

United States Submarine Veterans, Inc., Charleston Base
Minutes of Business Meeting
9 February 2023

Opening Ceremonies:

- The February 2023 Base Meeting was called to order by Base Commander Mike Ciesielko with a quorum of three officers and a total of 49 members. The meeting started at 1902 with the sound of the diving alarm.
- The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the Base Commander Mike Ciesielko and recited by the members in attendance. Vice Commander Tom Lawson was not present at this meeting.
- The Invocation and the Tolling of the Boats lost during the month of February was given by Base Chaplain Nick Nichols.
- Submarines lost during the month of February:
 - **USS BARBEL (SS-316)** February 4, 1945 – 4th War Patrol Lost with all hands – 81 souls
 - **USS SHARK 1 (SS-174)** February 11, 1942 – 1st War Patrol Lost with all hands – 59 souls
 - **USS AMBERJACK (SS-219)** February 16, 1943 – 3rd War Patrol Lost with all hands – 72 souls
 - **USS GRAYBACK (SS-208)** February 27, 1944 – 10th War Patrol Lost with all hands – 80 souls
 - **USS TROUT (SS-202)** February 29, 1944 – 11th War Patrol Lost with all hands – 81 souls
 - **5 Boats and 373 Men Lost**
 - **H.L. HUNLEY** February 17, 1864 Lost with all hands – 8 souls

Senior Chief Fire Control Technician, Submarines
Leroy Paul Werley Sr., USN Retired
Departed on Eternal Patrol on January 27, 2023

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

Introductions of New Attendees:

- One man was present at the Base meeting for the first time:
 - Brad Holtermann – MMN1 (ELT) – Qualified on USS Illinois SSN786 – 2018

Old Business:

- **Distinguished Submariner Award – Base Commander Mike Ciesielko**
 - DSA sheets were placed on each table for Base Members to nominate shipmates for this award. Please fill out these sheets and provide to the Base Secretary.

New Business:

- **2023 Charleston Submarine Birthday Ball – MMN1(SS) Brad Holtermann**
 - **Theme: Remember the Thresher**
 - Saturday April 8th
 - Cocktail hour 1730
 - Ceremony 1830
 - North Charleston Marriott on Goer Dr
 - POC: MMN1(SS) Bradley Holtermann
 - Everyone at Charleston Base is invited. It will be a good chance for the young active duty members to meet with the old submariners and swapping of sea stories.
 - The guest speaker will be Admiral Caldwell - current Director of Naval Reactors
 - Charleston Base members are requested to wear vests. Ladies should wear Sunday dress unless they want to wear a ball gown. That is for your personal budget to decide.
 - The tickets are \$30 each for Charleston Base Member
 - Nick will provide more information as available.

Secretary – Gordon Long:

- The Minutes from the January Base Meeting were emailed directly to the Base membership, published in the Base Newsletter and have been promulgated on the Base Website. There were no changes. The Base Meeting Minutes were approved as presented.

Treasurer – Ricky Collins:

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

Chaplain – Nick Nichols:

- Highlighted boat of the month:
 - USS GRAYBACK SS-208 was lost on February 26, 1944 with the loss of 80 officers and men on her 10th war patrol. She appears to have been caught on the surface in the East China Sea by a Japanese carrier plane whose bombs made a direct hit. During this patrol she sank four ships totaling 21,594 tons and was tied for 11th in the number of ships sunk.
- There are several shipmates and family members who have given me information which they wish to be kept confidential at this time.
- **FTCS(SS) Leroy Paul Werley Sr., USN Ret., 79**, departed on Eternal Patrol on Jan. 27, 2023. Leroy joined the Navy in 1962 and retired in 1983. He was a life member of the USSVI & Charleston Base, a member of the Holland Club having been qualified for 58 years, and a Member of FRA Branch 269. Leroy qualified on USS JOHN C. CALHOUN SSBN-630 in 1965. He also served on USS BANG SS-385, USS ATULE SS-403, JAMES MADISON SSBN-627 and TECUMSEH SSBN-628. His viewing was on Feb 2nd locally and his funeral was Feb. 3rd at Beaufort National Cemetery. A note of condolences from the base was put on the Funeral Home website.
- **Tom Lawson and his wife, Suzanne**, have symptoms of COVID. Tests taken today with results tomorrow. He missed the meeting but his son stated they are both doing well.
- **Don Petersen** is not doing well. He can't take phone calls however he does text. If you want to text him the number for text only is 843.532.6464.
- **Tom Clark** had surgery on Jan 23rd for a mass on his intestines. Not cancerous. Tom is still in an ICU room and continuing his recovery. Updates will be sent as he progresses. Family is requesting no calls or visitors until further notice. Daughter Susan texted today he has had an extended recovery but they are hoping for discharge to rehab on Monday, Feb 13.
- **Joe Hayes** had heart attack early Sunday morning, Feb 5, and was taken to Trident ER. He is now in an ICU room for treatment and observation. Jim Lewis has been visiting with him for a couple of hours each morning and will continue to keep us updated. Family is requesting no other visitors or calls until further notice.
- **Howard 'Andy' Anderson** has been in Trident hospital since Jan. 10. He had 4 heart attacks & 3 procedures during this time. Now on 6th floor for rehab. Says he is still kicking.
- **Bob McNeish** had outpatient gall bladder surgery on Feb. 1 at Trident. He texted mid-afternoon to tell me surgery went well; he was home but groggy and wobbly. On Feb 2nd he woke up shaking and went to Summerville Medical ER. He was seen immediately and done in a little over two hours. He is now home for recovery.
- **Rick Wise** has had two infusions and has done well in both. His second infusion was today, Feb. 9. Jerry Starr provided him transportation to and from the Cancer Center. He has had the complication of a cold and his great grandson has a mild case of COVID so he must be careful around everyone. He now is fighting a respiratory illness with antibiotics. He has a referral into the palliative care team to come up with a pain plan for my broken arm. **His next two infusions are Mar 2nd at 0815 and Rick Sparger will be taking him; then Mar 23 at 0815 and Ken Hutchison will be taking him.** He has enjoyed talking all his brothers who have called. Keep the prayers coming.
- **James Graham** was in the hospital mid-January for a pulmonary edema. He is home with lots of Doctor's appointments for follow-up.

- **Chris LaForce** went to the hospital mid-January after he woke up shaking. He had low blood sugar, was treated and sent home to continue his recovery. Heard at the meeting that he is doing well and still has his sense of humor.
- **Thom Beach** is still at the VICTORY HOUSE in Walterboro. His phone number is 843.809.9417. He called me Tuesday to say he's doing OK and to also say he is asking for pictures of submarines to hang at the Victory House. He has talked to those in charge and they have agreed to use pictures if he can get them. These should be similar to those the Scholarship committee has now if possible.
- **Gene Rutter, Tarheel Base Chaplain**, lost his 24-year-old granddaughter on Jan. 27. She contacted sepsis and before it could be controlled it attacked her liver, kidneys and lungs.

Webmaster – Nick Nichols

- **OLD VS NEW NATIONAL WEBSITES:**
 - Even though the new website is now online however it still has kinks that need corrected. Until officially notified, the only time the new (Blackbaud) website is to be used is for matters concerning the 2023 National Convention in Tucson. The site is www.ussvi.org.
 - Until further notice the rebuilt old website is the current active system that should be used for all of your normal research and data entries (Tools). The site is <https://ussubvets.org>
- Charleston Base Website is constantly updated. I have been able to put 175 member pictures into the National database. That's 67% of our members. Please take a look and update your profile on National.
- Activity pictures links on the home page have been updated with all 2021 and 2022 pictures. All pictures 2020 and before have been archived but can be requested from the webmaster if needed.
- 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. Contact the webmaster with any updates to this page.
- All of our members should have received the email from National concerning the increase in National Dues for both yearly and life fees on April 1, 2023. National fees increased by \$5 to \$30 per year. The board has voted to increase the base dues by \$5 to \$20 per year and increase life membership by \$20 for each age category. The membership application and PayPal links will indicate this increase on 1 April.
- The 2023 Lost Boats Memorial at Patriots Point will be held on Sat. 8 April. Service begins at 1000 with muster at 0930.
- **2023 Charleston Submarine Birthday Ball**
 - POC: MMN1(SS) Bradley Holtermann
 - The board approved their use of our base claxon with the Base Commander having custody of it.
 - The board approved their use of our Thresher float which will be setup for a static display outside the hotel for people to see and have photographs as they arrive.
 - Our most senior qualified member (in years qualified) SD1(SS) Jim Higgins USN Ret., qualified in 1954, will be honored by cutting the cake.

Social Media – Lewis Leal:

- The video from the January Base Meeting has not yet been posted. It is taking a good bit of time to edit.

Hunley/Housatonic – Harry Nettles

- The service will be held February 17 at 1900 on Sullivan's Island at Breach Inlet – NOT in the church, but on the beach. The weather at night time in February can be rough. Dress accordingly. Harry will not be at the ceremony.
- Tom Lawson will be taking over as the new Hunley/Housatonic Coordinator.

Kaps for Kids – Mike Emerson

- Not present.

Membership – Larry Knutson

- We currently have 259 Charleston Base Members. About 30 members are Dink and will be dropped by National within the next week or so unless dues are paid.
- Dues will increase on April 1.

- See Larry after the meeting or you can send dues payment via mail to Larry.
- Base standings: 1) Groton 1231 - 2) Hampton Roads 279 - 3) Charleston 259 – 4) Bremerton 231 - 5) Requin 192

National Awards – Base Commander Mike Ciesielko

- We need a new National Awards Coordinator. There are several members that should be nominated for various awards. Please contact Mike if available to do this job.

VA – Tom Lawson

- Not present.

Scholarship – Carl Chinn

- The Scholarship fund now has a balance of \$12,231.
- Applications have been available on the Base website for several weeks.
- The scholarship is available for high school seniors.
- Make sure to get a challenge coin.

Special Events – Rick Sparger

- Nothing to report

Election Coordinator – Ken Hutchison

- Elections for Base Commander and Treasurer will be held at the May Base Meeting. Please consider one of these positions. Email, call or text Ken if you would like to be on the ballot.

Fleet Reserve Association – Ken Hutchison

- The FRA will have a Superbowl party that Sunday night.
- The FRA is planning a picnic in April. More information about that later.

Recreation – Johnny Brown

- Not present.

Nuclear Power School –

- Our guest MMN1(SS) Brad Holtermann injected a bit of humor into the meeting when he spoke about attending the NPS graduation on January 20. Apparently, the CO of NPS did not have as warm a greeting from the speaker Admiral Caudle (Fleet Forces Commander) FKA CINCLANTFLT as Brad had received. (Think Bear Hug) The admiral had been his former Engineer on Sand Lance.

Newsletter – Nick Nichols for Ed Stank

- The Newsletter will be out within the next couple of days.

PAO – Nick Nichols for Ed Stank

- Nothing to report.

Storekeeper – Woody Woodsmall

- Woody has received three Dolphin Ties, so if you need one, see him tonight.
- Woody reminded us about the 2023 Submarine Calendars. The theme is *“Perils in the Deep”* and are \$10 each. He displayed the calendar for the camera and stated that he will mail them if necessary.

COB – Rick Sparger

- Ed Stank has done a fantastic job as Newsletter Editor / PAO and POC for USSVI National contact but he plans to resign these positions. Therefore, we need someone to take on these tasks.
- Prior to April 8, we need to do some “buff up” of the float before it is taken to the Submarine Birthday Ball for display.
- We can tell those staying at the Marriott, that we will be launching it at the Navy Base.

Vice Commander – Tom Lawson

- Not present.

Base Commander – Mike Ciesielko

- There are plans for a Southeast Regional Conference to be held in Gulfport, MS on April 3 - 6.
- The National Conference will be held in Tucson, AZ at the El Conquistador Hilton on August 28 – September 3.

Good of the Order

Ethiopia – Ken Hutchison

- There is a tribe in Ethiopia that values big guts. The most desirable men are those with the largest bellies and the bigger it is, the more attractive you are. So, for many in the room tonight, you are not fat. You are just in the wrong tribe.

Nuclear Historian – Rick Carlson

- Not present.

After Battery – Ray Sparks

- Not present.

Gun Club – Mike Ciesielko

- We had a great time at the range recently. Mike's wife had purchased a new gun and wanted to shoot it. Not only that one, but she demonstrated her ability to shoot tight groups with several guns belonging to the other guys there that day, prompting one to jokingly remind Mike not to make her mad.
- We had both younger and older guys there and some interesting guns.
- We plan to schedule more trips to the range after April.
- Some of the Range Masters at the location are former submariners.
- [SECRETARY'S NOTE: After the meeting concluded, BC said that he would schedule a shoot for March]

Hearing Aids – MMN1(SS) Brad Holtermann

- For those who may be having problems getting the VA to cover the cost of hearing aids, there is a new program at Fort Jackson for obtaining them. The audio test is performed for free and they sell the hearing aids for cost. The hearing aids for which he paid \$875 would go for \$6 - \$7k retail. He will provide the information about this to the Chaplain and Ken for FRA. It is available for any honorably discharged veteran.

Base Business Cards

- John Lookabill asked about Charleston Base Invitation Cards. BC had some to give him.

Non-Nuclear Historian – Harry Nettles

- How many here tonight have ever seen or met someone that, year later, you found out that they were famous? That would be someone whom you had met in the past and years later, found out that they were famous people? I see a few hands out there. Well, that happened to me.
- A long, long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away, I was the leading seaman on the USS Simon Bolivar SSBN-641 Blue. We were at the Naval Weapons Station, moored outside the tender – I think it was the USS Hunley – not quite sure, but it was a big gray thing. Well, I got my gang up topside; we are doing some chipping and scraping and we are getting ready to do some painting. All of a sudden, this great big guy comes down off the tender. He's a diver! He has got a five gallon bucket and comes on the boat and goes to the turtleback and dumps his bucket upside down, sits on it and takes off his prosthesis, then puts on his weight belt, his mask, grabs his tools and then, over the side he goes. This was a bit baffling, but he got done with putting the hull fitting on, crawls back up, sits back down on his bucket, puts his leg back on, takes his weight belt off, puts everything in the bucket and goes back up to the tender. WOW! That was like something! Here it is, years later, that I found out that this man was Carl Brashear! Well, if you get the FRA Today magazine,

you will see his picture on the front cover. I said, "I knew him." Well, technically, I didn't really know him, but I saw him in person when he took that leg off, went over the side and got back up. The Men of Honor story that Robert De Niro starred. It was a fantastic movie – quite a bit of foul language, like some sailors – but those special people just sort of pop up.

- So, I had another one. I found out about this guy a LONG time before I finally got to meet him. I remember 1968 in New London, CT at Sub School. I forget which building it was, but they had all these War Patrol flags. I was mesmerized by this one particular flag that stood out above all the others because it had a train on it! Well, inquiring minds want to know! How does a submarine sink a train? Was it on a barge and it blew the barge up? On a bridge and used the deck gun? Well, that did not happen. They set a booby trap on the railroad track and blew the train up! Well, on the fiftieth anniversary of the end of WWII, at a ceremony in Pearl Harbor, HI, I met the guy that was responsible for blowing up the train. It was Gene Fluckey, himself! He was doing a book-signing that I got to meet him and speak with him. He wrote a nice little note in his book to me. He found out that my wife was there, because she was taking pictures as I was standing over there next to him. When we were done, he looks out there and says, "Who's that?" "Oh, that is my wife." "Give me the book back," he said. I handed him the book and he sat back down and wrote another note – this time to her! So, these people just sort of pop in and out of your lives and you don't even know them. There is no telling who you have served with that – one day – is going to great and famous. So, for all those youths out there – were is that newbie at? – just wait, because you may meet one of those people, and you may live to find out that, "I KNEW HIM and look what he did!"

Drawings & Auctions

- Dennis Lanier would have won a half gallon of bourbon did not have a Scholarship Challenge Coin.
- FRA Drawing – Mike Ciesielko
- Depth Charge Drawing – Joe O'Saben

Closing Ceremony

- Chaplain Nick Nichols led the group in a prayer of Benediction.
- Base Commander Mike Ciesielko announced adjournment of the meeting.
- Base Commander Mike Ciesielko sounded three blasts of the diving alarm.
- Meeting closed at 2006.