



The "MidWatch"



December 2008
Volume 14 - Issue 12

The monthly newsletter of Perch Base - USSVI Phoenix, Arizona

<http://perch-base.org>

What's "Below Decks" in the Midwatch

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Lest We Forget Those Still On Patrol

DECEMBER ETERNAL PATROLS

| | | | |
|-------------|-------|---------------|--------|
| USS Sealion | SS195 | Dec. 10, 1941 | 5 men |
| USS F-1 | SS20 | Dec. 17, 1917 | 19 men |
| USS S-4 | SS109 | Dec. 17, 1927 | 34 men |

NEXT MEETING
 American Legion Post #105
 3534 W. Calavar Rd., Phoenix, AZ 85053
 (see map on page 4)

2008 Booster Club

Perch Base, USSVI, cannot support its operation on dues alone. Nor does the Base have any other successful source of income. The Booster Club is a list of those individuals who contribute extra money to keep the Base solvent.



Jerry Allston, David Anderson, Ted Asbell, Reynaldo Altos, Gary Bartlett, Kenneth Becker, Richard Bernier, Ron Beyer, Walt Blomgren, Ed Brooks, David Carpenter, Roger Cousin, George Crider, George Debo, Jim Denzien, Butch Deshong, Jim Edwards, Harry Ellis, Joe Errante, David Fledderjohn,

Tom Fooshee, Charles Greene, Billy Grieves, William Grissom, Michael Haler, Robert Hanson, Dave Harnish, Ed Hawkins, Harry Heller, Glenn Herold, Les Hillman, Stephen Hough, Davy Jones, Mike Keating, Denny Kerton, Jack Kimball, Darrell Lambert, Al Landeck, Doug LaRock, Burtis Loftin, George Long, George Marions, Raymond Marshall, Sandy Martin, Terry Martin, Bob May, Alan Miller, Paul Miller, Roger M. Miller, Tim Moore, Bob Nance, Jim Nelson, James F. Newman, James W. Newman, Joe Orteba, George Petrovitz, Royce Pettit, Wayne Pettes, Stan Reinhold, Robie Robinson, Stanley Rud, Mel Rycus, Ken Schonauer, Emil Schoonejans, Garry Shumann, Rick Simmons, Wayne Kirk Smith, Adrian Stuke, Jim Thomson, Turk Turner, William Tippet, Jim Wall, Forrest Watson, Donald Whitehead, Ed Wolf, Jerry Yowell, John Zaichkin.





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Sailing Orders



DECEMBER MEETING

*The December Perch Base meeting
(and future meetings at this time)
will be at the American Legion
Post #105, located at 3534 W.
Calavar Rd., Phoenix, AZ. This is
1/2 block northwest of the inter-
section of 35th Ave. and Thun-
derbird.*

(See map on the next page)



ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET

Saturday January 24th from 1500
(3:00 pm) until 2200 (10:00pm).

\$12.50 per person (\$25 per
couple).

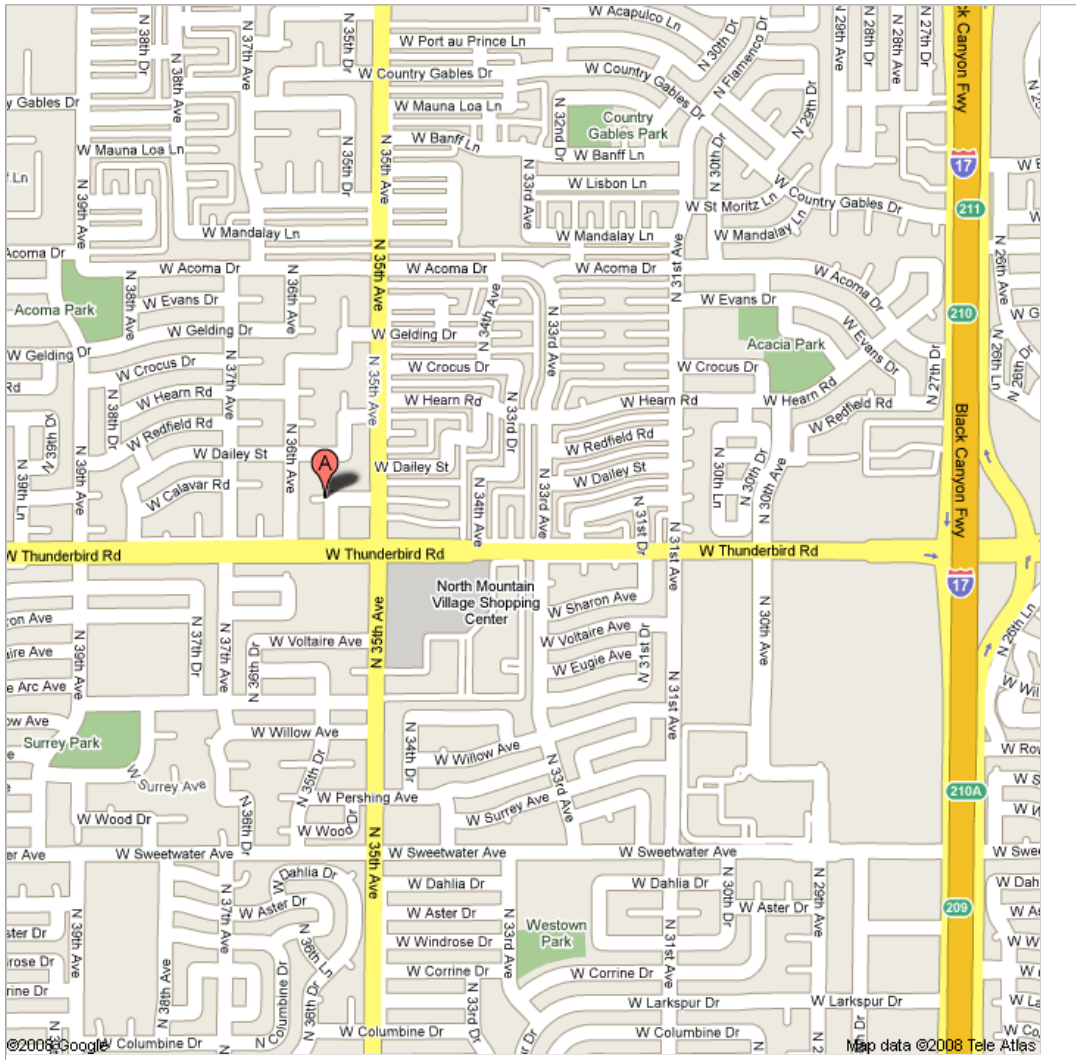
3:00 pm until 4:30 pm appetizer
and drinks;

5:00 pm dinner and dessert;

6:30 pm Awards and recognition.
8:00 pm until 10:00 pm socializing.



Address **3534 W Calavar Rd**
Phoenix, AZ 85053



Check out this map to get to the American Legion Post #105

Foundation Shipmates



These organizations and individuals have contributed to the Perch Base Foundation and deserve special recognition as "Foundations Shipmates." Perch Base members are encouraged to use these organizations as a way of saying, "thanks."

Avondale Toyota
Larry Harker Auto Repair Inc.
Fairings - Etc
White Shears Flowers
Frank Bono Metal Design
Southwest Steel Sales LLC



ETERNAL PATROL PREPARATIONS

Shipmates, while we hope your day and those of your shipmates is far off in the future, we must nevertheless prepare. Please copy this notice and place it with your will or important papers.

IMPORTANT

In the case of my death, please immediately notify the U.S. Submarine Veterans Inc., (USSVI) at 877-542-3483 or 360-337-2978 and give the person on duty the information regarding my death, funeral, and burial arrangements, plus who they can contact for follow-up and support.

Please ask them to contact my local chapter's Base Commander with this information as well (they can look it up in their membership records).

This information can alternatively be E-Mailed to the National Office at office@ussvi.org.

Still Recovering - Jim Nelson

The latest info on shipmate Jim Nelson is that he has been moved to Kindred Hospital, 13216 N. Plaza Del Rio Blvd, Peoria AZ. He continues to make very slow progress in his recovery and at this time, no visitors are allowed.

Please send all cards to the home address:

9503 W. Spanish Moss Ln.
Sun City, AZ 85373-1741

Please continue to keep both Jim and Nancy in your prayers.

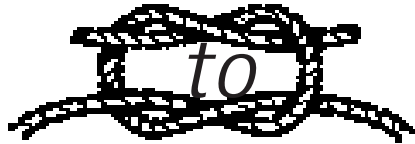
Need a Ride to a Meeting?

If you ever need a ride to a meeting, don't kiss off the meeting. Contact the Base's Chaplain, Howard Doyle to arrange a ride. Howard can be reached at:

(623) 935-3830 - home
(602) 228-2445 - mobile
d-hdolyle@msn.com



Shipmate



Shipmate

Shipmates,

THE DEADLINE TO RENEW YOUR ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP IS THE END OF THIS MONTH!

You may be a Holland Club member, Life Member in both USSVI and Perch Base or you may have signed up for multiple years in USSVI. If this is the case, please let this letter remind you that without your donations the base's survival would be questionable. I am – of course – talking about the Booster Club. Please show your support by sending a contribution and remember, no matter what the amount, it is appreciated. If you would like to make this a tax deductible contribution, please make your check out to: Arizona Submarine Veterans, Perch Base Charitable foundation.

Please take an active interest in your base. There are many activities and positions but few stepping up to help. This is your base – make it the best there is.

Send your check made out to the base or its charitable foundation to the Base Treasurer at:

Dave Harnish
6509 West Devonshire Ave
Phoenix, AZ 85033-3350

Military Retired / Social Security COLA to Increase in 2009

The 2009 military retired pay cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will be 5.8%. This increase, which goes into effect on December 1, 2008, also applies to SBP annuities, Social Security checks, and VA disability and survivor benefits. Retirees will see the increase in their January, 2009 checks.

Note: This annual Cost-of-Living-Adjustment is NOT in any way related to the annual military pay raise for active duty and reserve service members. In fact, this years COLA increase is larger than the 2009 military pay raise of 3.9%.

All retirees who retired before January 1, 2008 will receive the 5.8 percent Cost-of-Living-Adjustment.

Retirees who first became a member of the uniformed services before Sept. 8, 1980 and retired on or after January 1, 2008 will receive the 5.0 percent Cost-of-Living-Adjustment.

Retirees who first became a member of the uniformed services on or after Sept. 8, 1980, and retired in 2008 will receive a Partial COLA on a prorated basis as follows:

Jan. 1, 2008, and March 31, 2008, will receive 5.0% April 1 - June 30, 2008 will receive 3.8% July 1 - Sept. 30, 2008 will receive 1.2%. Those who retired after Oct. 1, 2008, will see no COLA this year.

Retirees who first entered the military after Sept. 8, 1980 and retired before Jan. 1, 2008 will also receive the 5.8 percent COLA.

Retirees who first became members of the uniformed services on or after Aug. 1, 1986 and elected to receive a Career Status Bonus at 15 years, and retired on or before Jan. 1, 2008, will receive an increase of only 4.8 percent.

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NEWS-03: Did you serve on USS Carbonero 65-68? If so PLEASE READ!

Submitted by: Bill Lee on 10/23/2008

The below was posted on one of the BBSs by Gil Raynor. If any of you know of anyone connected to this boat, please pass this along.

Bill

USS CARBONERO (SS-337)

This ALERT was passed to me today. Please alert all submariners. Thank you.

Our ASR/ARS Deep Sea Divers Secretary/Treasurer Chuck Micele sent this in his latest newsletter and I thought it might be pertinent to some of you or someone you know.

If you were aboard the USS Carbonero (SS-337) during any of the following dates: May & June 1965 August & September 1966 or April & May 1968, you should contact the nearest VA Medical Center and request an evaluation from their Environmental Agents Group.

This was the boat that was used for the SHAD testing to determine vulnerabilities to chemical and/or biological warfare.

For more information contact Ted McAnly - his email address is thmjmac@netzero.net.

NEWS-06: A reminder about USS Cavalla and Seawolf Park

Submitted by: Pat Householder on 11/15/2008

The situation at Seawolf Park in Galveston is grim.

They lost some of the buildings including the storage container of artifacts. The Cavalla and Stewart floated out of their berths and didn't make it back into their trenches. The Destroyer Escort Stewart is listing dangerously to starboard.



While the ships themselves look sound, a great deal of work will have to go into restoration of the exhibits. Some of their volunteers are already at work and are looking for your help.

The Cavalla Foundation is a 501(c)(3) not for profit association and donations are tax deductible.

They are selling IKE Recovery Crew T-shirts, in dark blue cotton, similar to their very popular Restoration Crew T-Shirts.

Please consider helping the CHF out with a direct contribution.

Cavalla Historical Foundation

c/o Hurricane Ike Recovery
Raynor & Associates
PO Box 821309
Houston, TX 77281-1309

Click on the link below for recent photos.

http://www.ussvi.org/Documents/Online_Organization_Cavallaneedshelp.pdf

This is an official US SUBMARINE VETERANS (USSVI) email communication

We Came in First!!



The new Base float, a 1/15th scale model of the USS Phoenix (SSN-702), made its grand premier at the Anthem Parade the Saturday before Veterans Day. Then, the big parade through downtown Phoenix where the Perch Base entry won 1st Place, Veterans Service Organization, Historical. Bravo Zulu to all shipmates who help make this come to pass.



Perch Base Commander is Arizona Chef of the Year

The 2008 Chef of the Year for the American Culinary Federation Chef's Association of Arizona is Chef Stanley (Stan) N. Reinhold, our own Base Commander. Stan is the Executive Chef / Director of Dining Services at MSD (Morrison Senior Dining) ATCA (Airline Training Center Arizona) Lufthansa Flight Training, Goodyear, AZ, USA.



He is currently the elected secretary for the Chef's Association of Arizona and has served the chapter for four years. Stan's many community volunteer programs and willingness to donate his time and energy have been extremely valuable to the chapter and community for many years.

He is a graduate of Johnson and Wales University, Providence, Rhode Island with an Associate in Occupational Science degree Culinary Arts, May 1992; Summa cum Laude, and a Bachelor of Science degree Food Service Management May 1994; Magna cum Laude. Stan resides in Peoria, AZ with his wife, Jane, of 33 years.



A Message from our President

It's a fact: The US Merchant Marine Academy is the only one of our 5 federal academies to be uniquely honored to carry a battle standard as part of its color guard. That flag represents to their student body, and proudly to the rest of the world, honor for the 142 cadet midshipmen who died while serving an integral part of their sea training during WWII.

It's a fact: Some day the last US SubVet WWII will be gone and I am comfortable knowing that after that day SubVets Inc will carry our battle standard honoring our 3,505 shipmates who died in WWII on the 52 lost boats, and thus "To Perpetuate The Memory Of Those Shipmates Who Gave Their Lives In Warfare In WWII"

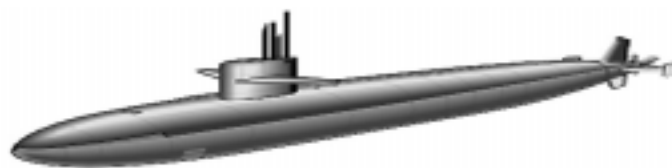
Kap(SS) 4 Kid(SS)

On September 18, 2008, I and other base shipmates had another delightful Kap(SS) 4 Kid(SS) presentation at the Phoenix Children's Hospital. We were again hosted by Kari Green and some of her staff and spent about an hour with the children. We shared submarine stories and watched an underway video that was filmed on the USS Helena SSN-725 when I had the good fortune to go to sea with in June of 2006. Again, the children and the staff appreciated our visit and look forward to our return in the future.

We presented the kids with Honorary Submariner certificates and caps. I spoke with one of the moms whose son David is pictured here. She was really excited about our visit because her brother, David's uncle, is currently serving on a Boomer somewhere in the Pacific. I sent David's mom an e-mail with the attached photo so she could send it to David's uncle.

Tim Moore

Past Commander, Perch Base, USSVI



From the Wardroom *Base Commander's Message*

Dear Friends and Shipmates,

Our debut the USS Phoenix SSN-702 Float in the Anthem Veterans Day Parade on November 8, 2008 was a huge success; and then the Phoenix Veterans Day Parade on Tuesday November 11, 2008 was attended by 225,000 people (estimated by the media).

It seemed to me to be the largest turn out for Veterans Day in years. Howard Doyle received an invitation to Phoenix Veteran Day Awards dinner Thursday evening November 20. Our Vice-President, Jim Denzien and Newsletter Editor, Chuck Emmett attended and return with some nice hardware, a First Place (Blue Ribbon) for Historical Theme Entry. The first of many awards for our USS Phoenix SSN-702 Float will garnish.

Our November 15th meeting, at American Legion Post #44 in downtown Scottsdale, was well attended. A special "thank you" to our guest speaker, John Dudas, one of the Regional VA Representative for the State of Arizona. John spoke on the workings of the Veterans Administration and provided a lot of good information. John is a Life Member of USSVI and Gudgeon Base in Prescott, AZ. Another special "thank you" to Jack Messersmith, Western District 1 Commander, for being there supporting Perch Base.

We will be returning to American Legion Post #105, 3534 W. Calavar Rd., Phoenix, AZ 85053 (just 1/2/ block northwest of Thunderbird and 35th Ave.) for our December 20th meeting.

Fraternally,

Stan Reinhold, Commander – Perch Base USSVI

November Meeting Minutes

The regular monthly meeting of the Arizona Submarine Veterans, Perch Base was convened at the American Legion, Post 44, Scottsdale AZ at 1300 hours on 15 November 2008. Stan Reinhold, Base Commander, called the meeting to order.

The membership was led in a prayer of invocation by Howard Doyle, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and a standard ceremonial opening. A moment of silence was observed for shipmates on eternal patrol and the tolling ceremony for boats lost in October was conducted.

According to the sailing list, there were twenty-four members and guests present. Minutes from the October 2008 regular meeting as published in the Midwatch were approved. Treasurer Dave Harnish reported the Base's financial status as of the first day of November 2008. A motion was made and seconded to accept the Treasurer's report as read. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Reports of Officers and Committee Chairmen

Vice Commander – Jim Denzien had nothing to report.

Chief of the Boat – Jim Edwards had nothing to report.

Chaplain – Howard Doyle had nothing to report.

Webmaster – Ray Samson was not present.

Membership Chairman – David Fledderjohn was not present.

Newsletter Editor – Chuck Emmett had nothing to report

Storekeeper – DeWayne Lober had nothing to report.

Past Base Commander - Tim Moore had nothing to report.

Old Business

Vice Commander Jim Denzien reported on the status of the "Save Our Sail" project. The presentation made to the Parks and Recreation Review Board concerning the placement of the USS Phoenix (SSN702) sail and rudder in Steele Indian School Park was successful. The Review Board approved the concept and we can now proceed. The debut of the new float is complete. Information was provided concerning the two parades and the static display at Echo Mountain School that we participated in for Veterans Day.

New Business

Shipmates Chuck Emmett and Jim Denzien will be attending the Veterans Day Parade Awards banquet to receive our award. Shipmate Barry Bowers agreed to become the float/parade coordinator. Kap(SS) 4 Kid(SS) presentations will be conducted on a regular basis: twice a year. We will be moving our meetings to the second Saturday of the month commencing in January 2009. We are closing in on a location for the Annual Awards Banquet. We will also be having a picnic this spring.

Guest Speaker

Shipmate John Dudas, a member of Gudgeon Base and Northern Supervisor for the Arizona Department of Veterans Services, gave a presentation on Veterans Benefits. The presentation was well received and a question and answer period followed.

Good of the Order

The content of the e-mail received from Vice Chairman Pete Lumianski of the USS Phoenix Commission regarding the result of the presentation to the Parks and Recreation Review Board. The e-mail contained information on where the process is now headed.

50/50 Drawing

The 50/50 drawing was won by Sandy Bernard.

Adjournment

All the outstanding business having been concluded, it was moved and seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion carried by voice vote. Howard Doyle offered the closing prayer and the meeting was adjourned.

Jim Denzien

Vice Commander





From the Desk Of the Sea Hag

Perch Base SubVettes

The parades are now history. Anthem was fun and the Phoenix parade was great! Our float won a first prize in the As usual, APS was fabulous, with breakfast, shirts, pins, hats and the after the parade pizza. I am sorry more of you couldn't join us. Maybe next year!

At the men's November meeting, John Dudas spoke about the VA and all it could do for us. He handed out information to all attendees. Very helpful information.

The men have decided that we will be having meetings at American Legion 105 from now on. They have come to an agreement with management. There is now a place there for us ladies to meet also, so we won't have to go to Taylor's Chowder House anymore...unless we want to, of course.

The Award's Banquet will be at 105 on January 24th. Time to be announced.

Membership dues are due (does that sound right?), so get your checks in the mail to Jane Reinhold, 8318 N. 97th Avenue, Peoria, AZ 85345.

Jim Nelson has been moved to Kindred Hospital in Peoria. He is making progress, albeit slowly. Nancy is holding her own at this point. Keep them in your prayers.

I hope to see lots and lots of you on December 20th at 105!

Mary



Nautical Nuances

or,

Did You Know?

- Two wives of Presidents of the United States have sponsored submarines. Mrs. Dwight D. Eisenhower christened the USS NAUTILUS, and Mrs. John F. Kennedy christened the USS LAFAYETTE.
- A submarine often navigates by sound when submerged. Sound can travel 3,000 nautical mile or more through water.
- On August 17, 1958, the USS SKATE circumnavigated the globe in about fifty minutes. The SKATE was at a radius of about two miles from the North Pole at the time, and the distance traveled in the circumnavigation was about twelve miles.
- USS TRITON, the only American made twin reactor ship ever built, on May 10, 1960, completed the first totally submerged circumnavigation of the world when she followed the route of Ferdinand Magellan for 36,000 miles during 84 days beneath the surface.
- When the nuclear powered submarine USS SEADRAGON surfaced at the North Pole while charting the Northwest Passage in August 1960, the crew organized a baseball game. Because of Polar time differences, when a batter clouted a home run it would land in either the next day or in 'yesterday'.
- The USS SKIPJACK was the first submarine designed from the keel up for top underwater performance using nuclear power. An earlier SKIPJACK was the first submarine to cross the Atlantic ocean under her own power (Newport, Rhode Island to Ponta Delgada, Azores, in 1917).
- Coronation ceremonies of Emperor Alexander II of Russia in 1855 were enlivened by a submarine concert. Wilhelm Bauer, a Bavarian inventor, took three musicians under the waters of Kronstadt Harbor in a submarine he had built, where they played appropriate music during the coronation. The music was distinctly heard on the surface.
- United States Submarines destroyed a total of 1314 Japanese ships during World War II, including one battleship, eight aircraft carriers, fifteen cruisers, forty-two destroyers, and twenty-three submarines. Against this score, fifty-two U.S. Submarines were lost.
- The USS SKATE (SSN 578) was the first vessel ever to surface at the North Pole, when on March 17, 1959 she surfaced there to conduct memorial services for the renowned Arctic explorer Sir Hubert Wilkins.
- USS SKATE and USS SEADRAGON, after affecting a historic rendezvous under the ice, surfaced together at the North Pole through an opening in the ice on August 1962.



Eternal Patrol December 10, 1941

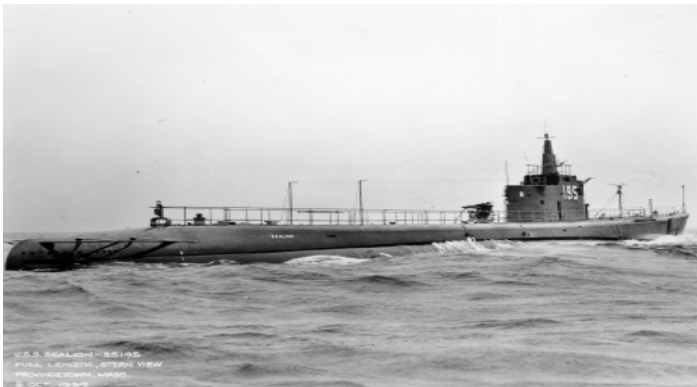
Editors Note: Less we forget, each month, one boat on eternal patrol will be highlighted in this newsletter. Sailors, rest your oars.

The Final Patrol

Lord, this departed shipmate with dolphins on his chest
Is part of an outfit known as the best.
Make him welcome and take him by the hand.
You'll find without a doubt he was the best in all the land.
So, heavenly Father add his name to the roll
Of our departed shipmates still on patrol
Let them know that we who survive
Will always keep their memories alive.



USS Sealion (SS-195)
Dec. 10, 1941
5 men



| Sargo Class |
|--|
| Displacement: Surf=1,450 tons, Sub=2,350 tons |
| Length: 310.5' ft Beam: 27.08 ft |
| Propulsion: 4 diesel 2,740 shp, 2 electric motors 3,300hp |
| Speed: Surf: 20knots Sub: 8.75knots |
| Range: Surfaced:11,000nm at 10 knts Submerged:100nm at 5 knts |
| Complement: 55 |
| Armament: 4x21in bow tubes, 4x21in stern tubes; 1x3ins 50cal, 2x50cal, 2x30cal machine guns |

USS Sealion (SS-195), a Sargo-class submarine, was the first ship of the United States Navy to be named for the sea lion, any of several large, eared seals native to the Pacific.

Her keel was laid down on 20 June 1938 by the Electric Boat Company of Groton, Connecticut. She was launched on 25 May 1939 sponsored by Mrs. Claude C. Bloch, and commissioned on 27 November 1939 with Lieutenant J. K. Morrison Jr., in command.

Following shakedown, Sealion, assigned to Submarine Division 17 (SubDiv 17), prepared for overseas deployment. In the spring of 1940, she sailed, with her division for the Philippine Islands, arriving at Cavite in the fall to commence operations as a unit of the Asiatic Fleet. Into October 1941, she ranged from Luzon into the Sulu Archipelago, then, with another submarine of her division, now SubDiv 202, she prepared for a regular overhaul at the Cavite Navy Yard. By 8 December (7 December east of the International Date Line), her yard period had begun; and, two days later, she took two direct hits in the Japanese air raid which demolished the navy yard.

The first bomb struck the after end of her conning tower and exploded outside the hull, over the control room. The second smashed through a main ballast tank and the pressure hull to explode in the after engine room, killing the four men then working there. In addition 1 crewman died while a POW.

Sealion flooded immediately and settled down by the stern with 40% of her main deck underwater and a 15 degree list to starboard. The destruction of the navy yard made repairs impossible, and she was ordered destroyed. All salvageable equipment was taken off, depth charges were placed inside, and, on 25 December, the explosives were set off to prevent her from being made useful to the enemy.



Submarines . . . of Today

The Final Account of USS San Francisco (SSN-711)

Adrift 500 Feet Under The Sea, A Minute Was An Eternity

By Christopher Drew

APRA HARBOR, Guam - Blood was everywhere. Sailors lay sprawled across the floor, several of them unconscious, others simply dazed. Even the captain was asking, 'What just happened?' All anyone knew for sure was that the nuclear-powered attack submarine had slammed head-on into something solid and very large, and that it had to get to the surface fast.

In the control room, a senior enlisted man shoved the 'chicken switches,' blowing high-pressure air through the ballast tanks to force the vessel upward. Usually, the submarine would respond at once. But as the captain, Cmdr. Kevin G. Mooney, and top officers stared at the depth gauge, the needle refused to budge.

Moments before, they had been slipping quiet and fast through the Pacific. Now, they were stuck, more than 500 feet down.

Ten seconds passed. Then 20, 30.

'I thought I was going to die,' Commander Mooney recalled.

It would be close to a minute, but an excruciatingly long minute, before the submarine's mangled nose began to rise, before the entire control room exhaled in relief, before the diving officer, Chief Petty Officer Danny R. Hager, began to read out a succession of shallower depths.

'I don't know how long it was,' Chief Hager said, 'but it seemed like forever.'

Last week, Navy investigators reported that a series of mistakes at sea and onshore caused the 6,900-ton submarine, the San Francisco, to run into an undersea mountain not on its navigational charts. One crewman was killed,

98 others were injured, and the captain and three other officers were relieved of their duties as a result of the Jan. 8 crash, one of the worst on an American submarine since the 1960's.

But what is becoming clear only now, from the first interviews with Commander Mooney and 15 other officers and enlisted men, as well as a review of Navy reports, is how much worse it nearly was, and how close the San Francisco came to being lost.

The submarine crashed at top speed - 33 knots, or roughly 38 miles an hour - about 360 miles southeast of Guam. The impact punched huge holes in the forward ballast tanks, so the air being blown into them was no match for the ocean pouring in. The throttles shut, and the vessel briefly lost propulsion. As the emergency blow caught hold, mainly in the rear tanks, the sub was just . . . drifting in the deep, its bow pointing down.

Luckily, the thick inner hull protecting the nuclear reactor and the crew's quarters held. But within was pandemonium - bodies pinballing, heads striking steel in the warren of lethally sharp surfaces in impossibly tight spaces. There was so much blood on the instruments and on the control-room floor that the place, Chief Hager said, 'looked like a slaughterhouse.'

Then chaos gave way to improvised heroism and a perilous, and finally futile, effort to rescue the most grievously injured sailor.



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The merely battered ministered to the badly hurt, turning the mess hall and the officers' wardroom into instant clinics, ripping off shirts to use as tourniquets and creating splints from cleaning brushes. When they realized that the only hope for the dying man — a young machinist's mate named Joseph A. Ashley — was to get to a hospital, sailors cut off railings and fixtures to thread his stretcher through narrow areas. They then rigged pulleys in an effort to hoist him through the sail, at the top of the submarine, and onto a helicopter hovering just above.



To avoid detection, submarines travel silent and largely blind, relying heavily on charts, and their interpreters, to navigate the undersea landscape. The meeting of this submarine and that mountain beneath the Pacific was in many ways a stroke of hauntingly rare bad luck: everyone relied on the one chart, from a panoply of them, that lacked even a hint of the looming danger. But the submarine's fate was also the result of a confluence of simple shipboard errors.

The Navy has placed the blame on the captain and the crew, and Commander Mooney says, 'I accept full responsibility.' He acknowledges several critical mistakes, including going too fast, taking insufficient depth soundings and failing to cross-check the route with other charts.

Yet the fact that those errors happened on a boat with a highly rated commander suggests a more nuanced calculus of responsibility, raising questions about the relatively primitive state of undersea charting and the training and support of submariners.

Petty Officer Ashley's father, Daniel L. Ashley, a Navy veteran, refuses to let the Navy off the hook. Sitting in his home outside Akron, Ohio, one recent morning, with a memorial of flags and photographs on the family organ, Mr. Ashley said he had forgiven Commander Mooney and the crew.

'I know what these men have to live with for the rest of their lives,' he said. 'I feel the same pain.' But if the Navy's systems for supporting submarines had not also broken down, he said, 'this would not have happened, and my son would be alive today.'

A Normal Saturday

As the San Francisco prepared to shove off in early January, spirits were high. Since taking over in December 2003, Commander Mooney had pushed his 136 sailors through four months of repairs and two intelligence missions.

The San Francisco, previously known as a troubled boat, was winning praise in the Navy as a 'Cinderella story.'

Now the submarine was headed for Brisbane, Australia, and its first liberty stop under the 40-year-old captain, a graduate of Duke University and a submarine officer for 19 years. One thing, though, was bothering him, he recalled: the basic routing instructions seemed to be late. So he told his navigators to call the Seventh Fleet in Japan and hurry them along.

The goal of the routings was to ensure that no other Navy ship would cross the submarine's path, and they laid out a wide track to follow. But some officers had come to view these navigational guides as suggesting a measure of safety. And as the San Francisco left here on Friday, Jan. 7, the team plotting the precise

route within that track focused on a single set of charts that, Navy officials agree, usually gave the most detailed view of the seabed.

Since submarines generally do not use active sonar, with its telltale pings, a good picture can be critical in avoiding mountain ranges rising from the seabed. Relying on charts, though, has always been somewhat hit or miss. Only 10

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percent of the oceans have been charted by Navy survey ships. Many charts only include obstacles spotted by warships, commercial vessels or even 18th-century explorers like Captain Cook.

One poorly charted area was south of Guam, where the Navy started basing subs in 2002. So by Saturday morning, when the San Francisco entered the Caroline Islands mountain chain, there had been talk of special precautions among some of the men. But to the plotting team, the winding route down to Australia looked wide open.

To the rest of the crew, it was just a normal Saturday, which meant cleaning the boat. Lunch began at 11 a. m. - hamburgers, French fries, baked beans - and at 11:25 Commander Mooney went to the wardroom, where the officers ate. The crew's work shift changed five minutes later, and when a line formed outside the mess, several men, including Petty Officer Ashley, decided to have a smoke first in the vessel's tail.

Sailors said this was typical of Petty Officer Ashley, 24, an unabashed country boy who loved motorcycles, Jeeps and the boat's diesel engine, which he cared for.

His nickname was Cooter, after a mechanic on the old television show 'Dukes of Hazzard.' He was also known for his wicked Michael Jackson imitation, which one sailor called 'moonwalking in cowboy boots.'

That afternoon, the plan was to slow down for drills, so with everything humming along, Lt. Cmdr. Bruce L. Carlton, the navigation officer driving the submarine, decided to get ahead of schedule by bumping up to full speed and going deeper.

A sounding taken at 11:30 a. m. confirmed what was on the charts. The ocean was 6,000 feet deep there - and the submarine began to glide down to 500 feet from 400 feet. At 11:38, a decision was made to go to 525 feet, and a junior officer recommended another sounding. But Commander Carlton did not think that was necessary, the Navy reports indicate, and none was made.

Blood and Chaos

Chief Hager, wry and wiry at 39, unbuckled his seat belt and hopped up to jot a note on a card taped to the jet-black control panel. Suddenly - it was just after 11:42 - he felt his grip on a drawer handle tighten as the submarine shuddered.

Then 'came the real deal,' he said, a thunderous blast and what felt like a warp-speed gale whipping through the submarine as it froze in its tracks.

The force spun his body around - like Spiderman twisting against a wall, he said - and his hand punched through a Plexiglas gauge cover. His seat ripped out of its runners and crushed his leg. Then one of the quartermasters, who had been monitoring the charts 15 feet away, came catapulting into view. He ended up knocked out on the floor, blood pouring from his forehead.

A few feet away, three more men were unconscious. One - the junior officer who had just suggested the extra sounding - was bleeding from his head and leg, and could hardly breathe. Commander Carlton, who was still in charge, had been thrown into a passageway, and blood streamed from the right side of his face as he scrambled back to the command center.

In the wardroom, Commander Mooney had been pinned into his seat, while a cook came over his shoulder and crashed into a television screen 10 feet away, cracking it in two places. Within seconds, the captain was rushing up a ladder to the control room, where the effort to blow the submarine to the surface had just begun.

Hundreds of papers that had popped out of binders were streaking dark red on the floor, and the microphones were crackling with injury reports. By 11:44, the submarine had finally broken the surface, with the captain scanning through a periscope. No ships. No wreckage. Nothing.

'I realized at that point that we had survived a collision with the bottom that was just unbelievable,' Commander Mooney said. But, he said, he 'literally had no idea' what it was doing there.

And no time to figure it out: there were also serious injuries in the crew's mess, the engine rooms and the smoking room - the other relatively open areas where men had gone flying. From the bridge atop the sail, Commander Carlton could see that the bow was damaged, raising fears of flooding.



'We were in shock,' Commander Mooney said. But everyone was running on instinct and training. Damage-control parties quickly reported that the inner hull was intact, the torpedoes and cruise missiles unscathed. The captain radioed for help and turned the boat back toward Guam. In the stern, men began bringing the injured forward, toward the wardroom and the mess.

In the smoking room, Petty Officer Ashley had been thrown about 20 feet, fracturing his skull against either metal equipment or a bulkhead doorjamb. Two sailors crouched over him.

'I didn't know what to do,' said one of them, Bryan Barnes, a 22-year-old electrician's mate. 'So I just held his hand and talked to him until doc came back.'

When 'doc,' the ship's medic, James H. Akin, arrived, he knew instantly that they had to get Petty Officer Ashley off the boat.

Racing to Save a Life.



A submarine at sea is a self-contained world in a steel bubble. One thing it does not have, though, is a doctor; the medic, an enlisted man with basic medical training, handles the run of everyday illness and injury. Now, in a full-out emergency, the medic's first job was to get Petty Officer Ashley immobilized on a stretcher so he could be carried to the crew's mess.

There, the chief of the boat, William Cramer, the senior enlisted man, was commanding the cleanup. His men unfurled large rolls of terry cloth to sop up the slippery goo of blood and capsized lunch, and shoved the broken plates and glasses into the galley. In the wardroom, Lt. Craig E. Litty, himself a former medic, quickly set up a triage center, where he helped bandage most of the injured men.

Corpsman Akin, at 6 foot 4 and 280 pounds the largest man onboard, set up his medical supplies on the salad bar in the mess. He stitched up the men with the worst lacerations.

And he tried to keep Petty Officer Ashley alive.

The medic says he knew he was probably nursing a dying man. Still, Petty Officer Ashley held on. For 21 hours, Corpsman Akin monitored his vital signs, kept his air passages clear, and gave him oxygen and morphine. Sailors took turns holding his hand. At one point, someone brought in a CD player and put on some Hank Williams Jr.

The first rescue ship, the Coast Guard cutter Galveston Island, arrived at 4:30 a. m. on Sunday. But by then, squalls had moved in, and it seemed too dangerous to try to shuttle Petty Officer Ashley over in a small boat.

The alternative seemed hardly less daring: using a helicopter to lift the wounded man and his stretcher out of a hatch on the top of the submarine's sail.

By now, a second ship, the Stockham, had arrived. It carried more doctors and two helicopters. Around 9 a. m., as one of the helicopters hovered 10 to 15 feet above the submarine, it dangled a doctor and a corpsman into the submarine to help prepare Petty Officer Ashley for the move. The pilots had to rely on a spotter in back to keep the copter clear of the pitching submarine.

'He was giving drift calls, saying 'Cut left,' 'Come right,' 'You're getting too close,' ' said one of the pilots, Ricke Harris.

Inside the submarine, Chief Cramer ordered a path cleared for the stretcher. Several men unbolted or cut off ladder railings and lockers. By late morning, men were stationed in doorways and stairwells to pass the stretcher along; one even crawled underneath and supported the stretcher on his back through the narrowest spots.

They climbed up one level and under the sail, and then another group took over, heaving on a rope and pulley to lift the stretcher up the 25-foot sail. The first effort failed when Petty Officer Ashley's breathing tube came loose. With his condition deteriorating, a second try made it to the top.

That was when the men had an awful realization: the hatch atop the sail did not quite open the full 90 degrees. No matter how much they tried, angling this way and that, the stretcher would not slip through.

A surgeon, Chris Cook, was then lowered by cable from the copter. But Petty Officer Ashley's heart stopped, and the men began CPR. Half an hour later, at 1:11 p. m., Dr. Cook pronounced him dead. Still, one of the sailors kept pounding.

'I looked at him and said, 'We're sorry,' Dr. Cook recalled. 'There's nothing more we can do.'

Hard Lessons

When the San Francisco pulled into Guam on Jan. 10, its bow sinking low in the water, the flags on other submarines were at half-mast, their crews lining the decks in tribute.

Looking at a picture of that moment, Commander Mooney speaks with pride of the way his crew brought the boat home. But an image discovered on the voyage back also remains seared in his mind, he says, one that helped seal his dismissal and spark broader questions about the Navy's navigational training and support.

That image is a small, light-blue circle on a white background. It signifies a potential hazard two to three

miles from where the San Francisco crashed - close enough, Commander Mooney says, that if he had known about it, he would have tried to skirt the area or asked for a new routing. Charting experts now believe that hazard was the mountain, and that its location was imprecisely reported in the days before satellites made navigational fixes more precise.

Commander Mooney said he first heard about the hazard from his boss onshore a few hours after the grounding. It is, in fact, on every chart of the area except for the one that the boat was using - the one that usually provided the most detailed picture of the seabed contours.

That revelation has been embarrassing to the Navy and the Pentagon office that prepares the charts. Moreover, investigators have found that the officer who gave the submarine its basic routing also relied only on that one chart.

Under Navy rules, the captain and his crew are solely responsible for the safety of their ship. After all, in wartime, submarines must operate without help from shore.

The captain acknowledged that he and his crew should have cross-checked the charts. But some of his officers say it was common to grab what seemed the best chart and run down the center of the basic track, as the San Francisco did. They also said they were not alone in believing that the routings were based on more substantial navigation checks. 'I look at it as just a lot of really bad luck,' said Lt. Cmdr. Rick Boneau, the San Francisco's executive officer.

Commander Boneau, Commander Carlton and an assistant navigator were relieved of their duties, and three enlisted men were reprimanded. Commander Carlton did not respond to requests for comment.

But Navy reports have found that the sea charts are not updated frequently enough and that the routings are often delivered late, limiting the time for onboard navigation checks. The accident has also stirred concerns - dating back to the advent of nuclear submarines under the legendary admiral Hyman G. Rickover - that Navy training places more emphasis on engineering than on skills like navigation. (dats a fact jack)



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The approach to keeping the reactor safe is to build in redundant checks and test sailors constantly. But even though inspections had found some navigation deficiencies on the San Francisco in 2004, the reports said, squadron officials in Guam did nothing to make sure the problems had been fixed.

Since the accident, the Navy has briefed hundreds of officers on the lessons to be drawn. Capt. Matt Brown, the spokesman for the Pacific Fleet, said the Navy is also looking at other changes to improve safety.

Some of the younger sailors said they had not realized how close they had come to dying until they saw the San Francisco's mutilated bow at the dry dock here.

'Your jaw just kind of dropped open, and you wondered why you were still alive,' said Mr. Barnes, the electrician's mate who held Joseph Ashley's hand right after the collision. As many as 10 sailors have asked not to return to submarine duty.

Commander Mooney is working a desk job until he can retire next year. Last month he visited Petty Officer Ashley's grave in a family plot on a hillside in West Virginia. The captain and the sailor's father said a prayer together as they placed a Navy marker by the grave. They embraced.

Then, the captain left one final offering - his command star, buried in the dirt.

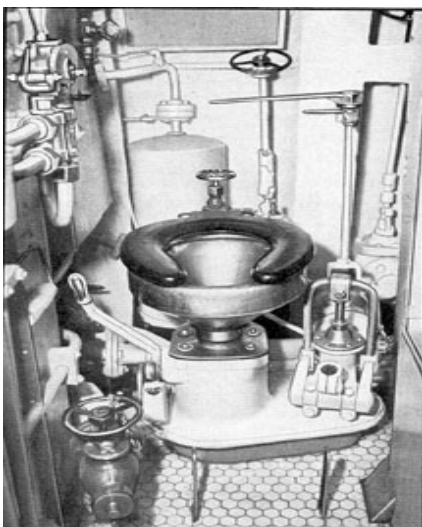
PUGET SOUND, Wash. – USS San Francisco (SSN 711) returned to the water on Oct. 10, 2008, after successfully undocking at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and Intermediate Maintenance Facility (PSNS & IMF), a field activity of Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA).

The dry docking resulted from the submarine's Jan. 8, 2005, collision with an undersea mountain. The challenging, one of a kind project involved PSNS & IMF cutting over one million pounds of ex-USS Honolulu (SSN 718) forward Ballast Tanks/Sonar Sphere and attaching it to the USS San Francisco. The engineering and production teams proceeded to manipulate the mammoth structure with orchestrated precision. In some areas, the bow of this massive structure was moved to within 1/16 of an inch of the original structure.

USS San Francisco returned to Apra Harbor, Guam, under her own power where a Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard-led team of engineers and production personnel began the task of assessing the damage, dismantling the wreckage, designing and installing structural and mechanical repairs to prepare her for return to the U.S. mainland. This temporary repair was followed by an unprecedented 5,600 nautical mile open ocean submarine surface transit to PSNS & IMF.

The submarine entered dry dock at PSNS & IMF on Dec. 5, 2006, to begin the restoration period. In the early stages, the temporary bow of the San Francisco was disassembled in place and the steel recycled. Later, PSNS & IMF was authorized to define and execute the complete availability to restore the rest of the ship's systems and bow restoration.

Do You Remember?



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