes had was completely different.

"When I was in command, nobody's going to say, 'I ain't taking no orders from no n----r officer,'" said Tzomes. "Those days were gone. I did have some issues with a couple of chief petty officers that didn't like having a black commanding officer, but most of it was subtle. The playing field was more leveled... more opportunities for anybody to do almost anything they wanted to do."

"They did, in Ebony [magazine], a feature story on me when I was in command. The crew was very proud of that. They were very proud of their commanding officer. Once you earn the trust of all your shipmates, then all the other issues go away."

"I came back to the Naval Academy, and they had invited him to come speak. He talked to the midshipmen and afterwards, he stood around so folks could come talk to him. I walked up to him and introduced myself and started this conversation about [how] life is tough for me, and before I got more than a sentence or two into it, he gave that look like, 'You have no idea what it's really like!'" Grooms recalled. "And I remember the look, and it was the look of an older brother that wants you to do well. In his special way he said, 'You better toughen up and get going!' And I really think that's part of the reason I was able to achieve the things I have, because I had someone like that who cared enough to not sugarcoat what I needed to be doing. I think the world of him. He inspired me in a big way."

Grooms and Tzomes along with Rear Adm. Tony Watson, Capt. Will Bundy, Vice Adm. Mel Williams, Capt. Joe Peterson, Adm. Cecil Haney are now fondly referred to as the Navy's "Centennial Seven," the first seven African American submarine commanders.

"So as we were approaching the hundredth anniversary of the submarine force, there were seven African American officers who were commanding officers of submarines," Grooms said. "And so we had this relationship with the Black Engineer of the Year Awards, and we would gather there every year. It kind of dawned on the group collectively, although I'm happy to give Admiral Mel Williams most of the credit, it dawned on us that there's this special thing. It's 100 years, and there are seven of us and 'Centennial Seven' resonates."

From there, the Centennial Seven were born, and they have been committed to paying it forward ever since.

"We try to gather with aspiring submariners, the young junior officers working their way up, just to give them some insight," said Grooms. "I think what happens lots of times with the young folks is that they go into something where there is only one or two of them and they sort of think that, 'I'm on my own and I'm the only person that's ever experienced this.' And just like my experience with Captain Tzomes, who had seen a whole lot more of the challenges than I, you really do want the chance to talk candidly."

Grooms is now paving the way for more black submarine officers the same way Tzomes did years ago.

"When I see an African American officer, I beam with pride because I know what they've gone through to get trained and be where they are. As I count the number of young African Americans, there are still not enough. And it's been a few years since we had another reach command - it's been too many years. And so I do try to put my arm around their shoulders and help them if there is anything that I can continue to do to interact with the young guys and encourage them," said Grooms.

And while there is still room for growth, for African Americans to achieve more in the Navy, Tzomes said it is important to realize how far things have come.

"We're past the term where we need to be talking about 'first' and all these exceptions," said Tzomes. "That's terrific."

Navy & Veteran News and Other Gouge

New Co-pays for TRICARE Pharmacy Customers

TRICARE Management Activity (TMA) announced new TRICARE co-payments for prescription drugs effective today (February 1, 2013). The Fiscal Year 2013 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA - P.L. 112-239) authorizes higher co-pays on brand name and non-formulary medications that are not filled at military clinics or hospitals. There is no increase to co-pays for generic medications.

TRICARE Pharmacy co-pays vary based on the class of drug and where beneficiaries choose to fill their prescriptions. The co-pay for generic medications stays at \$5 when a prescription is filled at a network retail pharmacy. There is no co-pay when generic prescriptions are filled through TRICARE Home Delivery. The new co-pay for a 30-day supply of a brand name medication purchased at a retail network pharmacy will be \$17, up from \$12. Beneficiaries using TRICARE Home Delivery pay \$13 for brand name drugs, up from \$9; however, the Home Delivery price is for a 90-day supply.

The greatest change in co-pays applies to non-formulary medications. The \$25 co-pay for these drugs increases to \$44 at retail pharmacies, and \$43 through Home Delivery, and the TRICARE Uniform Formulary lists all medications TRICARE covers.

For fiscal 2014 and beyond, the new law limits annual co-pays increases to the same percentage level as retiree cost-of-living adjustments. In years when a COLA increase totals less than a dollar, it will be delayed a year and combined with the next adjustment so increases will always be \$1 or more. Thanks in part to strong opposition from FRA, this plan was approved rather than much larger pharmacy co-pays proposals by the Pentagon.

Pharmacies at military hospitals and clinics continue to provide medications with no co-pays. Visit <http://www.tricare.mil/Costs/PrescriptionCosts.aspx> for more details.

New VA Programs Streamline Claims Processing and Expand Awareness

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has launched a new initiative that could eliminate the requirement for an in-person medical examination for some veterans and shorten the time it takes to process disability compensation claims. The initiative, called Acceptable Clinical Evidence (ACE), was developed by both the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) to provide a veteran-centric approach for disability examinations. Use of the ACE process opens the possibility of doing assessments without an in-person examination when there is sufficient information in the record.

"ACE is a process improvement that will help us meet our goal to eliminate the claims backlog and provide more timely benefits to our veterans, their families and survivors," said Undersecretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey. "The initiative also saves veterans the inconvenience and costs associated with attending a medical examination."

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) also recently launched the "Make the Connection" program to inform veterans, their families, friends, and members of their communities about the resources designed to help vets live well. At MakeTheConnection.net, veterans and their loved ones will find information, insight, and support for dealing with and working through a variety of common life experiences, day-to-day symptoms, as well as mental health conditions. MakeTheConnection.net is a free and confidential resource.

On The Web

Some Websites and Blogs of Interest to USSVICB Members

[Navy Plan Of The Day \(subscribe by email\)](#) [All Hands Online \(very cool\)](#) [Shift Colors Online](#)

[Track Every Airplane In The World](#) (email your favorite links for publication to [steve](#))

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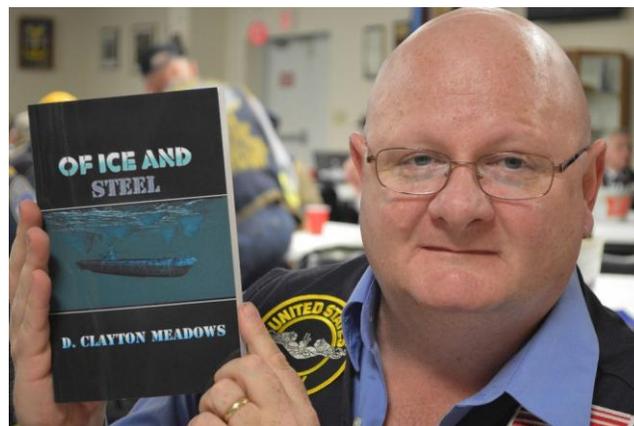
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