

**United States Submarine Veterans, Inc., Charleston Base**  
**Minutes of Business Meeting**  
**10 August 2023**

**Opening Ceremonies:**

- The August 2023 Base Meeting was called to order by Base Commander Mike Ciesielko with a quorum of four officers and a total of 47 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 August was given by Base Chaplain Nick Nichols.
- Submarines lost during the month of August:
  - **USS Bullhead (SS-332)**      **August 6, 1945 – 3rd War Patrol**      **Lost with All Hands – 84 Souls**
  - **USS Flier (SS-250)**      **August 13, 1944 – 2nd War Patrol**      **Lost with 82 Souls – 8 men survived.**
  - **USS S-39 (SS-144)**      **August 13, 1942 – 3rd War Patrol**      **No loss of life**
  - **USS Harder (SS-257)**      **August 24, 1944 – 6th War Patrol**      **Lost with All Hands – 79 Souls**
  - **USS Cochino (SS-345)**      **August 26, 1949**      **No Navy loss of life – one civilian loss – Tusk lost 6 souls during the rescue**
  - **FIVE Boats and 253 Men Lost**

**Master Chief Machinist Mate, Submarines**  
**Donald Dale Petersen, U.S. Navy Retired**  
**Departed on Eternal Patrol on July 21, 2023**

**Introductions of New Attendees:**

- Two men were present at the Base meeting for the first time:
  - David McNeely – ET1 – Qualified on USS Nathan Hale SSBN623 – 1983 – Also served aboard USS James Madison SSBN627, USS Hunley AS31, USS Holland AS32, POMFLANT and SUBTRAFAC Charleston
  - Chris Hauf – RMCS – Qualified on USS Florida SSBN728 – 2002 – Also served aboard USS Maine SSBN741, USS Louisiana SSBN743 and USS Nevada SSBN733

**Old Business:**

- None

**New Business:**

- Regarding the Chaplain's report about Al Dempster being removed from the Sailing List and the family issues involved, the decision was made to "Pass the Hat" to get his dues paid for this year. Any amount in excess of \$50 will be held by the Treasurer for future similar needs. The Treasurer reported that \$358 was donated by the Base Membership.

**Secretary – Gordon Long:**

- The Minutes from the July Base Meeting were emailed directly to the entire Base membership, published on the Base Website. The Base Meeting Minutes were approved with a correction to the Depth Charge.

**Treasurer – Ricky Collins:**

- The Treasurer's Report for July 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 HARDER SS-257 was lost on August 24, 1944 with the loss of 70 crew members from a depth charge attack by a minesweeper near Bataan while on her 6<sup>th</sup> war patrol. Harder had won a Presidential Unit Citation for her first 5 war patrols and CDR Dealey was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor posthumously. Harder received six battle stars for World War II service and is tied for 9<sup>th</sup> in the number of enemy ships sunk.
- There are several shipmates and family members who have given me information which they wish to be kept confidential at this time.
- **MMCM(SS) Don Petersen**, 76, departed on Eternal Patrol on Friday 21 July in Goose Creek. Don joined the Navy in 1968 and retired in 1994. He was a life member of USSVI & Charleston Base joining both in 2002, a member of the Holland Club having been qualified for 54 years, and a Life Member of FRA Branch 269 with continuous membership for 42 years. Don qualified on USS BASHAW SS/SSK/AGSS-241 in 1969. He also served on USS TINOSA SSN-606, USS JAMES MADISON SSBN-627, USS NARWHAL SSN-671 and USS WILLIAM H. BATES SSN-680. A note of condolence from Charleston Base has been placed on the funeral home website. The Funeral Home has indicated there are no services scheduled.
  - I have received word from both the Base Commander and the FRA Chaplain that Don's daughter wants to hold a SUBVET/FRA service for Don at the Fleet. No one has officially contacted either Bobbi or me.
  - The family did put a full obituary in the paper and held a graveside service on Sat 5 Aug but neither chaplain was contacted with the information.
- **HMCS(SS) Brain Repphum**, 94, departed on EP on 6 Aug. He was not a member of USSVI but was a member of FRA Branch 269.
- **Roger Gibson's daughter, Bonnie**, 61, passed away on the morning of July 25 at St. Francis Hospital from stage IV cancer. She was 12 hours into her hospice care but was too weak. I have not heard of any services being planned.
- **Rick Wise** will be having a chest CT scan on Aug 22nd. He is doing well.
- **Al Dempster's son, Ed**, sent me an email update on Al. Ed thinks his father is still a member of Charleston Base but we have checked and he was dropped in Jan 2020. I have sent Ed an email letting him know this. According to his son, Al has been out of commission for a while. His health has declined rapidly in the last four years. We recently moved him and my mom into an assisted living facility (The Bridge at Charleston). It's a very nice place and they honor veterans there.
- **Jim Higgins** is now home resting up from his stay in the Elms hotel program. He went home last week. Still has some infection on his spine that is being treated with antibiotics. He told me he feels much better.
- **Hans 'Sam' Vlam** is in the Oakbrook Health & Rehabilitation Center Rm 315 for rehab. He has Parkinson's and is doing as well as can be expected. He will enjoy any visits he gets.
- **Joe Lunn** is still battling his Parkinson's Disease.
- **Thom Beach** is still at the VICTORY HOUSE in Walterboro. His phone number is 843.809.9417.

#### **Webmaster – Nick Nichols:**

- We've had several phone number issues in the last few weeks. Would like for you to verify your number on our base Sailing List. If you change your number or drop your home line, please contact either Larry, me or the COB so that we can make the necessary changes locally and with National.
- Until told differently, continue to use the website of <https://ussubvets.org>

#### **Social Media – Lewis Leal:**

- Nothing to report

#### **Membership – Larry Knutson**

- Nothing to report
- Nick Nichols provided Base Standings [those with more than 200 members]:  
Groton 1155 - 2) Hampton Roads 278 - 3) Charleston 254 - 4) Bremerton 241

#### **National Awards – Mike Ciesielko**

- Mike reported as not having heard from National regarding National Awards. He had emailed the National Commander and the Chairman about the awards with no response. Mike will provide info as available.

### **VA – Tom Lawson**

- Nothing to report

### **Scholarship – Carl Chinn**

- There is a raffle drawing tonight for a picture of a submarine (UnderSeaPokenHolenWaterBoaten) with mock-German translations for various systems and equipment (Periscopes = Das Peepintubes).
- We still have Challenge Coins for sale - \$12 each.
- The Rummage sale will be held on November 18.
- Carl's wife has already sold \$345 of items online for the Scholarship Fund.

### **Special Events – Rick Sparger**

- Nothing to report

### **Fleet Reserve Association – Ken Hutchison**

- We will have an indoor picnic here at the FRA on Labor Day.
- We will also have a picnic at Marrington Plantation on September 23.
- Ken thanked Nick Nichols for doing a wonderful job for the new Fleet Reserve website. Nick informed everyone that the site is [FRA269GC.org](http://FRA269GC.org). It is also linked on the Charleston Base home page.

### **Nuclear Power School – Phil Nunnally**

- Not present.

### **Recreation – Johnny Brown**

- The Navy Ball Golf Tournament, for which we sponsored a lunch bar with a SubVets banner displayed, was held today. There were thirteen teams, of which our group, consisting of Ray Sparks, Greg Landry, Gene Weir and Johnny Brown was likely the oldest but had a great time as we took fourth place. No, we did not get any money.
- We will be having a cookout on October 28 at the Marrington Pavilion. Base Commander Mike Ciesielko will be cooking Boston Butts. COB will be cooking Fish Stew and I will be cooking Frogmore Stew. There will be plenty to eat. We do ask those attending to bring sides. Johnny will have a brochure sent soon.

### **Storekeeper – Woody Woodsmall**

- Woody has only one hat left, but can get more saying, ***“It never happened. We were never there.”***
- Woody has plenty of dolphin window decals of various sizes. Certainly, there is one that will fit on your car.
- If you have a dealer advertisement plate on the front of your car, replace it with a Silver Dolphin plate.
- Also, if you have a license plate frame from a dealer, you don't need to promote their business; replace that with a Submarine Service frame instead

### **Newsletter/PAO – Ed Stank**

- Ed has been requesting an individual to replace him as Newsletter Editor and Public Affairs Officer for several months now. As of this meeting, he announced that he has officially resigned both positions. The article about the Scholarship award should be in the next edition of American Submariner.

### **COB – Rick Sparger**

- Rick thanked Ed Stank for his work as Newsletter and PAO. Ed did a fabulous job getting Charleston Base published in American Submariner.
- Rick thanked the NPS Staff members for being here tonight.
- We want to get the KAPS 4 KIDS program going again. The COVID restrictions have been lifted from most hospitals.
- We used to pull the float in the Summerville parade, but they instituted a \$150 registration fee.
- The Chief Selectee Breakfast is on Saturday, September 9. It will be held at Bldg. 777 where we had the Amberjack Ceremony last year. Rick received a call from one of the Chiefs involved with the breakfast who

thought that Charleston Base was going to supply the food. "That is a NO." Rick has no idea where he got that from but we are not. The Selectees will be cooking.

#### **Vice Commander – Tom Lawson**

- Nothing to report.

#### **Base Commander – Mike Ciesielko**

- Think about our shipmates who are currently at sea. Prayer for them is always good.
- The Membership Support Fund that got started this evening with the "passing of the hat" for Al Dempster will be maintained by the Treasurer.

#### **Good of the Order**

#### **Nuclear Historian – Rick Carlson**

- Fellow Shipmates, Shoremates & LGBTQ+ (Remember – Don't Ask, Don't Tell)  
I want to apologize for not being here since I lost my wife. For a while, almost 3 years I had a female friend down in Savannah that wanted me with her. It's hard to be there and here – She offered me something that your gents could not. I have since returned and felt was my duty to bring you up to date. My grandson joined the Navy, went to NUC School, completed Prototype here in Charleston and received his first set of orders to the USS Illinois in Pearl Harbor, HI. This inspired me to get back on the horse and return to my Nuclear Historian duties. So here goes!!
- ON THE ROAD TO RIO ... ER, ROAD TO BEAUFORT, SC  
I was traveling to Beaufort SC on business, both government and Cold War Submarine Memorial business, pulling a trailer that George Lisle allowed me to borrow. The trailer was for a rather large construction sign that a contractor was donating the "the cause" for the Cold War Submarine Memorial at Patriots Point. As is my usual traveling mode when I'm alone, I have a CB radio headset on, covering one ear (standard operating procedure for us Radioman guys on the boats) \_ as I listen to the radio/wife with the other ear. Around Jacksonboro, the northbound drivers (i.e. 18-wheeler types) began putting out the word about a Piggly Wiggly truck that when off the road into a tidal creek. The driver was OK, but the section of Hwy 17 south was blocked as they off loaded his goods into another truck. No way around him unless you turned around and went through Walterboro and got on the super slab (I-95) from there. No dice for me. I had to get through in order to go to Beaufort. I arrived near the scene and stopped, which was several 18-wheelers back from the Highway Patrol blockade on a 4-lane section of the highway. Shortly thereafter the two cars in front of me decided to turn around and head back for the long way around to the super slab. Suddenly, a Pathfinder pulls up next to me and then slides in front of me where the two cars used to be. After a while, this guy steps out of the Pathfinder; he's got hair down to his waist, no shirt on, unsecured jeans and socks (with no shoes) half off his feet. I'm sitting here thinking, "What a clown." He looks around and decides to go talk to the Highway Patrol. He walks away and several minutes later both back doors of the Pathfinder open up and two gorgeous blondes step out wearing skimpy bathing suit tops and short shorts. They walk to the back of the Pathfinder and open up the back end. I'm about 15 feet from them as they face each other...Then, zip, and down go the short shorts, revealing V-type bathing suit bottoms! By now, little beads of sweat are forming on my forehead. One blonde climbs onto the top of the Pathfinder, faces me and lies down with her knees bent skyward. The other blonde lies down on the tailgate and props her legs on top of the spare tire. The beads of sweat are now burning my eyes as I try to concentrate on my mobile phone and try to remember who I was going to call and why. It became clear to me that I had no business using a mobile phone at a moment like this, so I threw it on the back seat and pondered my position carefully. The blonde on the roof of the Pathfinder now sat up and with one leg on the spare tire and the other dangling from the roof edge, she began to apply suntan lotion. I suddenly had the urge to eject myself from my Jeep and opened the door only to injure my shoulder from my still-secured seat belt. After exiting my Jeep, I stretched and decided that my headlights needed some sort of attention, maybe a bit of buffing up. But, no that obvious since my Jeep had been washed and buffed the day before. Then, I remembered what the WWII captains did when they made contact with a large enemy force. They called in a contact report, trailed and tried to get into a firing position by doing an end around. So, after milling around the front of my Jeep, checking the shocks, air pressure, steering damper and calibrating the position of my windshield wipers I felt it was time to call in

reinforcements. Returning to my Jeep I picked my CB mike and gave the guys (18-wheeler drivers) a 10-34 report (i.e. hazardous road conditions ahead). Moments after that transmission the drivers of the 18-wheelers About 1/4 mile behind me were jumping down from their cabs and heading to my location. Then the unexpected happened; the blond on the tailgate started walking my way. It was the moment that 28 years of married life had prepared me for...

Sorry, not enough paper to finish my report. The **Road to Beaufort** will be concluded at the next meeting. Hope to see you there!

### **After Battery – Ray Sparks**

- Not present.

### **Gun Club – Mike Ciesielko**

- Nothing to report.

### **Non-Nuclear Historian – Harry Nettles**

- If you have ever served on a Fast Attack, you may want to go have a smoke break or get a cold beer while I talk to the Pocket Rocket Heroes that are in here about life in the “real” Navy.

You see, a long, long time ago, when I was serving in the Real Navy, before I went back to the Pocket Rocket Hero era, we did a thing called PCO OPS. Anybody ever done this? How many of you were ever Diving Officers? For those who don't know PCO OPS is short for Prospective Commanding Officer Operations. That's where they send them to school for a year to teach them how to be a CO of nuclear powered submarines. They learn about laws and treaties and all this other junk. They had schools to learn things so that they are supposed be better than you do. Then they go through tactics training and their final exam is that they actually have to come to a submarine to prove that they can fight the submarine – That is that they can go to war.

So, we had a group of PCOs aboard when I was on the “Gray Thing”. I was the morning Diving Officer and we were down at AUTEC. We were “fighting” against a force of three – A Spruance-class destroyer that had the ability to launch torpedoes, a dipping helo that could also launch torpedoes and a P3 aircraft flying around that could launch torpedoes.

So, it's us out there against the world. Now, the tactics which we on the “Gray Thing” had trained on – Sonar reports WEAPON IN THE WATER, ALL AHEAD FLANK, GO DEEP – 20 DEGREE DOWN ANGLE, OPEN THE FORWARD AND AFTER GROUP VENTS, 5 SECOND BLOW, LEVEL OUT, RUN, RUN, RUN, SWIVEL, SWIVEL, SWIVEL ETC... When the torpedo shuts down, we go back up on top. We had practiced this and had done this several times, so we had it down pat.

So, we had this PCO out there and a PCO Instructor who is overseeing the event, right? So, Sonar calls out. “Weapon in the water!”

This PCO calls out the first several steps, but then says, “Open the Forward Group Vents and perform 5 second blow.”

My head whipped around so fast that I almost had spinal injuries. I said, “Sir, we need to open BOTH Ballast Tank Vents.”

He said, “I SAID, The Forward Group Vents!”

“Yes, Sir.”

So, we opened the forward group vents and by about the time we got down about to 700 feet, he told the Chief of the Watch, “Shut the vents.”

I am getting whiplash. “Sir, we need to leave the vents open.”

“I SAID, shut the vents.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“All Ahead two-thirds. Dive, make your depth 400 feet.”

UHUU? Up we came and I mean, UP WE CAME! We had a full dive on both planes. I turned around, looked at him and said, “Request speed.”

“Negative. No speed, no speed.” Nothing.

“Officer of the Deck, we need to open the vents!”

Well, all of a sudden, POOF! Out of the water we came. Well, the Captain comes out, looks at me and asked, “Chief, what's going on?”

I said, "Well, Captain..." I explained to him what happened. He turned around and told the PCO Instructor, "You need to work on this." The PCO Instructor said, "Yes, Sir."

Great! I got relieved too. I told the next Diving Officer, "Better watch out for these clowns."

Well, the next morning, guess what! I got the same PCO and we are doing the same thing. I can't believe that we're doing this, except this time, he opened the vents and then shut the vents. THEN he slowed QUICKER than he did before. And NOW, we are Coming Up Again! This time, I've got a 30+ degree up angle! There was NOTHING I could do. I was flooding water and pumping water – everything that the Chief of the Watch could do to negate the up angle.

We came screaming up; the Captain is in his stateroom looking at his little depth gauge on his desk, rapidly going tick, tick, tick – faster and faster. He's thinking, "Oh, this is NOT good." So, he jumps up runs to the Control Room. Just about the time we popped through the surface, he gets on the No. 2 scope and raises it up. Lo and behold, a camera comes on. We had three monitors in Control for everybody to see what was going on. Right about that time – VROOM – right over the top of us was a P3 aircraft at about 200 feet! I looked around and said, "I'm the only Diving Officer in the Atlantic fleet that has had a near mid-air collision with a P3!"

### **NNPTC**

- NNPTC is having a Burger Bash on BURGER BASH on August 24 at NNPTC Circle starting at 1600. If needed, we will have golf carts to help get people to the circle.

### **Drawings & Auctions**

- Scholarship "German Submarine" Picture Drawing – Tom Lawson
- FRA Drawing – Gordon Long
- Depth Charge Drawing – Bill Roup

### **Closing Ceremony**

- Base 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 2002.