

United States Submarine Veterans, Inc., Charleston Base
Minutes of Business Meeting
14 September 2023

Opening Ceremonies:

- The September 2023 Base Meeting was called to order by Base Commander Mike Ciesielko with a quorum of four officers and a total of 41 members. The meeting started at 1902 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 September was given by Base Chaplain Nick Nichols.
- Submarines lost during the month of September:
 - **USS S-5 (SS 110) Sep 1, 1920 – Practice Dive No loss of life**
 - **USS GRAYLING (SS 209) Sep 9, 1943 – 8th War Patrol Lost with all hands – 76 souls**
 - **USS S-51 (SS 162) Sep 25, 1925 – Rammed off Block Island Lost with 33 souls; 3 survivors**
 - **USS CISCO (SS 290) Sep 28, 1943 – 1st War Patrol Lost with all hands – 76 souls**
 - **USS POMPANO (SS 181) September, 1943 – 7th War Patrol Lost with all hands - 77 souls**
 - **Five Boats and 262 Men Lost**

Storekeeper First Class, Submarines
Hans “Sam” Vlam, U.S. Navy Retired
Departed on Eternal Patrol on September 13, 2023

Introductions of New Attendees:

- One man was present at the Base meeting for the first time:
 - Donald Underwood – QMCS – Qualified on USS Razorback SS394 – 1957 – Also served aboard USS Patrick Henry SSBN599, USS Thomas Edison SSBN610, USS Jallao SS368, USS Ulysses S Grant SSBN631 and USS Grayling SSN646

Old Business:

- None

New Business:

- Base Commander Mike Ciesielko introduced Anthony Mazza as our new NNPTC liaison.

Secretary – Gordon Long:

- The Minutes from the August Base Meeting were emailed directly to the entire Base membership, published on the Base Website. There were no revisions. The Base Meeting Minutes were approved as written.

Treasurer – Ricky Collins:

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

Chaplain – Tom Lawson for Nick Nichols:

- Highlighted boat of the month:
 - USS CISCO SS-290 departed on her 1st war patrol, but never returned. Japanese records tell of sighting a submarine leaking oil in the area where the Cisco was known to have been on duty. Japanese records state she was sunk by bombs and depth charges with the loss of 76 men.
- There are several shipmates and family members who have given me information which they wish to be kept confidential at this time.
- **ENCS(SS) Kenneth Carroll Henry** (Pig Pen or The Pigger) of the Sailor's Home in Gulfport MS has departed on Eternal Patrol on August 27, 2023. Ken joined the Navy in 1956 and retired in 1974. He qualified on

TRUTTA SS-421 in 1957. He was on ARCHERFISH SS-311 during her time in LANTFLT mapping the sea floor so the Boomers of the future could sail undeterred. Ken also served on GUAVINA SS-362, TENCH SS-417, ENTEMEDOR SS-340 and TUSK SS-426. After retiring from the Navy, he became a volunteer Fireman in Fla. After his wife's death Pigger moved to the Sailor's Home. More importantly he became the history keeper of SubVets WWII, researching and reporting Eternal Patrol notices of those heroes who rode real submarines during that conflict referred to as WWII. If Pigger was called and asked about a WWII Boat Sailor, he would email back with a history, naming the boats, War patrols, when & why change of rank (both directions), etc. A Class Act that never will be repeated. Shipmate, Rest Your Oars.

- **Rick Wise** continues to do well.
- **Pete Garrison** requested help with installing a new fan motor. He is not stable enough to stand on ladders. The NNPTC FCPOA (First Class Petty Officers Association) has contacted Pete and set up a date to come and help him.
- **Al Dempster's son, Ed**, was informed of the base members paying his father's 2023 dues. Al and his wife are now in The Bridge of Charleston Assisted Living. His son sent the following email: "Thanks for the update, I had intended to take care of his dues myself. But please let everyone know I really appreciate that they took care of that for him. His mailing address is: Alan Dempster – Room 222, 2590 Elms Plantation Blvd., North Charleston, SC 29406. They have a phone in their apartment – (843) 793-1187. If you need anything else, please let me know. Thanks again."
- **Hans 'Sam' Vlam**, With great sadness I report on Wednesday, September 13, 2023, our shipmate and friend Sam Vlam, 84, departed on Eternal Patrol in Summerville. Sam joined the Navy in 1956 and retired in 1978. He was a life member of USSVI National [1999], a Charleston Base member, and a member of the Holland Club having been qualified for 50 years. Sam qualified on USS NATHANAEL GREENE SSBN-616 IN 1973. He also served on USS GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER SSBN-656.
- **Thom Beach** is still at the VICTORY HOUSE in Walterboro. His phone number is 843.809.9417.

Webmaster – Tom Lawson for Nick Nichols:

- We are continuing to have phone number issues. If you change your number or drop your home line, please contact either Larry, Nick or the COB so that we can make the necessary changes locally and with National.
- Until told differently, continue to use the website of <https://ussubvets.org>
- The Fleet Reserve has a new website. It is FRA269GC.org.
- Expect many extra shipmates at the October meeting. The Stimson is having a reunion and they have been invited to attend our meeting. There are 35 SUBVETS in the shipmates that are attending but a total of 70 men will be at the reunion.

Social Media – Lewis Leal:

- Not present

Membership – Larry Knutson

- Next month (October) will start renewals for 2024. The Base website USSVICB.ORG has new rates for dues. Both National and Base dues have increased slightly.
- Members can send a check to Larry. His address is on the Base website.
- If dropped from National USSVI, your longevity date will reset to zero upon reinstatement.
- The report from Nick Nichols provided Base Standings [those with more than 200 members]: Groton 1156 - 2) Hampton Roads 280 - 3) Charleston 257 - 4) Bremerton 243

National Awards – Mike Ciesielko

- Mike will discuss this situation with National USSVI.

VA – Tom Lawson

- Nothing to report

Scholarship – Carl Chinn

- Raffle for dolphins and belt buckle next month is in progress. Drawing will be next month. Two winners. First gets choice.
- We still have Challenge Coins for sale - \$12 each.
- The Rummage sale will be held on November 18. Halloween Express on Old Trolley Rd.

Special Events – Rick Sparger

- Nothing to report

Fleet Reserve Association – Ken Hutchison

- FRA will have a picnic at Marrington Plantation on September 23. Glenn Little is coordinator for picnic. We expect to eat at 1200. BYOD.
- FRA Branch 269 will be hosting the Southeast Regional Convention in September 2024. There will be several fund raisers for this event. The first – on Veterans Day – will be a BBQ Plate Lunch. The cost will be \$12.

Nuclear Power School Awards – Phil Nunnally

- The last NPS Awards were held on 1 SEP and went very well. The next NPS Graduation will be 7 OCT.
- The Australian Navy is having graduates now also.

Little David – Phil Nunnally

- Phil is taking over as Little David coordinator. He and Rick Wise will be inspecting it soon.
- Phil is planning a working party for October.

Recreation – Johnny Brown

- We will be having a cookout on October 28 at the Marrington Pavilion. Base Commander Mike Ciesielko will be cooking Boston Butts (PULLED PORK). COB will be cooking Fish Stew and I will be cooking Frogmore Stew (LowCountry Boil). There is no cost, but we do ask those attending to bring sides. There will be plenty to eat. Johnny will have a brochure sent soon.
- The Base Christmas Party will be held at the FRA on Friday, December 1.

Storekeeper – Woody Woodsmall

- USSVI 2024 Calendars are available. \$10 each. This year is highlighting the GUPPY Class submarines.
- Woody has an emblem for your vehicles that says, "Submarine Vet Edition". \$20 each. He has already sold the ones that he purchased. Let him know if you want one or more so that he can get another order placed.

PAO – Dave Harvey

- Not Present

Newsletter – OPEN

- Nothing to report.

COB – Rick Sparger

- Last Saturday, the NNPTC held a CPO Selectee Brunch. About 20 SubVets attended. We thank all involved.
- There was a CPO Selectee Breakfast at Cracker Barrel in Summerville.
- Ed provided an update about AI Stoll

Vice Commander – Tom Lawson

- Nothing to report.

Base Commander – Mike Ciesielko

- There is an email scam that has affected the Base Commander email address. If you get anything weird like asking you to get Target gift cards or anything else. First of all, BC does not shop at Target. If you receive any questionable emails, please call BC on phone to verify.
- Regarding National Awards, we received NONE. Despite the valiant efforts of the committee members: Ken Hutchison, Ricky Collins, Tom Lawson, Glenn Little, USSVI did not recognize Charleston Base or any of its members.

Good of the Order

Nuclear Historian – Rick Carlson

- Not present.

After Battery – Ray Sparks

- Not present.

Equipment – Rick Wise

- Rick has custody of some equipment belonging to Charleston Base. (Inverter and battery powered claxon etc...) He needs someone to take custody of it since he cannot handle it any longer. It does not need to happen right now, but hopefully by November. COB recommended that it could be taken to the storage facility. That building is not temperature controlled.

National Convention in Tucson – Ed Stank

- The temperature there was 115 degrees.
- They had three excursions: The Biosphere, Air Museum and Desert Museum. If you had signed up for yourself and your spouse to attend all three of these, the cost would be about \$700. Ed rented a car for less than that for two weeks. Ed/Carolyn went to these for much less. The transportation cost was very high. The timing of the convention to be held in Arizona was inappropriate for the temperature.
- The National Convention next year – 24-26 August – will be held in Cleveland, OH. The USS Cod is located here, is well maintained and is a fantastic attraction.
- The Nathan Hale will also be holding a reunion.
- Three attended from Charleston Base: Ed, Mike Knaubb and Dave Harvey.

Gun Club – Mike Ciesielko

- Nothing to report.

REUNIONS – Ray Bryant

- USS Daniel Webster and USS Will Rogers Reunions are next month. See Ray after the meeting.

Non-Nuclear Historian – Harry Nettles

- This will relate to anyone who has ever been a member of a Man Overboard Party, a Leading Seaman (Yes, I realize that Nukes will not understand this one), a Deck Division LPO or possibly a Torpedoman.
- His name was LTJG Colch. He was a Rescue Pilot in Korea flying helicopters. How many Machinist Mates do we have in here tonight? How about a MM for a crewman aboard a helicopter. This man created the "Horse Collar" which is used to rescue downed pilots. So, if you were a First Lieutenant, Deck Division LPO or anyone who has ever been on a Man Overboard Party, you are familiar with a horse collar. In his spare time, while he was deployed to Korea, he created other safety devices to help with the rescue of downed pilots. On July 3, 1951, LT Colch and his crewman, while attempting to rescue a downed pilot in Korea, were shot down. For three days, they evaded capture, living off of one candy bar, two canteens of water and a flask of brandy. Eventually, they were captured. Both were wounded, both were hungry and suffering from exposure. LT Colch defied his captors. He would not answer their questions. He was a POW demanding proper treatment, of which, he and his crewman did not get. He shared meager rations with other POWs and gave only his name, rank and serial number. He had resolve which enabled him to survive the abuse that suffered at the hands of his captors. However, his body was not strong and on October 16, 1951, LT

Colch succumbed to his injuries and died as a POW. His actions resulted in the development of the Code of Conduct. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroism as a POW.

- Please Stand.
- The Code of Conduct
 - I am an American, fighting in the forces which guard my country and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in their defense.
 - I will never surrender of my own free will. If in command, I will never surrender the members of my command while they still have the means to resist.
 - If I am captured I will continue to resist by all means available. I will make every effort to escape and aid others to escape. I will accept neither parole nor special favors from the enemy.
 - If I become a prisoner of war, I will keep faith with my fellow prisoners. I will give no information or take part in any action which might be harmful to my comrades. If I am senior, I will take command. If not, I will obey the lawful orders of those appointed over me and will back them up in every way.
 - When questioned, should I become a prisoner of war, I am required to give name, rank, service number and date of birth. I will evade answering all further questions to the utmost of my ability. I will make no oral or written statements disloyal to my country and its allies or harmful to their cause.
 - I will never forget that I am an American, fighting for freedom, responsible for my actions, and dedicated to the principles which made my country free. I will trust in my God and in the United States of America.
- Thank you.

Drawings & Auctions

- Challenge Coin – Keith Dye
- FRA Drawing – Keith Dye
- Depth Charge Drawing – Ronnie VanDiver

Closing Ceremony

- Vice Commander Tom Lawson 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 2003.