

United States Submarine Veterans, Inc., Charleston Base
Minutes of Business Meeting
11 April 2024

Opening Ceremonies:

- The April 2024 Base Meeting was called to order by Base Commander Mike Ciesielko with a quorum of three officers and a total of 57 members. The meeting started at 1902 with the sound of the diving alarm. Vice Commander Tom Lawson was not in attendance this evening.
- The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the Base Commander Mike Ciesielko and recited by the members in attendance.
- The Invocation and the Tolling of the Boats lost during the month of April was given by Base Chaplain Nick Nichols.
- Submarines lost during the month of April:
 - **USS PICKEREL (SS-177)** April 3, 1943 – 7th war patrol Lost with all hands – 74 souls
 - **USS SNOOK (SS-279)** April 8, 1945 – 9th war patrol Lost with all hands – 84 souls
 - **USS THRESHER (SSN-593)** April 10, 1963 – sea trials Lost with all hands – 129 souls
 - **USS GUDGEON (SS-211)** April 18, 1944 – 12th war patrol Lost with all hands – 79 souls
 - **USS GRENADE (SS-210)** April 22, 1943 – 6th war patrol 76 POWs – 72 survived the war
 - **Five Boats and 370 Men Lost**

Hospital Corpman Senior Chief, Submarines
Robert Franklin Hopkins, USN Retired
Departed on Eternal Patrol on April 5, 2024

- The Creed of USSVI was read by Base Commander Mike Ciesielko.
- Base Commander Mike Ciesielko welcomed members and guests to the meeting.

Holland Club Award Presentation:

- Base Commander Mike Ciesielko introduced Holland Club Chairman Bill Freligh.
- HC Chairman Bill Freligh read the names of the former WWII Swamp Fox Chapter members and many of their contributions to the U.S. Navy Submarine Force and USSVI Charleston Base. All of these men are now on Eternal Patrol.
- Bill recognized Honorary Member Casey Power – in attendance this evening – who would drive from Atlanta to ensure that his dad Stacy could be at the meeting each month.
- Bill explained the purpose of the Holland Club and read the text of the USSVI National award.
- Base Commander Mike Ciesielko read the award from Charleston Base and signed each certificate.
- John Lookabill assisted the ceremony by presenting the Holland Club hat to each man.
- Bill Freligh read the Name, Qual Date and Boat of each man below, who came forward with his guests to accept the Holland Club award. Each individual presentation was recorded with a photograph, followed by a group picture once all citations were given:
 - **EMC(SS) John Brotherton**
 - **LT William Carman**
 - **STSCS(SS) Timothy Esch**
 - **LT Thomas Holcombe**
 - **MM2(SS) Ronnie Kerstetter**
 - **ETCS(SS) Glenn Little**
 - **CWO(SS) Robert W. MacPherson**
 - **HMCM(SS) Raymond Pelland**
 - **MMC(SS) Patrick Toelle**
- Bill Freligh asked the senior Base members – in turn – to stand and be recognized as submarine qualified for 65/60/55 years.

Introductions of New Attendees:

- The following men were present at the Base meeting for the first time:
 - Michael Sharp – O-7 – Qualified on USS Swordfish – August 1977 – Also served aboard USS Hawkbill SSN666, USS San Francisco SSN711, USS Swordfish SSN579 (Twice as JO and XO). Is Lifetime Member of USSVI and Bremerton Base.
 - Keegen Cunningham – MMN1 – Qualified on USS Florida SSGN728 - Active Duty serving at Nuclear Power School
 - Kurtis Geske – MMN1 – Qualified on USS Maryland SSBN738 – October 2019 – Active Duty serving at Nuclear Power School
 - Patrick Patrick Dermody – RMC/ETC – Qualified on USS Blueback SS581 – June 1987 – Also served aboard USS Salt Lake City SSN716
 - Bill Yeager – RO – Qualified on USS L Mendel River SSN686 – 1987
 - Bob McPherson – CWO – Qualified on USS George Washington SSBN598 – August 1974 – Also served aboard USS Halibut SSN587, USS San Francisco SSN711, USS Ohio SSBN726, USS Indiana SSN789, as Docking Officer in Holy Loch and USS Hunley AS31
- Bob McPherson, who coordinated attendance of the Charleston Base Meeting this evening as part of SSN711 Reunion activities, asked for the men to stand for recognition. We are glad to have about twenty of those here at the Base Meeting tonight.
- Base Commander Mike Ciesielko requested guests to depart the room for the remainder of the meeting.

Old Business:

- None

New Business:

- None

Secretary – Gordon Long:

- The Minutes from the March Base meeting had been emailed to all Base members, however, a correction was made to the Minutes afterward. The actual error was noted to the members in attendance this evening. The corrected Minutes had been already published on the Base Website for download. There were no other changes, additions or deletions. The Minutes were approved as corrected and published.

Treasurer – Base Commander for Ricky Collins:

- The Treasurer's Report for March was published and promulgated on the website. There were no revisions. The report was approved as presented.

Chaplain – Nick Nichols:

There are several shipmates and family members who have given me information which they wish to be kept confidential at this time.

- **HMCS(SS) Robert Franklin Hopkins, 87, USN Ret.,** departed on Eternal Patrol on April 5th in Salisbury NC. Hop joined the Navy in 1956 and retired in 1986 after serving 30 years. He was a life member of USSVI National [2003] and a member of three bases: Charleston [2003], Carolina Piedmont [2008], and his primary base Nat Greene [2010], a member of the Holland Club having been qualified for 56 years, and past commander of Rockwell (NC) AmVets Post 845. In 1968, He qualified on USS LEWIS & CLARK SSBN-644 in 1968. He also served on EVERGLADES AD-24, SEAHORSE, GEORGE WASHINGTON, USS WOODROW WILSON and CANOPUS AS-34. He had several shore tours retiring in 1986 from Naval Hospital Charleston SC. All services are taking place in NC. A note of condolence from CB was placed on the funeral home website.
- **Rick Wise** had surgery last Wednesday to remove the nodule from his left lung although it turned out to be 3 nodules. He called me from recovery at 0930 to tell me the surgery went well. He was in the hospital overnight. He had the help of Ed Stank to take him for the surgery and stayed with him then Woody Woodsmall brought him home. He is doing well.

- **Ken Curtis** fell again on Friday 5 April and banged his face up really bad. He is home now and still going to PT twice a week.
- **Tom Lawson** is now on O2 treatment. Having a difficult time breathing.
- **Fred Woodley** had a biopsy on his right ear the morning of the 11th. Took a good-sized chunk off, about nickel sized. Hopefully comes back benign or he starts Mohs surgeries! Saying his prayers! He was in the hospital in March with a serious UTI and sepsis. He was treated with antibiotics and is now recovering at home. He still has some problems and is scheduled for more testing on 23rd followed by a scope of the bladder on the 25th.
- **Tom Cyrek** is at home with a home health nurse coming by each day. He is feeling better and has gone to the After Battery. If you call do so between 1200-1400 so as not to interfere with his evening meds.
- **Jerry Stout** continues his treatment. He has a PETscan on 25 May.
- **Larry Rosselot** had reverse surgery on his right shoulder 6 March. He is home and recovering well.
- **Al Dempster** and his wife, Connie, are in The Bridge of Charleston Assisted Living. His mailing address is: Alan Dempster – Room 222, 2590 Elms Plantation Blvd., North Charleston, SC 29406. They have a phone in their apartment – (843) 793-1187.
- **Thom Beach** is at the VICTORY HOUSE in Walterboro. Thom is in a private room in the Elliott Pavilion Rm A-117a. His phone number is 843.809.9417.
- **Don Londergan** is in Cypress Square on Midland Pkwy in room 136. Has no phone and hardly any visitors. Visit if you are able.
- Complete/update your page 2 if you have not done so.

Webmaster – Nick Nichols:

- If you change your number or drop your home line, please contact either Larry, Nick or the COB so that we can make the necessary changes locally and with National.
- Until told differently, continue to use the website URL of <https://ussubvets.org>
- Since Rick Wise will be out of town, he has asked me to conduct the April 13 Lost Boats / Amberjack Crew / service and bell tolling. The weather looks good for the ceremony to be held at the CWM. The men from the SAN FRANCISCO SSN-711 Reunion will join us for the event. RADM Sharp will be our guest speaker.

Social Media – Lewis Leal:

- Nothing to report

Membership – Nick Nichols for Larry Knutson

- We received two new members tonight. Charleston Base now has 255 members. We are still in the #3 spot behind Groton and Hampton Roads.

National Awards – Mike Ciesielko

- Nothing to report.

Scholarship – Carl Chinn

- The current balance in the Scholarship Fund is \$12,607.
- Challenge coins are available for \$12. At the end of the meeting we have a drawing which requires possession of a challenge coin.
- Last month, Anthony Mazza won the Depth Charge and donated the entire amount to the Scholarship Fund.
- Application deadline for Scholarship submissions has now passed.
- The committee has three books to auction this evening.

Fleet Reserve Association – Nick Nichols for Ken Hutchison

- The proceeds from the Branch 269 Auxiliary Yard Sale will be used for the SE Regional Convention.
- The FRA LowCountry Boil will be held on Saturday, May, 18 beginning at 1130. The proceeds for this will also support the SE Regional Convention. Admission is \$12. There will be raffles available. Some of our SubVets are also cooking.

Election Coordinator – Nick Nichols for Ken Hutchison

- This year, the offices of Vice Commander and Secretary are scheduled for the May Base Meeting.
- At this time, there are three candidates for Vice Commander:
 - Tom Lawson – Incumbent
 - Ed Stank
 - Gordon (Willy) Williams
- Currently, there is only the incumbent, Gordon Long as candidate for Secretary.

Recreation – Johnny Brown

- Planning River Dogs game for May 24. We will be in Section 205 – Rows 2/3. We will be in the SHADE this time. More info to come.

NNPTC Liaison – Anthony Mazza

- Anthony reminded everyone of the Sub Ball on April 13.
- NNPTC will be holding a picnic tomorrow, April 12 beginning at 1300. All SubVets are invited. Look for the smoke and you will find it. If no Base approved ID, please contact Anthony.

Nuclear Power School Awards – Anthony Mazza for Phil Nunnally

- The next NPS graduation will be April 26. Anthony will be there and expects Phil also.
- Meet in Navy Exchange parking lot 0800 to carpool in to the ceremony.

Newsletter – Phil Nunnally

- Not present

Little David – Greg Landry for Phil Nunnally

- We changed out a bunch of boards on the last working party, but it still needs paint. Planned for April 18.
- The NNPTC First Class Petty Officer's Association is planning to help. Thanks to each one.

SC License Plates – Ed Stank

- Has a contact in DMV. Ed is planning a meeting.
- Before anything can be done, we must raise \$6,800 for the state fee.
- Some members have made donations to the effort. See the Treasurer Ricky Collins if you would like to donate.

Special Events – Tom Holcombe

- Nothing to report.

Hunley Coordinator – Tom Holcombe

- Nothing to report.

PAO – OPEN

- The position is open.

Storekeeper – Woody Woodsmall

- The National SK has issued a new patch – 60TH (DIAMOND) Anniversary
- Woody read names of those who wanted a patch/coin set.
- Woody has 55/60/65 year rockers for the Holland Club patches. There is no charge for these.

COB – Greg Landry

- Greg spoke about enjoyable time that everyone had during the Oyster Roast at The After Battery.
- The CPO rate was established on April 1, 1893.
- We will need some help with tables/chairs at the Amberjack/Lost Boats Ceremony.
- With 255 members of Charleston Base, we are not far from second place.

VA – Mike Ciesielko for Tom Lawson

- Nothing to report.

Vice Commander – Tom Lawson

- Not present.

Base Commander – Mike Ciesielko

- Thanked everyone for being at the meeting tonight.
- Mike especially enjoyed having the group from SSN711 at the Base Meeting tonight for the Holland Club induction.
- Mike thanked Admiral Sharp for his willingness to speak at the Amberjack/Lost Boats ceremony on Saturday.

Good of the Order**Nuclear Historian – Rick Carlson**

- Not present.

After Battery – Ray Sparks

- The Hog Roast will be April 20 – 27. Different menu each day.
- There will be two golf outings on Thursday/Friday – Lake Marion and Santee Country Club.
- The After Battery is open each Wednesday for dinner.

Gun Club – Mike Ciesielko

- Graphics artist is designing a patch for those who come out.
- Mike's wife is an extremely accurate shot and is looking to the shoots.

Drawings & Auctions

- Submarine Book with Osborne comments – Kurtis Geske - \$60
- Submarine Book – Tim Howard – \$60
- Navy Book – Casey Power – \$40
- Challenge Coin Drawing – Lewis Leal would have won, but did not have a coin.
- FRA Drawing – Chuck Gravely
- Depth Charge Drawing – Rodney McKanna – Required a second draw since the first was not claimed.

Closing Ceremony

- Chaplain Nick Nichols led the group in a prayer of Benediction.
- Base Commander Mike Ciesielko announced adjournment of the meeting with a sound of three blasts of the diving alarm.
- Meeting closed at 2008.