

United States Submarine Veterans, Inc., Charleston Base
Minutes of Business Meeting
12 September 2024

Opening Ceremonies:

- The September 2024 Base Meeting was called to order by Base Commander Mike Ciesielko with a quorum of four officers and a total of 52 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 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**

Radioman Master Chief, Submarines
William A. 'Bill' Neff, US Navy Retired/Vietnam Veteran
Departed on Eternal Patrol 22 August 2024

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

Introductions of New Attendees:

- One man was at the Charleston Base Meeting for the first time this evening.
 - Dennis Boehmer – MA1 – Qualified on USS Albuquerque SSN706 – DEC 1984 – Four years active / Sixteen years reserve / Eleven months Middle East '03-'04

Old Business:

- **SC Submariner License Plates – Ed Stank**
 - Ed has decided to continue his effort to get the submariner license plates. He brought paper ballots for members who did not respond to his email request. Ed has a list of those who have casted a vote and stated that he will come to each member's home if necessary to obtain your vote. The two questions being asked are:
 - **Would you be interested in a Specialty Plate for the Submarine Force? Yes or No**
 - **Do you approve the expenditure of \$3200 development deposit (non-refundable) from our investment fund for the cost to develop the plate which if approved would be recouped through the sale of the plate. Yes or No**
 - Two other bases in SC have agreed to donate money to get the plate initiated.
 - [SECRETARY'S NOTE: In August, Ed Stank had sent out emails asking all Charleston Base members to vote whether or not to support getting a SC License plate established as "Submarine Qualified". The amount of votes he received via email was insufficient, as of the Board Meeting last week, to have a quorum. With the email vote failed, the Charleston Base Treasurer provided a check to Ed for the full amount of his donation. At last reporting, Ed has not cashed the check.]

New Business:

- **USSVI National Convention - Ray Sparks**
 - Ray reported on the convention, which was held in Cleveland.
 - Ray recommended that if you are around Cleveland to visit the **USS COD** as, "it looks as good as it did the day it was commissioned."
 - Of all the hundreds of veteran's groups around the country, only USSVI is listed as debt free.

- The Life Membership fund and the Operating fund of USSVI are well financed.
- That being said, the National dues will be increasing by \$10/year.
- More than half of the USSVI membership are in the Holland Club. We need new members.
- In the USSVI National election, only fifteen (15) percent of the members voted.
- The next National Convention will be September 2025 in Orlando.
- Ray read and presented a USSVI National Silver Anchor award to Steve (Buddha) Nelms due to his founding and work at The After Battery.

Secretary – Gordon Long:

- The Minutes from the July/August Base meeting were emailed to all Base members. The Minutes have also been published on the Base Website for download. Due to hazardous weather conditions, the August Meeting was cancelled and only a truncated set of Minutes was recorded. Was advised of a minor correction in the totals of the August Lost Boats section. The Minutes were approved with the corrections.

Treasurer – Base Commander for 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 – Nick Nichols:

- Highlighted boat of the month:
 - **Grayling (SS209)** was lost on September 9th, 1943, with the loss of all hands, 76 crew members near the Tablas Strait. Grayling was on her 8th war patrol and sank two ships before being lost.
- There are several shipmates and family members who have given me information which they wish to be kept confidential at this time.
- **RMCM(SS) William A. 'Bill' Neff, USN Ret., Vietnam Veteran, age 80**, departed on Eternal Patrol 22 August in TX. Bill joined the Navy in 1961 and retired in 1987. He was a Vietnam Veteran having served in-country 1966-1967. He was a Life Member of USSVI National [2000] and Charleston [2016], and the Holland Club having qualified in 1972 on USS HADDO SSN-604. He also served on MEMPHIS SSN-691. Prior to his submarine service he served on GOODRICH DD/DDR-831 and WRIGHT CVL-49/CC-2. He will be inurned on the Neptune Memorial Reef, an underwater columbarium located off Key Biscayne in Miami Florida.
- **CAPT Lawrence Anderson, USN Ret**, departed on Eternal Patrol on July 20 in Georgetown. He served a tour on a diesel submarine and then served on USS NATHAN HALE SSBN-623 as the Engineering officer. Fred Woodley served with him there. After leaving the HALE Larry entered the Navy Ready Reserve and attained the rank of Captain ending his service as the CO of a Norfolk VA submarine unit. Larry was not a member of USSVI.
- **MMCM(SS) Richard J. Reuss, USN Ret., 87**, departed on Eternal Patrol on September 4 in Myrtle Beach. Dick joined the Navy in 1954 and retired in 1973. He qualified on the USS JAMES MONROE in 1965. Prior to entering submarine duty he was on USS ESSEX CVA-9 and USS FRANKLIN D. ROSSEVELT CVA-42. He was a member of USSVI as aa MAL
- **Mike Curtis, 57, Ken and Barbara's youngest son** died on 6 September from a heart attack. Mike was an Army veteran and leaves a wife and 2 children. Services will be held at McAlister-Smith Funeral Home Goose Creek on Saturday. Family visitation will be at 1400 with a memorial service at 1500. If you can attend, please wear your vest to show Ken the support of his shipmates.
- **Beetle Bailey** ruptured hi right quad 4 weeks ago. He is in a leg brace. If going to try to make the meeting next week.
- **John Lookabill** was in the hospital over the holiday weekend with COVID. He is now home recovering.
- **Marvin Miller** is now living at White Oak Manor. 9285 Medical Plaza Dr. Room 417. This is behind Trident.
- **Bob Browning** had surgery on his right hand at the VA on 22 August. Larry Knudson drove him down, waited for the surgery and brought him back home. Hard cast for 3 months, then 3 months PT. It was serious surgery if you read the binnacle list email I sent out. He has zero pain and plans on being at the meeting on Thursday.

- **Tom Cyrek** is still at the VA, day 24. Gloria sent this update: Looking at surgery on his spine to stabilize his spinal column and decompress. Not expecting to regain use of legs but right now he cannot even sit in a wheelchair. Hopefully will reduce pain levels and stop further deterioration of his spine. He will need rehab if they can find someone who will take him with duopa pump. Still a long road "home". Asking for continued prayers. They do help. We hope to know more by Tuesday.
- **Bill Roberts** is healing well from the surgery at MUSC for an esophageal hernia on 19 August. He had a week in the hospital and was home on 23 August. His niece came down to take care of him in recovery. He is in Cottage 606 and Becky is in the Greenhouse Memory Care Unit. His mailing address is: William Roberts, 201 W. 9th North Street, Unit 99, Summerville SC 29483-6715.
- **James Graham** is not having the surgery on his leg. He is using an oil that reduces the pain for 5-6 hours after use.
- **Fred Woodley** is still having the bladder issues and also high PSA levels.
- **Jeff Reuer** has been diagnosed with partially blocked arteries in both legs. He had a CT that determined he has 100% blockage in both legs but his body is regenerating its own bypass for blood flow. They will be watching for 6 months and maybe there will not be surgery.
- **Al & Connie Dempster** 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.
- **Rick Wise** provided an update to his physical condition and is scheduled to receive an improved right arm.
- 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>

249th Navy Birthday Ball – Nick Nichols

- Will be held Saturday, October 12 at **Charleston Area Convention Center**
 - 5001 Coliseum Drive North Charleston, SC 29418
 - Cocktail Hour 1700
 - Ceremony 1800
 - Dinner /Reception 1900-2200
 - **Dinner will be served Buffet Style:**
- **Uniform:**
 - E6 and below: Dress Blues with ribbons or better
 - E7-O4: Dress Blues or Dinner Dress Blues with mini medals
 - O5 and Above: Dinner Dress Blues with mini medals
 - **Civilians: Formal Attire – Tux or Uniform with mini medals.**
 - **\$70.00** +\$6.54 Fee on Eventbrite
 - **SUBVETS can wear our Charleston Tuxedo.**

Social Media – Lewis Leal:

- Nothing to report.

Membership – Larry Knutson

- Annual Dues begin next month (OCTOBER).
- **Nick Nichols provided Base Standings** [those with more than 200 members]: Charleston is #3 in USSVI membership. Groton 1150 - 2) Hampton Roads 275 - 3) Charleston 252 - 4) Bremerton 245

National Awards – Base Commander Mike Ciesielko

- Mike thanked Bob Browning for his effort with USSVI National Awards.
- Mike also wants to meet in December to put together a package of award submittals.

Scholarship – Carl Chinn

- Carl read a Thank You note from one of the recent recipients of the Scholarship award.
- Carl advised the membership of the availability of the National USSVI Scholarship opportunity.
- Carl provided some statistics on the Scholarship effort during his tenure as Scholarship Committee chair and then advised the Base members that the current committee has – at this time – resigned. A new chairman is now needed.

Fleet Reserve Association – Ken Hutchison

- FRA Southeast Regional Convention will be held on September 24-26.
- On September 25, a BBQ will be held at the FRA for the convention guests.
- The FRA president and vice-president will be there.
- Johnny Brown is the Pitmaster with assistance by Ray Standfelt.
- Ken has membership applications for those who are not FRA members.
- Nick Nichols pointed out that FRA does not charge us to use the meeting room for our Base Meetings or Board Meetings. That very fact is reason to join the FRA, if not already a member. For the last couple of years, we have held our Christmas party at the FRA with no charge for the room.
- The FRA advocates for its members in Washington D.C.

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 beginning at 1600. Dinner will begin at 1800. At that 2000, the DJ will move to the other side of the building for Karaoke. Everyone is invited to go there to participate.
- There will be a \$10 charge for the Christmas Party to facilitate a good head count. This money will be used to obtain gift cards and door prizes.
- Mark your calendars. Johnny will provide a flyer for the event.
- Nick thanked Johnny Brown for making arrangements for the River Dogs Baseball game. Everything was perfect, including the weather. They played a great game, but lost.

NNPTC Liaison – Anthony Mazza

- Nothing to Report

Base Comptroller – Rick Wise/Tom Holcombe

- In October, the 3rd quarter report will be presented.
- At the October Board Meeting, the proposed 2025 Charleston Base Budget will be submitted for review. If approved by the Board, it will be sent to the entire Base for review, followed by a vote at the November Base Meeting.

Nuclear Power School Awards – Phil Nunnally

- The next graduation ceremony will be held on October 11. This graduation will include the first group of Australian enlisted personnel.
- The Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy and the Australian Warrant Officer of the Navy (Aussie equiv.) will be in attendance at this graduation.

Newsletter – Phil Nunnally

- Newsletter will be out soon.
- Phil will include information about a “Bubblehead Cruise” from Port Canaveral.
- Phil is asking for pictures from the convention in Cleveland so that he can include them in the Newsletter.

Little David – Phil Nunnally

- There is some work that needs to be done, but it can wait until spring.

Hunley/Housatic – Tom Holcombe

- There is an upcoming Friends of the Hunley Weekend:
 - On Friday, October 25, at the City Bus Shed, downtown Charleston, Friends of the Hunley will hold a party with a live band with lots of food and Oyster Roast. The full cost is \$60, but SubVets get a \$5 discount.
 - On Saturday, October 26, the organization will hold “Behind the Scenes” tours in the lab, where you will get to see items that will never make it to the public presentation. Information about this tour was provided in the Base Newsletter.

Special Events – Tom Holcombe

- Tom has been talking with the Coastal Carolina Fair.
- They are willing to give us a spot at Gate 1.
- Tom is going to put together a Watch Bill since we will need volunteers for eleven (11) days to man the float from 1600 to closing of the gate each night.
- Tom asked for a show of hands for interest, getting a sizeable portion of those in attendance.
- Tom and Dave Harvey are working together on this event.
- Dave Harvey spoke about making a trip to Manitowoc, WI for the USS Cobia.

PAO – Base Commander Mike Ciesielko

- Mike introduced Rafael Guzman as the new PAO.

Storekeeper – Woody Woodsmall

- Woody is running military discounts until the year. He will not ask for your ID.
- Any item that is less \$10 or less is \$1 off. Any item above \$10 is \$2 off.
- The new calendar for 2025 is only \$9 and has information about the VA Class boats. He has only a small number this year, so get them while they are available.

COB – Greg Landry

- Greg talked about increasing membership.

VA – Tom Lawson

- Nothing to report.

Vice Commander – Tom Lawson

- Nothing to report.

Base Commander – Mike Ciesielko

- Dave Harvey is the chairman for the SE Regional Convention. We need a lot of people to help.
- Mike thanked everyone for attendance tonight.

Good of the Order

Nuclear Historian – Rick Wise

- Rick told a sea story from his first boat, USS Daniel Boone about one shipmate being dragged down the pier, falling down the hatch, declared dead by the corpsman; only to be kicked and brought back to life.

After Battery – Steve (Buddha) Nelms

- Expressed his gratitude for the Silver Anchor Award.
- Thanked Bob McPherson for the poem. Many are requesting copies.
- Thanked Dave Harvey for construction of the new handicap ramp.

Gun Club – Mike Ciesielko

- Nothing reported.

Drawings & Auctions

- FRA Drawing – Rick Wise
- Depth Charge Drawing – Bob McPherson

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 2008.