

United States Submarine Veterans, Inc., Charleston Base

Minutes of Business Meeting

14 April 2022

Opening Ceremonies:

- The April 2022 Base Meeting was called to order by Base Commander Mike Ciesielko with a quorum of four officers and a total of 56 members. The meeting started at 1900 with the sound of the diving alarm.
- The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the Vice Commander Tom Lawson 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**

Senior Chief Fire Control Technician Ballistic, Submarines
Frank C. Capaci, U.S. Navy Retired
Departed on Eternal Patrol on March 13, 2022

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

Holland Club Induction – Bill Freligh

- Bill Freligh read an explanation of Holland Club including being named after John P. Holland who is considered the father of the modern submarine. This year, we recognized those submarine veterans who qualified in 1972.
- Bill recognized Stacy Power as our only remaining WWII veteran who qualified submarines in 1951.
- Bill recognized the following WWII submarine veterans who are on Eternal Patrol.
 - “Panama Jack” Stevenson
 - Lee Allison
 - Willie Jones
 - Walter Curtiss
 - Sam Whatley
 - Andrew Pelinshire
- Bill read the USSVI National Certificate recognizing Holland Club induction.
- Base Commander Mike Ciesielko read the Charleston Base Holland Club Citation.
- John Lookabill joined the ceremony to present the Holland Club hat.
- The following men were then officially inducted into the Holland Club:
 - Herbert Anderson – In MUSC – award accepted by his wife
 - Robert Browning
 - Bruce Bohon
 - William “Butch” Bryar (not in attendance this evening)
 - Richard Gagne
 - Dennis Lanier
 - Ronald Litzenberger
 - Chris McCool
 - Norris Nathan
 - Stephen Woodside
- PAO Ed Stank took a group photograph to commemorate the occasion.

- Bill Freligh explained that the Holland Club patch recognizes 50 years of submarine qualification. In addition, there are rockers to add years to the patch in five year intervals. These were provided to those Charleston Base members in attendance:
- 70 years – Stacy Power was the sole recipient.
- 65 years – a few men received this rocker.
- 60 years – several men received this rocker.
- 55 years – quite a number of men received this rocker.
- Bill asked all of the Holland Club members to stand for recognition.
- The ceremony was concluded. Family members and guests were dismissed for the remainder of the Base Meeting.

Introductions of New Attendees:

- Three men attended the Base Meeting for the first time this evening.
 - Sean Szymanski – CDR – Qualified on USS Pittsburg SSN720 – Also served aboard USS Connecticut, USS John F. Kennedy CV67, USS Gettysburg CG64, NNPTC Ballston Spa NY, several HMS, NNPTC Director-Students/Staff
 - Clyde Ragland – MM1/LCDR – Qualified on USS Von Steuben SSBN632 – 1975 – Also served as staff instructor NPTU Ballston Spa NY– Retired 2006
 - Johnny Brown – TMC/LT – Qualified on USS George Washington SSBN598 – 1977 – Also served aboard USS John Adams SSBN620, USS Holland AS32, Trident Refit Facility, POMFLANT, MK48 Torpedo Shop Charleston

Old Business:

- **Amberjack Ceremony** – Rick Wise
 - The Amberjack Ceremony will be held on Saturday, April 16 at the Cold War Memorial, beginning at 1000. This year, the names of the lost boats will be read. The U.S. lost 52 submarines during WWII. When USSVI was formed, each of the 50 states was assigned one boat for remembrance. South Carolina was assigned the USS Amberjack. More populous states, California and New York, were given one more.
 - Rusty Pickett will speak at the Amberjack Ceremony.
- **Submarine Birthday Ball** – Nick Nichols
 - The 2022 Submarine Birthday Ball is still scheduled for 7 May at the Charleston Marriott across from the Riverdogs stadium. The tickets sales go live at the end of the week. As soon as I get the word that the website is up and working, I'll send the info to everyone so you can buy your tickets. Due to some issues and the time constraints no hull numbered coins will be available but they plan on bringing them back next year. The tickets are \$35 each.
 - The exact time has not been posted, but based on previous years, everyone should begin arriving at about 1800 with dinner approximately 1700 and festivities to follow.
 - The uniform for the event is either the "Charleston Tuxedo" or Vest. Nick reported that the organizers prefer Charleston Base members to wear the vest.
 - Nick also recommended that Base members mingle with the young submarine sailors, even sitting at the tables with them. Yes, even the Chiefs are young to us, but you are likely to learn something from them.

New Business:

- No new business.

Secretary – Gordon Long:

- The Minutes from the March Base meeting have been emailed directly to the Base membership and had been promulgated on the Base Website. No additions or deletions were noted. The March Base Meeting Minutes were approved.

Treasurer – Ricky Collins:

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

Chaplain – Nick Nichols:

- Highlighted boat of the month:
 - On April 10, 1963 the USS THRESHER (SSN-593) was lost with the loss of 112 crew members and 17 civilian technicians during deep-diving exercises. 15 minutes after reaching test depth, she communicated with USS Skylark that she was having problems. Skylark heard noises "like air rushing into an air tank" - then, silence. Rescue ship Recovery (ASR-43) subsequently recovered bits of debris, including gloves and bits of internal insulation. Photographs taken by Trieste proved that the submarine had broken up, taking all hands onboard to their deaths in 1,400 fathoms of water, some 220 miles east of Boston.
- There are several shipmates and family members who have given me information which they wish to be kept confidential at this time.
- **FTCS(SS) Frank C. Capaci**, USN Ret., departed on EP on Sunday, March 13, 2022 at Trident Hospital. Frank joined the Navy in 1973 and retired in 1993. He was a Life Member of USSVI [2016] & Charleston Base [2016]. Frank qualified on USS KAMEHAMEHA SSBN/SSN-642 in 1975 and also served on HUNLEY AS-31, PROTEUS AS-19, SIMON LAKE AS-33 and ALABAMA SSBN-731. His shore duties included Naval Guided Missile School Dam Neck VA, Trident Training Facility Pearl Harbor HI and Strategic Systems Programs Arlington VA. Frank's wife, Mona, called me today to inform me of Frank's passing. A memorial service will be held at a future date and Charleston Base will be notified when the date is decided.
- As reported by Tom Yingling, **LCDR Johnny McWilliams** departed on Eternal Patrol on April 1, 2022 at 2:32 AM. He and his wife Debbie lived on Lake Martin, Alabama. His last 4 to 6 weeks were spent fighting Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma, B Cell. Thank the Good Lord that he took Johnny into his eternal life and love and ended his terrible suffering.
- As reported by Larry Rosselot, **MM1(SS) Dale Comstock**, departed on Eternal Patrol in Goose Creek SC. Dale and Larry served on the WOODROW WILSON SSBN 624 in the Shipyard in Charleston.
- **Joyce Altschuler**, 53, wife of Les Altschuler USSVI Northeast Regional Director, passed away April 6 in NJ. Joyce passed away peacefully with our family at her side after a four-month battle with multiple illnesses. She had been in the hospital almost continuously since December 7, 2021. She was an Associate member of the United States Submarine Veterans (USSV) NJ North Base and a past National 1st Vice President for the "SubVettes" the USSV ladies auxiliary.
- **Trish Stanley**, 55, Mike and Anna Emerson's daughter, passed away sometime Friday or Saturday, cause unknown at this time. Mike found her when he went over to see her. She has a son, 2 daughters and 4 grandsons. He will let us know as more is known. There will be a service sometime during the week of the 25th. Please pray for Mike and the family while they grieve their loss.
- **Jerri Stoll [Al's wife]** passed away on Friday, March 18th. Her service was held on March 22nd.
- **Stefanie Peters**, 50, daughter of Sue and Clyde [EP Aug. 24, 2014] passed away on April 2nd from complications of liver cancer.
- **James McDonald** reported that he thought he would touch base as it has been just over a year since his stroke (mar 3 19). "I am up and walking without a cane, walker, ect. One advantage of being an A-Ganger we can be stubborn at times (still have a slight limp but working on it). Included a couple of pictures hopefully they can bring a little laughter to your day. Thanks for all the help getting my HOLLAND CLUB stuff to me up here in Norfolk. Well got to run now hope to see you next time I make it down there." [pictures will be at the end of this report]
- **Rodney McKanna** was admitted to Trident Hospital ET on 4 April with MRSA infection of his right leg. He finally made it to a room yesterday, He's in room 711. Only 1 visitor allowed at a time. The Surgery went well and he is being pumped with hi power antibiotics. He has been up walking already.
- **Bill Kennedy** emailed me to say he has a mass in his right lung. Doc says looks like some form of cancer. Headed for full body scan Friday and a biopsy on Monday. Should know by the end of next week all the answers. The mass was found Friday and went to the cancer doc today. Quick action.

- **Herb Anderson** was in the Georgetown Hospital ER last week with polymorphic ventricular tachycardia, an unstable heart rhythm. He will be there until Monday when they will probably put in a pacemaker. He is in good spirits and comfortable now. He hopes to be at our meeting. Asking for extra prayers.
- **Beetle Bailey** is having hand surgery due to tingling in both hands.
- **Don Ort** has tested positive for COVID. He is on meds. Scans of his lungs are clear. No improvements but not any worse.
- **Jerry Stout** had a PET Scan on March 11 and there is a reoccurrence of his Cancer. While trying to determine status in further trials, he is continuing with his treatment. Thanks to all shipmates for concern and prayers.
- **Robert Gay** has been diagnosed with cancer and has begun his chemo. He will have his 3rd chemo tomorrow (Friday). The first two have been a real trial and did a number on his body. The first two weeks were bad; he felt like I had been run over by dump truck most of the time. This past week he had a couple of days that he felt almost normal and he is hoping and praying that keeps up.
- **Fred Woodley** reports he is at the point of full-blown Diabetes A1C 10.9 Struggling with weight, eyesight, both shoulders and vascular issues! Have to keep moving!
- **Jay Pierce** had his left knee replaced is home and doing well.
- **Tom Skorepa** let me know the specialist lung surgeon did not like the readings from the one who did the basic biopsy, so she wants to redo the testing while she has me out. She reviewed all prior scans from the chest area, and sees that whatever it is, it's growing. If it's cancer she will know for sure, and remove the lower lobe and lymph nodes in area. If not cancer, she will discuss situation with wife and remove the problem items as they will only come back and could be cancer then. She feels it could be cancer but we caught it very early. Wish me luck.
- **Jim Williams** is in Hospice care at home. He has good and bad days. He likes to have visits also. He is now bedridden.
- **Stacy Power** fell in early March, went to the ER and was kept overnight for observation. He is home recovering and has been taken off his blood thinners. We are glad to see him here at the meeting tonight.
- **Don Londergan** is still in Cypress Place on Midland Pkwy in room 136.
- **Gene Weir** continues his cancer treatments.
- **Bob Snyder** is still with palliative care.
- Complete/update your page 2 if you have not done so.

Webmaster – Nick Nichols

- Website is constantly updated.
- Make use of the EVENTS page on the Charleston Base website. All events that are put out to the membership via email will be listed and updated on the events page.
- Pictures will now be on the USSVI National website. Please take a look at your profile on the National site and update it if needed. Many have missing info.
- **Widows and email info.** When a CB SUBVET departs on EP his widow/family are asked if they wish to continue receiving emails and info from the base. If they agree they will receive info until 1) they request it to stop or 2) they discontinue the email in use.

Social Media – Lewis Leal:

- Lou will get the Holland Club video segment of tonight's meeting published as quick as he can.
- He will record the Amberjack ceremony for publication also.
- Lou provided information regarding online viewership numbers of Base Meetings. The link is only sent to the Base members and is not meant to be publicly available.

Submarine Veterans of WWII – Mike Ciesielko for George Scharf:

- Stacy Power is here tonight along with his son Casey. We are glad to see both of them this evening.

Kaps for Kids – Mike Emerson

- Nothing to report.

Membership – Larry Knutson

- We currently have 267 Charleston Base Members.
- Nick Nichols provided Base standings: Groton – 1156; Hampton Roads – 268; Charleston – 267; Bremerton – 250; Requin – 191; San Diego – 179; Long Island – 154; Mare Island – 152

National Awards – Base Commander for Don Ort

- Don is stepping down as National Awards Coordinator. COB Rick Sparger will send out a request to the membership for a volunteer.

VA – TOM LAWSON

- Booster shots are available at the VA.

Scholarship – Carl Chinn

- The balance in the Scholarship Fund is \$9,070.
- Beetle Bailey won two of the submarine models at the last Base meeting. His chances to win were greatly increased by the number of tickets that he had purchased.
- The current raffle is for a large set of powder coated dolphins. The drawing will be held at the Base Meeting in May.
- The deadline for Scholarship applications is April 15.

Special Events – Rick Sparger

- The Air Force Base will be having an Armed Forces Day ceremony on May 21. They have requested that we bring the float to the event. This will be a static display. Ken Hutchison has volunteered to tow the float. We will need some men in vests to attend it and answer questions.
- Our cover has been damaged by the recent strong winds.
- The lady in charge of the May 21 AFB event has asked – and been given permission to address Charleston Base for a few minutes at the May Base Meeting.
- We need a small working party to meet at the Navy Exchange parking lot to load chairs Friday for the Amberjack ceremony.

Fleet Reserve Association – Rick Sparger

- Nothing to report

Recreation – Rick Sparger

- We are planning to have a picnic on June 4 (First Saturday). The cooker will be provided, but we need someone to head up this event and someone to cook. Terry Trump is being asked to arrange the location (Bushy Park) for us.
- Rick Wise pointed out that we have money in the budget for recreation purposes.

CRAMA – Mike Ciesielko for Butch Bryar

- Butch is not present tonight as he is expecting a phone call regarding the USS Ling in New Jersey

Nuclear Power School – Ray Sparks

- The next NPS graduation is May 27 at 0800. Meet at Exchange parking lot to carpool because of limited parking. It is worth the trip to hear Rick Wise make the presentation from Charleston Base.

Newsletter – Ed Stank

- The Base Newsletter will be sent out shortly.

Public Affairs – Ed Stank

- Ed has submitted a couple of articles for American Submariner. He will prepare others for tonight's Holland Club induction and the Chief Selectee Breakfast.

Election Coordinator – Ken Hutchison

- The elections for Vice Commander and Secretary are scheduled for the Base Meeting next month. Ken has received no other nominations for these offices other than current officers Vice Commander Tom Lawson and Secretary Gordon Long.

Storekeeper – Woody Woodsmall

- Woody named a Base member who had requested a patch. Woody has had it for several Base meetings now. It has not been paid for as yet either.
- The national storekeeper had mistakenly sent a set of gold dolphins plate frame. The retired officers that are here tonight may be interested.

COB – Rick Sparger

- At the Amberjack ceremony, we can expect to have a large group of NNPTC sailors in attendance. They will be there in uniform. Rusty Pickett will be the speaker. Bring your family members.

Vice Commander – Tom Lawson

- We would like to have a good turnout at the Amberjack Ceremony this weekend.

Base Commander – Mike Ciesielko

- Mike noted that the attendance at the Base Meeting is gradually increasing and thanked those here tonight.

Good of the Order

Nuclear Historian – Rick Carlson

- Not present.

Non-Nuclear Historian – Harry Nettles

- In the interest of time this evening, Harry withheld his story until the next Base Meeting.

After Battery – Ray Sparks / Steve (Buddha) Nelms

- There were 180 people present for the Saturday hog roast.
- Most were from out of town including special guests, WWII veteran and his from Rhode Island.
- Stacy Power attended the event.
- There were several active duty submariners from New London.
- The first submarine qualified woman to attend visit the After Battery was a YNC named Tina stationed on a boat in Kings Bay.
- The After Battery is open every Wednesday. Dinner is at 1700.

Speaker Needed for Memorial Day – ED STANK

- Ed received a phone call from a lady who used to work at the Victory House in Walterboro. She is now employed at an assisted living facility on Midland Parkway. Many of those at the location are veterans. She is looking for a guest speaker for a Memorial Day observance at 1400. She would like to have someone address the history of caps (hats).

Wills – Mike Emerson

- Mike, who recently lost his daughter, noted how Nick (Base Chaplain) stresses the need for Page 2s to be completed, also addressed the importance of wills. Some folks, many who are young, think that they don't need one. Others think that once they write a will, their life is over. Neither is true. Wills are meant to preserve the family. Talk to your families about getting your wills done. Also, if you have a lock on your phone, make sure that someone that you trust has the key to get into it.

Gun Club – Mike Ciesielko

- Nothing reported.

Easter Church Invitation – Gordon Long

- Gordon had placed invitation cards on each table for ParkWay Baptist Church, located on Ladson Road. Gordon invited Base members to the Easter service.

Drawings & Auctions

- FRA Drawing – Tommy Wilbanks
- Depth Charge Drawing – Johnny Brown

Closing Ceremony

- Chaplain Nick Nichols led the group in a prayer of Benediction.
- Base Commander Mike Ciesielko announced adjournment of the meeting.
- Vice Commander Tom Lawson sounded three blasts of the diving alarm.
- Meeting closed at 2021.