

**United States Submarine Veterans, Inc., Charleston Base**  
**Minutes of Business Meeting**  
**11 July 2024**

**Opening Ceremonies:**

- The July 2024 Base Meeting was called to order by Base Commander Mike Ciesielko with a quorum of four officers and a total of 43 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 July was given by Base Chaplain Nick Nichols.
- Submarines lost during the month of July:
  - **USS S-28 (SS-133) July 4, 1944 – Training Exercise Lost with All Hands – 49 Souls**
  - **USS ROBALO (SS-273) July 26, 1944 – 3<sup>RD</sup> war patrol Lost with 77 Men – 4 Died as POWs – 81 Souls**
  - **USS GRUNNION (SS-216) July 30, 1942 – 1<sup>ST</sup> war patrol Lost with All Hands – 70 Souls**
  - **THREE Boats and 200 Men Lost**
- The Creed of USSVI was read by Vice Commander Tom Lawson.
- Base Commander Mike Ciesielko welcomed members and guests to the meeting.

**Guest Speakers: The Wall That Heals**

- **Phyllis Hughes** – Dorchester Heritage Center – 964 Hwy 78 Ridgeville
  - A program of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Foundation – Founders of the Wall
  - The largest traveling “Wall That Heals” will be on display from October 17-20, 2024 at 101 Ridge St. St. George. (The Old Dorchester County Court House)
  - Will arrive in the area on October 15. The truck with the memorial panels is considered hallowed ground. It will be met and escorted by the Patriot Guard Riders and Deputies from the Dorchester County Sheriff’s Office. All veterans are invited to join the procession.
  - Cadets from the Citadel will be there on October 16 to help set up
  - Gold Star Families are being contacted to be there during the assembly.
  - The display will be open to the public 24x7. Volunteers are needed for all hours of day/night. There is a sign-up sheet available.
  - Ms. Hughes would like to talk to a nurse that served in Vietnam. Please advise if able.
  - If you know someone who died as a result of the Vietnam War, please advise so that they will be recognized.
- **Bill Blakely**– Dorchester Heritage Center– Treasurer
  - Explained volunteer duties and website sign-up info.
  - Explained info regarding post-war deaths.

**Introductions of New Attendees:**

- One man was at the Charleston Base Meeting for the first time this evening.
  - Bill Blakely – FTG/LCDR – Qualified on USS George Bancroft SSBN643 – 1984 – Also was Plankowner aboard USS Nevada SSBN733 and Plankowner aboard USS Maryland SSBN738.

**Old Business:**

- None

**New Business:**

- Dave Harvey spoke briefly about a trip he made to Two Rivers, WI and a visit to the USS COBIA. There was no actual business discussed.

### Secretary – Gordon Long:

- The Minutes from the June Base meeting were emailed to all Base members. The Minutes have also been published on the Base Website for download. There were no changes, additions or deletions. The Minutes were approved as written.

### Treasurer – Base Commander for Ricky Collins:

- The Treasurer's Report for June 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:
  - **S-28 (SS133)** was lost on July 4, 1944 with the loss of 49 crew members. She was conducting training exercises off Hawaii with the US Coast Guard Cutter Reliance. After S-28 dove for a practice torpedo approach, Reliance lost contact. No distress signal or explosion was heard. Two days later, an oil slick was found near where S-29 had dove. The exact cause of her loss remains a mystery.
- There are several shipmates and family members who have given me information which they wish to be kept confidential at this time.
- **CDR James Douglas 'JD' Pickett USN Ret**, departed on Eternal Patrol on July 4, 2024. JD joined the Navy in 1972 and retired in 1998. He qualified on the USS GRAYBACK SSG/APSS/SS-574 in 1974. He served on USS PINTADO SSN0672, USS NARWHAL SSN-671, USS LaJolla SSN/MTS-701, and USS HYMAN G. RICKOVER SSN-709. JD was instrumental in starting the Denizens of the Deep Base in Aiken SC and was the first Base Commander 2002-2006.
- **MT1(SS) Brett D. Johnson, 66**, departed on Eternal Patrol on June 30, 2024 at a local hospital. He qualified on USS HENRY L. STIMSON SSBN-655 in 1986 and also served on USS JOHN C. CALHOUN SSBN-630. Brett served with me on the Stimson my COB tour. Both arrived in 85 and left in 89. He was not a member of USSVI or Charleston Base. His viewing is Sat., July 13<sup>th</sup>, 1600-1800 at Dial-Murray Funeral Home in Moncks Corner with a memorial service at Beaufort National Cemetery at a later date.
- **Ken Curtis** fell on the July 4<sup>th</sup>. He broke his left tibia and is now in a boot type cast with no walking except to go to the head. He is home if anyone wants to call him.
- **Bill Jennings** was in Roper St. Francis West Ashley on Wednesday and came home today. He was diagnosed with water around his lungs and is being treated with lasiks.
- **Sonny Rash** had surgery on June 26<sup>th</sup> at the VA on an infection in his left foot. He is home recovering from surgery on two toes to remove the infection.
- **Bill 'Robby' Roberts** went to MUSC July 8<sup>th</sup> at MUSC for surgery to correct the leaking aneurysm. After more tests it was determined it is not leaking as first thought and he was sent home. He will be getting another scan in mid-August.  
---Bill and Becky have completed their move to The Village of Summerville (was Presbyterian Home). His phone number and email remain the same. He is in Cottage 606 and Becky is in the Greenhouse Memory Care Unit. The new mailing address has been added to our sailing list and to the national database: William Roberts, 201 W. 9th North Street, Unit 99, Summerville SC 29483-6715.
- **Jeff Reuer** has been diagnosed with partially blocked arteries in both legs which causes pain with even minimal walking. This has kept him from being at the meetings/special events. Sometime in August he will be having surgery to put stents in both legs.
- **Rick Wise** had a PET scan early June with results showing no visible signs of cancer but two vague areas. Biopsies on June 11 came back negative for cancerous cells. He is learning how to use his prosthetic arm.
- **Tom Cyrek** is at home with a home health nurse coming by each day. Due to his Parkinsons meds, if you call do so between 1200-1400 so as not to interfere with his evening meds.
- **Al Dempster** and his wife, Connie, are in The Bridge of Charleston Assisted Living. Mailing address is: Alan Dempster – Room 222, 2590 Elms Plantation Blvd., North Charleston, SC 29406. Apartment phone – (843) 793-1187.
- **Thom Beach** has moved back to Summerville and is at the Blake at Carnes Crossroads. He is in room 108. His dialysis days are Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Visitors are welcome. The address is 4015 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave., Summerville SC 29486.

- **Al Stoll** is at the Village of Summerville. Will try to contact him this week.
- Complete/update your page 2 if you have not done so.

#### **Webmaster – Nick Nichols:**

- 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>

#### **Social Media – Lewis Leal:**

- Not present.

#### **Membership – Larry Knutson**

- **Base Standings** [those with more than 200 members]: Charleston is #3 in USSVI membership. Groton 1140 - 2) Hampton Roads 277 - 3) Charleston 256 - 4) Bremerton 240

#### **National Awards – OPEN**

- Mike spoke about his conversation with the District Commander and how he had derailed the last group of the award submissions. Mike wants to get our much deserving Base Members recognized on the national level. He listed several members who should have received awards years ago for their contributions and accomplishments.
- Base Commander requested a member take on the job of National Awards Coordinator. Other members can help write the

#### **Scholarship – Carl Chinn**

- The Scholarship information was submitted to Summerville Journal Scene and published.
- Carl noted that some free submarine stuff was donated by Glenn Little and is available.
- Carl also has two one-day passes for ATP Gun Shop.
- The Pint Night at the Rusty Bull Brewery netted \$162 for the Scholarship Fund. While there, Carl set out a donation jar for Scholarship Fund and received an additional \$128.

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

- FRA Convention will be held on September 24-26.
- On September 25, a BBQ will be held at the FRA for the convention guests. Johnny Brown is the Pitmaster with assistance by Ray Standfelt.
- Come out and meet guests from all over the southeast.

#### **Recreation – Johnny Brown**

- Charleston Base Christmas Party will be held at the FRA on Friday, December 6. Mark your calendar. The DJ will play Christmas music until 2000. At that time, he will move to the other side of the building for Karaoke. Everyone is invited to go there to participate. Johnny will be working with the FRA for the menu.
- Charleston Base will hold a cookout at The After Battery this coming Saturday beginning at 0800. Johnny requested a few members to assist in a working party on Friday.

#### **NNPTC Liaison – Anthony Mazza**

- Nothing to Report

#### **Base Comptroller – Rick Wise/Tom Holcombe**

- The Second Quarter Report will be on the website soon.

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

- The next graduation ceremony will be held on August 16.

#### **Newsletter – Phil Nunnally**

- Newsletter will be out soon.

**Little David – Phil Nunnally**

- Nothing report

**SC License Plates – Ed Stank**

- Ed spoke with the Palmetto Base in Columbia and a rep from DMV.
- Ed is looking for someone with a graphic arts program.
- Of the \$6,800 that DMV requires, the Golden Corner Base in Easley is willing to donate \$15 per member.
- Ed recommended that Charleston Base donate in like fashion with \$3200 to be pulled from the Investment fund.
- Ed requested that we hold a proxy vote from the entire Base membership.

**HUNLEY/HOUSATONIC – Tom Holcombe**

- Tom talked about a “behind the scenes” event being held on October 25.
- Tom will provide the information to Phil to put into the Newsletter.

**Special Events – Tom Holcombe**

- Nothing to report

**PAO – OPEN**

- The position is open.

**Storekeeper – Woody Woodsmall**

- Woody has two remaining USSVI 60<sup>TH</sup> patch/coin sets.

**COB – Greg Landry**

- For the picnic at The After Battery on 13 JULY, request all bring sides. BYOC – Bring your own chair.

**Kaps4Kids – Ken Hutchison**

- Ken recommended that we restart K4K.
- Base Commander talked about how well this program used to be and emphasized the need to get this rolling again. We need someone to spearhead this effort.

**VA – Tom Lawson**

- Nothing to report.

**Vice Commander – Tom Lawson**

- The USSVI Charitable Foundation is providing window AC units to SubVets that are in need of air conditioning for their home. This is done with a gift certificate payable to Home Depot. If you or another SubVet with such a need, please inform Base Commander. He will contact the District Commander to get a unit provided.

**Base Commander – Mike Ciesielko**

- Mike talked about getting together with other Bases in some location to just have fun. It would likely require a hotel stay, but perhaps with the group, we could get reduced room rates.
- Mike talked about the Freedom Fest and the top quality of the fireworks display. He also noted how few of the Base members were present at the event.
- Mike thanked everyone for attendance tonight.

## **Good of the Order**

### **Vest – Nick Nichols**

- Nick has a vest with a bunch of patches belonging to a departed shipmate provided by the family. None of them have desire to retain it. Ray Sparks said that he will take it to The After Battery.

### **Nuclear Historian – Rick Wise**

- No report tonight

### **After Battery – Ray Sparks**

- Nothing to report
- Remember the Saturday picnic.

### **Gun Club – Mike Ciesielko**

- Nothing reported.

### **Drawings & Auctions**

- FRA Drawing – Nick Fender
- Depth Charge Drawing – Bob Browning

### **Closing Ceremony**

- Chaplain Nick Nichols led the group in a prayer of Benediction.
- Base Commander Mike Ciesielko announced adjournment of the meeting with a sound of three blasts of the diving alarm.
- Meeting closed at 1957.