



VOL. 2026 #6

JUNE 2026

**USS HENRY L. STIMSON ASSOCIATION SSBN655 NEWSLETTER**

Association Officers & Board of Directors 2025 - 2027

<b>PRESIDENT</b> <u>Jerry [CJ] Blevins</u>	<b>VICE PRESIDENT</b> <u>Paul [Margaret] Clark</u>	<b>SECRETARY</b> <u>Nick [Linda] Nichols</u>	<b>TREASURER</b> <u>Ken [Diane] Meigs</u>	<b>PAST PRESIDENT</b> <u>Tom [Marie] Krauser</u>
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Other Positions 2023 - 2025

<b>HISTORIAN / CUSTODIAN</b> <u>Larry [Linda] Knutson</u>	<b>WEBMASTER / NEWSLETTER</b> <u>Nick [Linda] Nichols</u>	<b>CHAPLAIN</b> <u>Bruce [Vicki] Stefanik</u>
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**REUNION CONTROL CENTER**  
**2027 Stimson Reunion #14**  
**HOTEL: TBD**  
**DATE: TBD**  
**LOCATION: indianapolis IN**  
**Reunion Committee:**  
**Gary & Mary Owen and Doug Cooper**  
**Watch this space for more info to come.**



**From the Association President - Jerry Blevins [LT(SS) B 76-79, USSVI Groton Base, Assoc Life Member]:**

CJ and I are finally back into a fully restored house after 4-months of living on subfloors and with most of the first floor packed into the garage. It is great working on my computer at a desk again instead of on a TV tray in a spare bedroom.

June is a mixed month for our submarine service. This month the USS Scorpion was officially declared lost in 1968 and the search for the wreckage of the USS Thresher began in 1964. On a positive note, the keel of the USS Nautilus was laid in 1952 and the USS George Washington was launched in 1959.

Found an interesting bit of Submarine History. I have an article at the end of the newsletter on "The USS Alligator (Arguably our first Submersible Boat)".



**Chaplain's Corner - Bruce Stefanik [MS1(SS) B 73-77, 655 Assoc Life Member, USSVI/Holland Club USS Asheville Base]:**

Praise the Lord. Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who finds great delight in his commands. Psalm 112:1

Summer is on the way, it is going to get hot and sunny. There are many things that we can do and they can be lots of fun. But let us not forget that loving each other can be the most fun of all.

May you and your families be blessed as we think of each other this month.

On Armed Forces Day, Vicki and I had the chance to attend a special local event for Submarine Veterans held in Little Switzerland, NC. It was held at the site of the WWII Memorial on Moonshine Mountain. The highlight was the Tolling of the Lost Boats of WWII. We had a very enjoyable time there along with another Stimson couple, Dave & Beth Violette. There are some pictures at the end of the newsletter.





**NOTE:** Don Ort [MM1(SS) G/SY1/G 69-74, CWO4 Ret], continues to locate our Stimson shipmates on our Sailing List but without an email.

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**ETN3(SS) Timothy Breit G 75-77**  
[updated by shipmate]

**BINNACLE LIST UPDATES:** If you know of a shipmate who should be on the binnacle list please let me know. I will contact the shipmate for permission to add them to this list. I only add those who have given permission.

I am using the binnacle list as an ongoing story for each person on it. This way you will be able to understand the update better than if you do not remember what their health issues were.

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**Margaret Clark** [wife of **Paul Clark**, Association Vice President]

Cards to: 6 Birkdale Ct., E. Aiken, SC 29803

**5.30/26: Email from David Huckeba:** Got a call from Paul Clark this morning. Margaret has been in hospital since Memorial Day in Augusta. A routine chest CT found a tumor in left lung and water in the lung. She has been having pain in back and further tests show a lesion on her L5 that's metastasized from the lung cancer. She is in a lot of pain. Dr attempting to reduce pain so she can be released to start radiation treatments 4 times per week. It's not operable but treatable. He wanted to get the info out to our shipmates.

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**Timothy Breit [ETN3(SS) G 75-77]**

Cards to: 500 NW Island Lake Rd Poulsbo WA 98370

**5.25.26:** Email from Tim: I have been diagnosed with non alcohol related cirrhosis of the liver. also suffered a dislocated shoulder. This required reverse joint replacement.

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**John Cole [LT B WEPS 78-80, USSVI Member-at-Large, CDR Ret.]**

Cards to: 5914 Ruby Dr Pearland TX 77581-8926

**5.7.26: Email from John:** I am now home again after multiple hospital in (109) and out (21) of the last 130 days. A December 2, 2025 stroke (my second) started it off. Only the left side was affected as I received the clot busting shot right away so only minor residual affects.

Next.... I damaged my left Achilles tendon so

was non-weight bearing for most of January through the middle of April. During this time, on February 23, 2026 I had a third stroke which was centered in the portion of the brain that controls my vision leaving me totally blind.

Thank The LORD!!! It has improved to the point that I have a limited kind of short-ranger tunnel vision on most days while other days I am left with shapes and shadows. Doctors say the eyes are fine, it is the Parkinson's and Stroke affecting the brain. However, it now seems that the biggest concern is the COPD and heart failure that is leaving me short of breath.

'If It's Not One Thing Its Another', Getting Older Is Not for the Faint at Heart That's for Sure!  
We pray that all are doing much better and can get off the Binnacle List soon. V/R, John & Susan Cole

Bye for now, Very Respectfully. John F. Cole Cdr., U. S. Navy Retired, 100% Disabled 05/12/1964 To 08/01/1994, E1-E9 & O1E-O5 Vietnam through Desert Storm

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**Bob 'Doc' Dougherty [MM1(SS) G/SY1/G 70-74]**

Cards to: 2600 Eberly Street, Hatboro, PA 19040

**4.17.26:** Email from Elaine: Doc was admitted for the 3rd time this year on March 25 and discharged on April 7. He is on 24/7 oxygen. He continues to struggle with breathing whenever exerting any type of energy. Just going 2 or 3 feet is a struggle even with having oxygen. He is scheduled for an Ablation on May 21. This is usually an outpatient and also considered a low-risk operation.

However, with Doc's weakened condition this will be high risk and also involve at least an overnight stay in the hospital with the chance he might be in for 3-5 days. Hopefully this will help with his breathing problem although the doctor only gives it a 60% chance of helping. All prayers are greatly appreciated.

*3.22.26: Email from Gretchen: from Elaine Dougherty: from Elaine: 'Doc' is Progressing slowly. Kidneys are back to normal. Liver taking a little longer but moving in the right direction. Doc is now able to take short walks but does get slightly tired but not out of breath. No swelling which is a good thing. He is on a low sodium diet with 64 oz of water/liquid allowed per day because of heart failure. Also, a low sodium diet which is taking him a while to get used to. Since the reunion he has lost almost 30 lbs. Next up is a*

*nuclear test and possible scheduling of an ablation for the Afib.*

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**Hal Smith [MM2(SS) G 68-69]**

Cards to: 12050 Grand Lakes Dr., Jacksonville FL 32258

**No Recent Updates**

*1.19.26: Email from Hal: Feb 15 2024 was told to see a cancer surgeon by Dr. after colonoscopy. Went to Baptist MD Anderson Cancer Center in Jacksonville, Fl. Oncologist said that biopsy indicated I have colon cancer of the type Goblet Cell carcinoma. A very aggressive type at stage 4. I had surgery and the tumor and 2.5 ft of my colon was removed including the appendix and 19 lymph nodes. I healed in 5 weeks and I began 2 different types of chemotherapy consisting of infusion and home chemo over a period of a year or so. CT scan indicated chemo was not working and we began Immunotherapy consisting of 2 nasty home meds and infusion. During all of this I had various side effects from it all such shortness of breath, tiredness, water retention which caused my legs and feet to swell. the swelling caused the water circulation to stop and collected in my legs, with water blisters which broke draining liquid down my legs constantly. I am going to wound care. I was having trouble breathing and was in the hospital for that and various other things for two days. I had a ct scan while in the hospital. I was released after 2 days. I was taken off the home immunotherapy meds because my kidney functions were not good. I continued with infusion therapy 2 more times. On my last Oncologist visit about 1.5 weeks ago, The Oncologist said that the Immunotherapy was no longer working and the last CT scan was showing that the cancer was spreading and at this time no other type of treatment would be effective and they would like to switch treatment to quality of life. I was told that I have about 6 months to live. I would like you all to keep me in your prayers.*

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**Diane Meigs [wife of Ken Meigs ETR2(SS) G Comm 65-70 Plank, SV MAL Base HC, Assoc. Treasurer & Life Member]**

Cards to: 1537 Pebble Beach Ct Medford OR 97504

**No Recent Updates**

**2.7.26: Email from Ken:** Diane has had some post chemo (treatment #1) complications that we're working through with the help of friends from church who have gone through similar treatments.

*1.30.26: Text from Ken: They found more cancer in Diane. She started her 1st of 4 chemo treatments on 30 Jan hopefully will remove the cancer that was uncovered in a PET scan a couple of weeks ago. There will be a 3-week interval between each of the treatments.*

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**Kim Sanner [wife of Bill Sanner Jr., ETN2(SS) B 73-77, SV/HC Cowtown Base]**

Cards to: 2009 Glenda Ave., Haltom City TX 76111

**NO RECENT UPDATES**

*10.14.25: Text from Bill: Kim has moved to Medical City Rehab, 900 8th Ave, Fort Worth. Room 316. They expect her to be there for 1 to 2 weeks. Nice place, nice room.*

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**Sandy Hastie [CAPT B 80 (Oct-Dec) CO-1 patrol]**

Cards to: 75 Lambeth Dr., Asheville NC 28803-3425

**NO RECENT UPDATES**

*12.29.25: Email from Sandy & Donna:*

*Dear Family and Friends,*

*We thank everyone who has faithfully prayed for both of us. 2025 has been a year of challenges; however, we also continue to find joy and gratitude each day and thank God for the many blessings He has bestowed on us. Here are our current statuses.*

*Donna continues to have severe chronic back and leg nerve pain. No doctors we have seen are able to offer a reliable solution, which is depressing but, as we understand it, is not an unusual occurrence. She saw the doctor that did her EMG and he thought a spinal epidural in the "hot spot" that showed on her EMG could provide some relief. He believes this spot is causing some, if not the majority of her pain. The injection is scheduled for early February, first available appointment. She is on the wait list in case an earlier appointment comes available. As often is the case, doctors are often booked up four to eight weeks ahead and that is the case here. The other option is a spinal stimulator, which has*

limited effectiveness and is not strongly recommended because of the metal rods in her back. However, that remains a possibility down the road.

Sandy has had some positive news. Specifically, for his heart, he was approved for a procedure to replace his aortic heart valve. This was done a month ago and has helped with his fatigue, dizziness, and lymphedema swelling in his legs. On Wednesday this week, we saw the doctor who did the procedure and he said Sandy's heart was working well – a very positive outcome! His fractured right collar bone from a fall a month and a half ago is healing well and he has almost 100% use of his right shoulder and arm – another positive outcome as this is the arm he uses his cane to help him walk. He had a PET/CT scan on 30 November and, although he will never be cancer free, the scan showed the Keytruda was controlling the cancer well except for two spots in his right hip that were growing slowly. He may have to go back on chemo at some time; however, for now, that is not necessary – another positive outcome.

So, for now, Sandy will try to exercise more to maintain good health and we will continue to look for a solution or solutions to help Donna's challenges.

With love and thanks, Donna and Sandy

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**Bruce Stefanik [MS1(SS) B 73-77, 655 Assoc Life Member, USSVI/Holland Club USS Asheville Base]:**

Cards to: 50 Fairway View Dr., Etowah NC 28729

**4.14.26:** Email from Vicki: I had an excellent 6 week post-op with my surgeon yesterday. He is very happy with my progress. Thanks for all the prayers. Bruce is doing great. He was a wonderful nurse even setting his alarm for 3 am to make sure I took my pain meds. He doesn't see his neurologist until going to ALS clinic in October. We will know more then.

**2.26.26:** Email from Vicki: Surgery went well. Doctor said the knee was really bad. Lots of pain right now but they did have me stand and move a little sideways. Will have me walk tomorrow. Thank all of you for your prayers.

**1.13.26:** Email from Vicki: I [Vicki] am scheduled for left knee replacement surgery on February 26 with an overnight stay in the hospital.

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**George Stevens [MT2(SS) G 68-71]**

Cards to: 3025 Winterhaven Dr., Lake Havasu City, AZ 86404

**No Recent Updates**

**1.23.26:** Email from George: Ann is doing better but still in pain - so no real change there. Me, I tried boron and it didn't help my arthritis but then I realized I was already taking it with my multivitamin. I did find that turmeric seems to help. My heart has been up and down. Was doing better after giving up chocolate but then started back with aFib again. Realized that I ran out of cayenne about the same time. Have started taking it again and my heart is doing better again.

**11.11.25:** Email from George: My heart is doing better since I gave up chocolate but having a lot of pain from arthritis/muscle/joints - everything hurts. Ann is going for a consult for her back - pinched sciatic nerve.

**9.22.25:** Email from George: Ann's back is worse and there's nothing the doctors can do. Shots don't work and surgery is not an option in her case. Me - not much more the docs can do for me either. I am increasing my cayenne intake and that seems to help.

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**Ron 'RG' Hyson [STS1(SS) B 70-75 (STSCM Ret), Assoc. Life Member, USSVI/Holland Club Hampton Roads Base]**

Cards to: 3425 MacDonald Rd., Virginia Beach VA 23464

**No recent updates**

**3.26.2024:** Email from Jean: The results of Ron's evaluation on January 2024, compared to last year, scored significantly lower on a test of global cognition. His doctor reported that Ron has transition to the Moderately Severe Stage of dementia.

Thank you for all the prayers, caring thoughts, cards, letters, pictures, and memories Ron has received. They really brighten his day. Jean/Ron

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**DID YOU KNOW??**

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**3-second tech genius:** Take a pic of the back of your TV before unplugging anything. Routers, consoles, soundbars, printers, all of it. The second you start moving cables around, everything becomes black spaghetti with trust issues. One photo gives you a map. While you're at it, label

your chargers. Laptop, fast phone, watch, data cable. They all look identical eventually. A piece of tape saves more time than you'd think.

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**3-second tech genius:** You can silence an incoming call without sending it to voicemail. On iPhone, press the side button once. On Android, press either volume button. The call keeps ringing on their end, your screen goes dark, and you look like you didn't notice. Nobody has to know.

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**3-second tech genius:** Printer acting weird? Unplug it, hold the power button for 15 seconds, then plug it back in. This clears its memory and often fixes common errors. Ink-credible.

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## GREAT LINKS TO SPEND TIME WITH

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**655 Association Website**

[www.ssb655.org](http://www.ssb655.org)

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**D-DAY - June 6th 1944**

**The Longest Day Full Movie:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5STfiFpcrs)

[v=k5STfiFpcrs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5STfiFpcrs)

The D-Day operation of June 6, 1944, brought together the land, air, and sea forces of the allied armies in what became known as the largest amphibious invasion in military history. The operation, given the codename OVERLORD, delivered five naval assault divisions to the beaches of Normandy, France. The beaches were given the code names UTAH, OMAHA, GOLD, JUNO, and SWORD. The invasion force included 7,000 ships and landing craft manned by over 195,000 naval personnel from eight allied countries. Almost 133,000 troops from the United States, the British Commonwealth, and their allies, landed on D-Day. Casualties from these countries during the landing numbered 10,300. By June 30, over 850,000 men, 148,000 vehicles, and 570,000 tons of supplies had landed on the Normandy shores. Fighting by the brave soldiers, sailors, and airmen of the allied forces western front, and Russian forces on the eastern front, led to the defeat of German Nazi forces. On May 7, 1945, German General Alfred Jodl signed an unconditional surrender at Reims, France.

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### SCPO and MCPO ranks started 1 June 1958

Prior to 1958, Chief Petty Officer was the highest enlisted pay grade in both the U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard. The pay grades of E-8 and E-9, Senior Chief and Master Chief, were created effective 1, 1958, under a 1958 Amendment to the Career Compensation Act of 1949.



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### SEA STORIES, COMMENTS and JUST GOOD THINGS From Our Shipmates

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*Submitted by Trin Rios, Submarine Qualified 1960  
LCDR B NAV SSBN 655 1976-1978 SUBVET-  
Holland Club Tri-State Base*

#### MEMORIAL DAY AND THE SUBMARINE SERVICE

This **Memorial Day** as we honor all those that have given their all for their country in times of war and peace, let us remember the brave sailors of the **US Submarine Force** that have given their all for their country.

**Submarining** has always been a very dangerous business. The sea has always been very unforgiving of mistakes and carelessness. This is why the submarine qualification process so important for the safety of the boat and crew. As the submarines are get bigger, faster and dive deeper, the danger also increases.

Since the first US submarine joined the US Navy fleet in 1900, we have lost a total of 74 boats, with a loss of 4,300 brave sailors, in peace time and in wars.

The UK has lost a total of 135 boats with a loss of 6,000 brave sailors.

GERMANY in two World Wars, has lost 941 boats with a loss of 34,744 brave sailors!

The Soviet Union (14 countries) has lost a total of 122 boats with a loss of 4,143 brave sailors.

All other nations with submarines have lost a total of 221 boats with a loss of 2,081 brave sailors.

Thus, since 1900, in times of war and peace, a total of **1,493 submarines** have been lost with a total of **51,268 brave sailors**.

**MAY ALL THOSE SUBMARINERS WHO GAVE THEIR ALL FOR THEIR COUNTRY REST IN PEACE IN THE ARMS OF OUR LORD...**

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### ***The Lean Submariner***

Here's the latest posts on the blog. Still going strong. The link to his blog is

<https://theleansubmariner.com/>

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### **The USS Ohio Museum – Why Not.**

By Mister Mac on May 12, 2026

**I read today that when the USS Ohio finally retires, it will do so as the oldest continuous operating submarine in US History.**

**The first submarine of the class, the USS Ohio or SSBN-726, was commissioned in 1981, followed by 17 more vessels.**

Though Ohio-class submarines were built to have a 30-year service life, most have been extended to 42 years through mid-life refueling and upgrades. They are a major element of U.S strategic defense until they are replaced by the upcoming Columbia-class submarines, the first of which are expected to enter service in the early 2030s.

If you really think about it, the Ohio has stood watch over America from the Cold War until now. I can hardly even imagine how many men and women have served on her and how many miles she has sailed. I'm sure someone has that information so would be curious to see if it actually exists.

She was the fourth out of the five submarines I served on. She was also the most challenging of the commands I served on for too many reasons. But she was certainly an important part of my navy journey. Without her, I would never have been able to transition to the Trident Training

Facility. That assignment led to my making Chief and Later Chief Warrant Officer. I gained the title of Master Training Specialist and earned my Bachelor of Science degree which would later provide me with a second career that was fruitful and rewarding.

**Read BLOG here**

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### **Domino Effect – April 1975**

By Mister Mac on April 30, 2026

**“Well, at least the war is over.” January 23, 1973**

Well, at least the war is over. Today is January 23, 2024. I get messages from time to time reminding me of things that happened on this day. For instance, on this day in 1957, the first frisbee was p...

**Read BLOG here**

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### **Marx? I thought that guy was dead.**

By Mister Mac on May 3, 2026

**Typically, I avoid political articles since the country is so divided now.**

Years ago, I indulged in printing a series about the potential change that might come under a new administration in 2020. I archived those articles but go back from time to time to see how accurate they were. Being completely transparent, they were spot on. I will freely admit that I see things through a certain lens. I can't imagine that any honest person could admit anything less of themselves. The direction the country went for four long years was not exactly what I wanted to happen, but the facts are the facts,

**Read BLOG here**

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### **Memorial Day 2026 – How do you define freedom?**

By Mister Mac on May 25, 2026

**I was honored to be able to provide the keynote talk at our community Memorial Day Service.**

Memorial Day in my family has traditionally been one of the most important days of the year. Growing up, I can remember watching my Dad prepare for the day. His leadership was inspirational and helped me to understand how important it was to remember all of the sacrifices made by men and women who I would never meet. The following is the notes section from my

presentation.

### **How do you define freedom?**

The answer for me would come over the course of my life's journey. Obviously living in America, freedom is all around us. The schools most of us took for granted, the churches where people could gather together and worship their deity with little interference from the government, and sports venues where we could cheer on our favorite teams as they demonstrated their skills.

But from the time I was old enough to understand the significance, it was the **Gardens of Stones** where I came to learn about freedom. You may better know them as cemeteries.

Mt. Vernon Cemetery was literally in my backyard. The cemetery dated back .....

**[Read BLOG here](#)**



**The Computer Corner**  
**By: George Birmingham [ET1(SS)**  
**G/SY1/G 69-74, Assoc. Life**  
**Member, USSVI/Holland Club**  
**Carolina Piedmont Base]**

### **What Can a Technician with Remote Access Do? – Anything!**

Greetings Shipmates! This month we will take a brief look at the Remote Access to your computer by third-parties. While the oft-encountered “Tech Support” pop-ups and “Your computer is infected” pop-ups have been less frequent they still occur on occasion. And as we know, we don't click on those pop-ups, and we don't call phone numbers displayed - we simply hit ALT-F4 to dismiss these pop-ups immediately. Following one of these events, it's a good idea to run a full anti-virus scan just to make sure nothing dangerous was dropped off during that pop-up event.

The following article, from AskLeo.com discusses a number of risks with granting remote access:

#### [What Can a Technician with Remote Access Do?](#)

In the following video, Leo talks about Remote Desktop at the 4:08 mark. This video was created at the time of Windows 10. The Windows 11 Home edition, does not support Remote Desktop. If you go to Settings and search for Remote Desktop, you can verify this fact.

[Is it Safe to Allow Remote Connections to My](#)

### [Machine?](#)

In the July, 2025 Computer Corner article, I described the method to use to allow you to provide help to someone, or get help from a trusted individual via remote access. In Windows 11 Home edition, go to Settings. In the Settings search bar, if you search for the term “Remote Assistance”, you will get a System Properties setting page displayed to allow you to disable that capability, if you so desire. And if you click on the “Advanced” button you can also remove the ability to remotely control your computer.

I hope you find this helpful. And remember, ALT-F4 for mysterious pop-up windows is your first line of defense...

As always, shipmates, comments and suggestions for future topics are welcomed.

Contact me at [subvet\\_ssb@bellsouth.net](mailto:subvet_ssb@bellsouth.net). And if you have a difficult computer or network problem you need help with, contact me. I'm always glad to help out if I can. //George



**The Security Corner**  
**By: George Birmingham [ET1(SS)**  
**G/SY1/G 69-74, Assoc. Life**  
**Member, USSVI/Holland Club**  
**Carolina Piedmont Base]**

### **Credit Cards and Debit Cards – How to protect yourself**

Greetings Shipmates! Summer has arrived! This month we will take a look at credit and debit cards and how to protect these cards we use most every day. These cards provide us with the means to shop on-line, and locally at our favorite retailers. When was the last time you saw someone write a check in the checkout line?

Credit cards offer superior protection compared to debit cards because they are governed by the Fair Credit Billing Act (FCBA), limiting liability for fraudulent charges to \$50. Conversely, debit cards can leave you liable for the full amount if not reported quickly, while also immediately removing money from your bank account. However, many banks and credit unions offer limited or zero liability for debit card fraud, often voluntarily exceeding federal requirements. While the Electronic Funds Transfer Act limits liability to \$50 if reported within two days, major card networks



President.

[Read More...](#)

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### **VA MOVES TO SPEED UP COMMUNITY CARE APPOINTMENT SCHEDULING**

Technology that will help VA schedule community care appointments faster is up and running at all VA facilities. In 2026, VA is expanding its use so Veterans can more easily choose the health care they've earned.

[Learn more](#)

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### **7 Ways Veterans Can Protect Themselves From Scams**

Veterans have served our country with honor and deserve to be protected from threats to their benefits and personal information. Unfortunately, scammers often pose as employees of the Department of Veterans Administration (VA) and contact veterans by mail, phone, email, and social media offering to help them access or file for benefits, for a fee.

#### **How to identify and avoid scams**

If you're a veteran, here are 7 ways you can protect yourself:

1. **Be cautious of companies that advertise that you can only get VA benefits with their help.** These companies may charge illegal fees for services that you can get for free. You can check their credentials using VA's online Accreditation tool.
2. **If a company pressures you to sign a contract right away or take some other immediate action, that's a red flag.** If they insist "You must act now," ignore them.
3. **Disregard advertisements that promise an immediate or overly generous payout.** Claims like these are also red flags. If it seems too good to be true, it probably is.
4. **Be alert to "phishing" and requests for personal information about you, your benefits, medical records, and finances.** The VA, like Social Security, will generally not call you to request information unless you have pending agency business. When we need to reach you or to update your record, we'll mail you a letter with instructions.
5. **Limit the personal details you share on social media.** The more you post about yourself online, the easier it may be for criminals to use

that information to access your VA accounts, steal your identity, and more.

6. **Be careful about the websites you visit.** Before doing business online, check for "https://" at the start of the website address. The "s" stands for "secure" – these sites use extra measures to keep your information safe.

7. **Watch out for common red flags in emails, texts, and on social media.** You should be suspicious of communication which:

- o Come from a public domain, such as gmail.com or yahoo.com. Emails from government agencies will generally end in .gov, like va.gov or ssa.gov.
- o Contain suspicious or random links or attachments and "urgent" requests for action. Have misspellings and grammatical errors.

#### **Where to get help and more information**

Report and learn more about Social Security-related scams at [ssa.gov/scam](https://ssa.gov/scam).

Sign up for free consumer alerts from the Federal Trade Commission and, if necessary, file a complaint at [Reportfraud.ftc.gov](https://Reportfraud.ftc.gov).

Report suspected fraud to the VSAFE Fraud Hotline at 833-38V-SAFE and find resources at [VSAFE.gov](https://VSAFE.gov).

Subscribe to [MilitaryConsumer.gov/blog](https://MilitaryConsumer.gov/blog) for the latest news on scams.

Visit [Operation Protect Veterans](https://OperationProtectVeterans), a joint program of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and AARP.

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### **Did you know that Veterans are eligible for VA Burial Benefits?**

Whether choosing a VA National Cemetery, VA grant-funded cemetery, or a private cemetery, VA burial and memorial benefits ensure you and your family receive the ceremony and remembrance you deserve.

#### **Complete your pre-need burial application today**

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### **VA Hospitals Earn Top Marks in Federal Review**

As reported May 19 by Patricia Kime for *Military Times*, more than three-fourths of 112 VA medical centers earned four- or five-star ratings from the federal government for quality in the latest review. For the second year, no VA hospitals received a one-star rating from the Centers for Medicare &

Medicaid Services, the agency within the Department of Health and Human Services that publishes quality assessments for U.S. hospitals based on mortality rates, patient safety, hospital readmissions, and other measures. In 2026, 45 percent of VA facilities received five stars; 33 percent earned four stars; 16 percent received three stars; and 6 percent were given two stars. The assessments compare favorably against more than 4,600 hospitals reviewed nationwide. Roughly 12 percent of U.S. hospitals received five-star ratings; 30 percent were awarded four stars; 31 percent received three stars; 21 percent earned two stars; and 6 percent were given one star this year. Officials said the new ratings mean VA hospitals account for nearly 15 percent of the country's five-star rated hospitals.

[Read More...](#)

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### **VA Launches MDMA-assisted Mental-Health Therapy Trial**

This week, the VA announced a new clinical trial to evaluate the safety and efficacy of methylenedioxymethamphetamine-assisted therapy, or MDMA-assisted therapy, for the treatment of severe mental-health disorders, including PTSD and alcohol-use disorder. The new trial comes after President Trump's recent executive order on "Accelerating Medical Treatments for Serious Mental Illness." The order aims to increase clinical trial participation and accelerate innovative research models and drug approvals for psychedelic drugs.

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### **Navy releases list of ships it plans to inactivate this year**

[www.navytimes.com](http://www.navytimes.com)

The U.S. Navy named 14 ships it intends to remove from the fleet during the current fiscal year, according to a Navy administrative message released Sunday.

The service released an inactivation schedule for fiscal 2026 that will see vessels either recycled, dismantled, deemed logistics support assets or transferred to the U.S. Maritime Administration, a government agency that oversees the disposal of naval vessels.

Los Angeles-class submarines USS Newport News and USS Alexandria, along with Ohio-class guided-missile submarine USS Georgia, are

slated to be recycled.

The service is currently phasing out Los Angeles-class submarines — some of which have served for 40 years — and is in the process of replacing them with Virginia-class submarines.

Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruisers USS Shiloh and USS Lake Erie, along with Whidbey Island-class dock landing ship USS Germantown and Henry J. Kaiser-class underway replenishment oiler USNS John Ericsson, will be used as logistics support assets.

"Logistics Support Assets (LSA) will be used as a primary means of cannibalization and equipment removal for ships," the Navy administrative message said.

There were only 10 Ticonderoga-class cruisers remaining in the Navy fleet as of April 23, 2025, according to the service.

The Navy built 27 Ticonderoga-class cruisers beginning in 1980 but has been phasing them out of service, with hopes of completely retiring the remaining ships by fiscal 2027 and replacing them with its next-generation destroyer.

The cruiser was the first ship to wield the AEGIS Combat System, an advanced weapons platform that utilizes radar to detect, track and fire at targets.

The last Ticonderoga-class cruiser home-ported overseas began its return to the U.S. in March.

In the administrative message, the Navy said it also plans to dismantle the Freedom-class littoral combat ship USS Fort Worth.

The Freedom-class has been plagued by mechanical problems, failed weapons systems and ballooning maintenance costs.

The service will also transfer the following ships to the U.S. Maritime Administration: Watson-class vehicle cargo ships USNS Red Cloud, USNS Watkins and USNS Pomeroy; Offshore Petroleum Distribution System vessel USNS Vadm. K. R. Wheeler; and Henry J. Kaiser-class underway replenishment oilers USNS Pecos and USNS Big Horn.

Riley Ceder is a reporter at Military Times, where he covers breaking news, criminal justice, investigations, and cyber. He previously worked as an investigative practicum student at The Washington Post, where he contributed to the Abused by the Badge investigation.

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## **First Columbia-Class Sub Tracking To 2028 Delivery, General Dynamics Says**

(USNI NEWS 29 APR 26) ... Sam LaGrone

The first of the new Columbia-class of ballistic missile submarine is tracking for a 2028 delivery due to improvements in workforce efficiency and the supplier base, General Dynamics officials said Wednesday.

District of Columbia (SSBN-826), currently being assembled at GD Electric Boat is “on a path to deliver that first boat by the end of 2028, so excellent progress in the last six or nine months on the Columbia program,” GD’s president Danny Deep said during a first-quarter earnings call on Wednesday.

Delivering the 21,000-ton ballistic missile nuclear submarine on time is the top acquisition priority for the Pentagon for District of Columbia to be ready for its first deterrent patrol in 2030.

The original delivery date in 2027 was pushed to 2028 in part due to delays in assembling the components for the first boat. In particular, delays in producing steam turbines and late delivery of the bow and stern added to the schedule setback. The Navy’s own estimates, included in the Fiscal Year 2027 budget submission, have District of Columbia set to deliver in March of 2029 and the follow-on Wisconsin (SSBN-827) in April of 2030. A Columbia sub is slated to deliver once a year after that.

Deep said over the last year, deliveries from suppliers have improved, allowing the shipyard to increase the efficiency of the construction. This has led to “positive momentum on Columbia, all the major modules we received by the end of last year, and so we’re in the process of integrating and assembling those in one of our larger yards, and expect to have a real key milestone achieved by the end of this year,” Deep said.

The Fiscal Year 2027 budget request includes \$15 billion for the Columbia-class funding line that includes the last tranche of funding for the third Columbia boat Groton (SSBN-828) and full-funding for the fourth unmanned boat, SSBN-829.

The update from GD comes as the new office in charge of submarine production has come online led by Vice Adm. Rob Gaucher, who said last week getting District of Columbia on the path to a 2028 delivery was a major priority.

“We’re a little off plan right now, so my job is to

get us on plan, and what the orders I got are this is a life-or-death imperative,” Gaucher said. “All policies are on the table. Risk is authorized. [We] can’t compromise quality or safety, but we’ve got to think, act and operate differently to drive to that end.”

Outside of the delivery of the first boat, Deep said negotiations for a massive contract for 15 new submarines — 10 Block VI Virginia-class submarines and five Columbia-class Build II submarines — is ongoing.

“As it relates to Block VI and Build II, we have had and have been in ongoing and detailed discussions with the Navy on that... but that continues to proceed,” Deep said.

<https://news.usni.org/2026/04/29/first-columbia-class-sub-tracking-to-2028-delivery-general-dynamics-says>

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## **U.S. Navy Goes All In On Submarines In Released Shipbuilding Plan**

(NAVAL NEWS 14 MAY 26) ... Ethan Gossrow

The U.S. Navy’s Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) regarding shipbuilding for fiscal years 2027-2031 contains massive investments into the U.S. Navy’s submarine force, with new details provided around what the U.S. subsurface fleet could look like in the future.

Earmarked funding for submarines totals out to \$124.9 billion dollars for FY 27-31, presenting a massive leap in investment in the U.S.’s stated submarine plans. The FYDP doles out \$62 billion dollars for the procurement of 5 Columbia-class (SSBN-826) Nuclear Ballistic Submarines (SSBNs), with one hull procured every fiscal year. Subsequently, the remaining \$62.9 billion for the 5 year period will go towards procuring another 10 Virginia-class Nuclear Attack Submarines (SSNs).

The per year funding for the SSBN-826 program is as follows; \$15.203 billion in FY 2027, \$11.472 billion in FY 2028, \$10.974 billion in FY 2029, \$12.09 billion in FY 2030, and \$12.02 billion in 2031. Comparatively, the breakdown for the Virginia SSNs stipulates; \$13.986 billion in FY 2027, \$12.634 billion in FY 2028, \$13.578 billion in FY 2029, \$11.597 billion in FY 2030, and \$11.115 billion in 2031.

The Submarine industrial base will receive a further \$6.2 billion across the FYDP, designated towards growing production capacity to at least

one Columbia and 2 Virginias every year via supply chain stabilization and workforce growth. An additional \$7.2 billion allotted to Nuclear Shipbuilder productivity enhancement in the same period could also help to achieve desired rates.

Under the FYDP, the Columbia-class hulls numbered 4-8 are to be procured and will be delivered to the Navy in 2032 through 2036 following the first 3 hull deliveries in 2029, 2030, and 2031 respectively. Supplementing the Columbias, 6 of the Virginias are Block VI standard boats and the remaining four representing the first of the Block VIIs procured.

### **Ensuring Continuity**

The Navy's reasoning towards continued support of the Columbia-class has remained largely unchanged, centering around a need to keep the sea-based leg of the Nuclear Triad functional during the decommissioning of the Ohio-class SSBNs. Correspondingly, the Navy also needs the Columbias due to several qualitative enhancements such as the electronic propulsion and control systems, and 50 years of quieting technology evolution since the induction of the Ohios.

Conversely, the Navy states the need for the continued procurement of the Virginias is based partly on preserving the submarine production base, ensured through the Block VI multi-year procurement contract providing stable demand and production output whilst also providing means of upgraded forms of undersea dominance.

Additionally, the Navy states that this contract will allow for growth in the submarine industrial base through worker retention alongside investments into modernizing facilities and advanced procurement helping to reduce potential delays.

The Navy's support of the SSN(X) program support falls largely into the same lines of reasoning behind the procurement of Block VI and Block VII Virginia-class SSNs, with an emphasis on continued undersea dominance and the prevention of submarine industrial base atrophy. SSN(X)'s service entry in the 2040s will mark the induction of a completely new class of SSN into the U.S. Navy in roughly 3 and half decades, with the new boats tasked with supplementing the inventory of the Virginias in service by then.

SSN(X) will also present a leap in integration as the class is meant to be highly interoperable with

unmanned systems from the outset of design work. The FYDP also points towards SSN(X) carrying an increased payload volume, likely in regards to the carriage of said unmanned systems, allowing for innate sea-bed warfare capabilities. With a delivery date in the 2040s, the U.S. Navy has determined SSN(X) will be able to capitalize off of the current round of revitalization efforts in the industrial base, allowing for an easier production cycle.

### **Future Force Constitution**

Alongside a 2 SSN per fiscal year procurement plan, the Navy also expects that deliveries will also hover around 2 SSNs per year, with periodic jumps in deliveries throughout the next decade and a half. Some years will experience comparatively high delivery numbers, with the delivery of 4 SSNs projected in 2035 and 2038, followed by a peak output at 5 submarines delivered in 2039 alone.

The rate of new SSNs delivered over the next decade projects the outpacing of the expected rate of SSN retirement, increasing the total number of SSNs from 47 in FY 2027 to 56 by FY 2040, following a lull in deliveries causing the total number of attack submarines in service to drop to 45 in 2030 and 2031.

12-13 SSBNs in active service will be the baseline total throughout the next several decades as the Ohios steadily leave service and the Columbias eventually come online. The Columbia-class of boats will be the only SSBNs in service following the estimated decommissioning of the last Ohio 2042, ending a nearly 63 service life for America's strategic backbone.

Amongst the retirements listed in the program document is the first Seawolf-class SSN to be decommissioned, as the USS Connecticut is scheduled to leave service sometime in 2031. Connecticut will thus become the first in her class to leave service, just 5 years post service re-entry following a collision with an underground mountain in 2021. Furthermore, the U.S. Navy will find itself without Nuclear Powered Guided Missile submarines in 2029 and until the 2040 following the decommissioning of the USS Florida.

<https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2026/05/u-s-navy-goes-all-in-on-submarines-in-released-shipbuilding-plan/>

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## **Navy Plans To Homeport Columbia-Class Ballistic Missile Submarines At Naval Base Kitsap In Washington**

*(STARS AND STRIPES 27 MAY 26)* ... Gary Warner

The Navy plans to homeport up to eight Columbia-class ballistic missile submarines at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor by early in the next decade, the service said Wednesday.

The submarines would replace up to eight of the current Ohio-class submarines homeported at the base just west of Seattle on the Puget Sound.

“The purpose of the Proposed Action is to ensure continuation of the Navy’s sea-based strategic deterrence mission at NBK-Bangor,” the Navy said in a statement Wednesday. “The need for the Proposed Action is to ensure the U.S. can respond to current and future threats and meet national defense objectives and policies.”

The first Columbia-class boat, the USS District of Columbia, is under construction at General Dynamics Electric Boat in Groton, Conn. Additional modules are being built at Electric Boat facility Quonset Point in North Kingstown, R.I., and HII Newport News Shipbuilding in Newport News, Va.

The environmental plan would be finalized next year, with construction beginning in July 2027, according to Ted Brown, a Navy spokesman on the project.

“Construction would take about five years and be phased,” Brown said. The first submarine would be expected to arrive for homeporting in 2032.

The USS District of Columbia is the first of 12 planned Columbia-class ballistic missile submarines. The submarines will be 560 feet long and have a displacement of 20,810 tons, making them the largest submarines ever built by the United States.

Each Columbia-class submarine will carry 16 Trident II D5 (D5LE) submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), each capable of carrying multiple warheads.

The Columbia-class submarines are one part of the modernization of the U.S. nuclear triad, which will include the new B-21 Raider stealth bomber and the new LGM-35A Sentinel ICBMs, a switch from the current LGM-30G Minuteman III land-based ICBMs.

The Navy plans to homeport some of the Columbia-class submarines at Kings Bay, Ga.

The Navy previously announced plans to homeport the USS John F. Kennedy, the second Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carrier, at Naval Base Kitsap-Bremerton with a target date of 2029.

The Navy’s announcement invites review and comment on the Draft Environmental Assessment of potential impacts of the Columbia-class submarine homeporting decision.

The Navy proposes to “demolish, construct and renovate facilities and infrastructure at three upland sites (Upland Site North, Keyport Annex, Upland Site South) and at the Pier Site at NBK-Bangor.”

The Navy’s assessment shows no significant impacts from the project on air quality, water resources, stormwater, animal habitats, and other aspects.

The Navy would also implement stormwater infrastructure and create construction laydown and staging areas for materials and temporary parking.

The Navy is accepting written comments during a 30-day public comment period from Wednesday to June 25, 2026.

The Draft Environmental Assessment is available on the Navy’s website, [www.nepa.navy.mil/Columbia-West-Coast/](http://www.nepa.navy.mil/Columbia-West-Coast/) and at the following local libraries:

Kitsap Regional Library, Sylvan Way, 1301 Sylvan Way, Bremerton, Wash. 98310

Kitsap Regional Library, Silverdale, 3650 NW Anderson Hill Road, Suite 101, Silverdale, Wash. 98383

Kitsap Regional Library, Poulsbo, 700 NE Lincoln Road, Poulsbo, Wash. 98370

Jefferson County Library District, 620 Cedar Avenue, Port Hadlock, Wash. 98339

Seattle Public Library, 1000 Fourth Avenue, Seattle, Wash. 98104

A public meeting will be held on June 4 from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Best Western Plus Silverdale, 3073 NW Bucklin Hill Rd., in Silverdale, Wash. The public may arrive at any time during the specified hours. There will not be a formal presentation.

All comments must be postmarked or submitted electronically on or before 11:59 p.m. PDT on June 25, 2026, to be considered in the

development of the Final Environmental Assessment.

“The Navy encourages the public to attend the public meeting and to visit the project website to learn more,” the statement said.

Comments may be submitted at the public meeting or by mail to:

Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command Atlantic

Attn: Columbia-Class EA, Project Manager  
Code EV22JS, 6506 Hampton Blvd.

Norfolk, Va. 23508

Or through the project website:

[www.nepa.navy.mil/Columbia-West-Coast/](http://www.nepa.navy.mil/Columbia-West-Coast/)

<https://www.stripes.com/branches/navy/2026-05-27/columbia-class-subs-homeport-naval-base-kitsap-21798111.html>

## PICTURES FROM MOONSHINE MOUNTAIN WWII LOST BOATS MEMORIAL





January 2026

Dear Friends,

HAPPY NEW YEAR!! We are reaching out to you on behalf of the Capital Campaign Committee and the Board of Directors of the St. Marys Submarine Museum. The Museum has been dedicated to preserving and sharing with the public the rich history of the 'silent service' for nearly three decades since our doors opened on 30 March 1996. We were privileged to have a true hero from WWII, RADM Eugene Fluckey, Commanding Officer of USS BARB (SS 220) and recipient of the Medal of Honor, as our Commissioning Speaker.

In the early 90's a group of citizens led by Sheila McNeill and John Crouse, community leaders, retired military folks, elected officials and base leadership banded together for a common goal and fantastic vision of establishing what we have today. This has been an amazing 30-year partnership between the City of St. Marys and the Museum. Our Museum has been a vital resource for our community and the Kings Bay Submarine Base, offering programs and services that enrich the lives of our residents, visitors, veterans and our active duty Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen that call Camden County home during their time of duty here.

Built on the success of that partnership and the generosity of City Leadership, we are moving to a new location in the center of St. Marys. We will be next to what is becoming the new City Hall complex and Senior Citizen Center. This will double the size of our current location affording us the opportunity to grow and expand exhibits, display artifacts currently in storage, have plenty of parking, and be closer to the Submarine Base and Interstate 95.

We have engaged the services of an architect to design the facility and to assist in selecting a General Contractor to create and construct the new space in this 9000 square foot warehouse area.

***We invite you to be part of this effort by becoming a Plankowner of the new Building and help make a difference in our community. Your support is crucial to helping us achieve our goal. Enclosed you will find more information about our project and how you can contribute.***

Thank you for considering our request and together we can build a brighter future for our community while saluting the Silent Service. For any questions or further information, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you for your time.

William A. Carriera, President  
Board of Directors

Brenda Spencer, Chairperson  
Capital Campaign Committee

Keith F. Post, STSCS(SS)(USN-Ret)  
Executive Director



SUBMARINE MUSEUM ST. MARYS, GA. CONCEPT SKETCH



## BECOME A PART OF HISTORY HERE IN ST. MARYS!

We invite you to become a Plankowner of the new ST. MARYS SUBMARINE MUSEUM. Please fill out this form and send it with your donation to the Museum, or call us at 912-882-ASUB(2782) to make a donation over the phone. We appreciate your support!

### CAPITAL CAMPAIGN DONATION FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_

### DONATION LEVELS

Plankowner Certificates will be issued in the following levels for those who donate the minimum or more in the respective category. Certificates will be issued following the ribbon cutting of the new Museum, tentatively set for November 2026. All donations of any kind and size are welcome!



**Turtle - \$100**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_.



**WWII Fleet Boat - \$500**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_.



**USS NAUTILUS - \$1000**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_.



**USS VIRGINIA - \$5000**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_.



**USS DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA - \$10,000**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_.

**Other Amount:**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Direct donations with a credit card call 912-882-2782 or by check mail to:

**St. Marys Submarine Museum**  
**ATTN: CAPITAL CAMPAIGN**  
 Post Office Box #5640  
 St. Marys, GA 31558-5640

The St. Marys Submarine Museum is a 501C3 non-profit entity.  
 All donations are tax deductible as allowed by law. Our EIN is 58-2179402.

## Historical Look at U.S. Navy Diesel Boat Service

There have been many significant changes in the U.S. Navy Submarine Service since the WWII Diesel Boat Era. It might be interesting historically to note some of them.

- Initially, there were only seven pay grades (actually eight). They ran from one to seven with Apprentice Seaman (AS) as one, Seaman Second Class (S2/c) as two, Seaman First Class (S1/c) as three, Petty Officer Third Class (e.g., MM3c) as four. Petty Officers Second and First Class as five and six. Chief Petty Officers were initially promoted to "seven A" for one year (Acting Appointment) and then to Chief Petty Officer as pay grade seven. There were no Master or Command Chief, etc. The "C" for Chief Petty Officers preceded the rate designation, for example, C.M.M., not MMC as today. For all of the seaman ratings, there was a comparable Fireman (F)
- The Officer's rank structure has remained consistent with minor exceptions. During WWII, a five star Fleet Admiral rank was added and bestowed on Nimitz and King. No one promoted to that rank since WWII. Another thing there was no Commodore rank utilized. Officers were promoted from Captain to Rear Admiral (lower half) and hence to Rear Admiral (upper half). The Rear Admiral (Lower Half) replaced the Commodore rank. As it is custom to call any Commanding Officer Captain, it also was custom to name a Submarine Squadron Commander Commodore.
- Before WWII, an Apprentice Seaman's pay was \$21.00 per month. Pays increased in WWII with Apprentice Seaman to \$50.00 per month and around \$120.00 per month for a Chief. All personnel on Submarines got 50% submarine money and 20% sea duty pay. When added together, added up to about 80% extra pay. If you were married and had dependents, your pay was reduced by \$28.00 per month; the U.S. Navy supplemented another \$22.00, and your dependent was sent a monthly check for \$50.00.
- Consequently, an Apprentice Seaman would get \$22.00 per month. However, enlisted personnel below pay grade four could not marry without the permission of their Commanding Officer. This breached more often than observed, and many entered the service married.
- At one time, the Navy Paymasters would pay personnel with \$2.00 bills so that when spent, it would indicate to the local economy the impact of the service. Also, when being paid by the Paymaster on board a tender, you would line up with your "pay chit" to draw your pay. When you reached the pay desk, you would salute the Paymaster, put your fingerprint on the "pay chit," and draw your money. There was a posted pay list indicating what you had on the "books," and you could draw all or whatever amount you desired. Submarine and sea pay were a real boon especially when sea store cigarettes at six cents a pack and a bottle of beer on Bank St. was twenty-five cents. Later, when you came in off patrol, you would have that back pay and be really flush.
- Due to the rapid expansion of every aspect of the U.S. Navy, if you could cut the mustard, promotions were forthcoming. Many a serving enlisted person commissioned (called mustangs) or advanced in rating because of the enormous need to fill billets in new construction and replace casualties. Classes at the U.S. Naval Academy graduated early. Personnel with special qualifications were coming into the service rated or commissioned. You could see a Chief Petty Officer with no hash marks. These ratings were derided and called "slick arms" (no hash marks) or "Tajo" ratings by the old-timers. Some enlisted personnel commissioned as regular line officers, Warrant Officers, and Limited Duty Officers (LDOs) in specific areas. Such commissions initially were considered temporary with reversion back to their permanent grades after hostilities
- They created many specialty ratings. In their "Crow" specialty designator was a diamond with a letter inside, e.g., the letter "A" would be for a coach or professional athlete who would conduct physical conditioning, etc. Most, if not all, of these ratings ceased to exist with the end of the war. Some referred to these as "square knot" rates. There were right and left arm rates. Right arm rates were considered "Sea Going Rates" (B.M., QM, G.M., S.M., F.C., TM, etc.) and the "Crow" was worn on the right arm. Left arm rates were ancillary and were MM, Y, EM, R.M.,

MOMM, E.T., etc. Right arm rates were senior to left arm ratings. There was no Boatswain Mate Third Class they were called Coxswains.

- Seamen and Firemen wore a "watch stripe" round the right shoulder - white for seamen red for firemen. There was other colors of "Watch Stripes" for aviation, C.B.s, etc. Indication of rate was on uniform cuffs. One white/red stripe for AS/FA, two for S2c/F2/c and three for S1/c and F1/c. The present diagonal 1, 2, or 3 stripe(s), in color was originally for WAVE uniforms and after WWII were adopted for the present enlisted uniform and the watch stripe was eliminated.
- The "T-Shirt" a part of the enlisted uniform initially served two purposes. (1) It was to be worn without the Jumper on work details, especially in tropical locations. (2) It was meant to have the high white neckline to show in the "V" of the Jumper. Some personnel, to enhance the appearance would cut the tab off and wore the "T-shirt" backward for a better appearance especially if with age and washings it seemed to sag. The popularity of the T-Shirt expanded into wide public acceptance after WWII and is now utilized, not only as an undergarment but as outerwear with various designs, logos, etc.
- There were no Silver Metal Dolphins for enlisted personnel. Dolphins for enlisted personnel consisted of embroidered "patches". (white for blues and blue for whites) sewn on the right forearm. Silver Metal Dolphins for enlisted personnel was authorized after WWII.
- All enlisted personnel wore embroidered "patches" as distinguishing marks e.g., if you were a designated striker you could wear the insignia for that specialty on the left upper sleeve. Other distinguishing marks for enlisted personnel were "patches" on uniforms, e.g., an Expert Lookout "patch" binoculars, a diver a divers helmet (M for Master. with degree of qualification indicated on the chest section of the helmet. These worn on the right upper sleeve and there were many of them. One "perk" that has persisted is the wearing of gold rating insignia and hash marks for those with 12 years of good conduct. Chief Petty Officers merely pinned their fouled anchor hat insignia to the front top of their hat covers. The black band and background for the insignia was initiated after WWII. Officers did wear Gold Metal Dolphins as they do today.
- Unknown today was also the fact that there was a dress white uniform for enlisted personnel. The collar and cuffs were blue and were adorned with piping. What is worn today are "undress whites". Pictures of them are in old "Bluejacket Manuals". Officers wore swords for ceremonial occasions as they do today but back before WWII Chief Petty Officers had a cutlass for ceremonial dress occasions. Another uniform item that is now passé is the flat hat. Once the ribbon had the name of your ship but this discontinued for security reasons and all flat hats merely had U.S. Navy in gold on the ribbon.
- In boot camp all of your uniform items were stenciled with your name and service number. There were no doors on lockers and each item had a prescribed method of folding and stowing. It was even prescribed as to how you would pack your seabag.
- Originally, the entire submarine base was literally below the railroad tracks. Later as the base expanded it was called "lower base". Most of the upper base buildings, i.e., Morton Hall, Dealey Center, etc., were constructed for WWII. The road from the present main gate past the golf course was the Groton-Norwich road. About half way up the road was an overhead railroad bridge. The entrance to the base was under the bridge and the Marine guard stationed there in a guard shack. The base commanders office was housed in a small brick building about half way between the training tower and the Torpedo Shop.
- Submarine School - six weeks enlisted and three months for officers. Of some 250,000 men who applied for submarine duty less than 10% made it to Sub School and many of those washed out. Submarine School was the sole tyrannical domain of one Chief Torpedoman Charles Spritz. Submarine School was called "Spritz's Navy". He ruled with an iron hand and was feared by instructors and students alike. He had little regard for rate whether you were a Seaman First Class or a Petty Officer First Class. To call him eccentric was a gross understatement. He did not smoke, did not drink and was single It is open to debate as to if he ever even pulled a liberty. His total devotion was to the Submarine School. It was universally

conceded that he had gone "asiatic", not 100% stable and perhaps as a youngster he might have been dropped on his head.

He insisted that personnel, at all times, be properly and neatly attired in the regulation "Uniform of the Day" without exception. No tailor made, proper rolled neckerchief down to the "V" in the Jumper with immaculate white T-Shirt showing, shoes well shined, etc. He did not permit smoking nor any type of horseplay. He demanded that all personnel move at a fast pace. Chief Spritz had the uncanny ability to be everywhere at all times and pity the poor individual who crossed his path. His discipline was swift and sure. He felt it was his personal mission to ascertain that anyone leaving sub school for submarine duty was in every respect ready. He had many axioms but his favorite was "There is room for anything on a submarine except a mistake". Sub school students were not "boots", many, if not most, had time in the U.S. Navy and were rated. There is an article in POLARIS issue of August, 2000 (Submarine Saga segment) which delves into more detail relative to Chief Spritz and is briefly incorporated here as it is a definite part of the Diesel Boat Era. Sub Vets of WWII in recognition of respect, and a fealty obligation to this once feudal lord and master, wear a "Spritz's Navy" patch on their vests.

- It would seem that the screening at Sub School served us well. Friction between members of the crew was unbecoming and unacceptable. If an individual demonstrated an inability to "get along" he could be transferred to another boat. If the same conduct prevailed there he would be transferred out of submarines.
- The training tower caused many a wash out for both physical and mental reasons. If a person could not "pop" his ears it could cause pain and even bleeding from the ears. Your voice changed dramatically to a high pitch under pressure. All personnel had to qualify from the 100' lock with the Mommson Lung. Right after the war it was noted that some German submariners had made emergency escapes using free ascents. A number of crews from boats went to the tower and made free ascents.
- We had less pomp insofar as the ceremony observed when a member of the crew qualified than is apparent today. The individual, thrown over the side then sewed dolphins on his uniforms and wore them with pride. They have always been, and always will be, a badge of honor regardless of manner in which bestowed. There was less reverence on some other occasions also., e.g., when a "Good Conduct Medal" was awarded to a member of the crew it would be given by the Captain (or perhaps the Exec) at quarters amid "hoots and hollers" with cries of "Undiscovered Crime". There was also a bonus system for awards ranging from \$1.00 per month for the Good Conduct Medal to \$5.00 per month for the Congressional Medal of Honor.
- "Tailor Made" dress blues were the uniform of the day for liberty. The jumper was skin tight with a zipper in the side so that it could be taken off. Accentuated bell bottoms were mandated. The inside of the cuffs were decorated with embroidered color decorations, usually dragons, etc., and were only visible when the cuffs were turned up.  
When you made Chief you initially bought the cheapest hat you could find since it was also considered appropriate and properly respectful to have all of the crew urinate in your first hat.
- Sad to note in this day and enlightened age all of the military services of the United States were segregated during our era. The practice abolished by President Truman over 50 years ago. Stewards, at that time, recruited from America territories and from American minorities. Even in such a tight knit group as American Submarines two racks in the Forward Torpedo Room hung off the overhead beneath The Torpedo Loading Hatch were reserved for the Stewards. Rated Stewards wore uniforms similar to Chiefs.
- The submarine sailor was a very irreverent individual with an avid distaste for regulations, etc. The average life span of a submarine sailor was four patrols (about a year). Despite bravado, that thought prevailed to varying degrees depending upon the individual. That premise however, was unsaid but used as an excuse for hell-raising. Rarely mentioned in tales of WWII

submarine lore was the fact that going through minefields was as apprehensive as being depth charged.

- Submarine Officers and crews were very young - anyone past thirty was a very old man. Admiral Charles Lockwood (Uncle Charley) Com Sub Pac was most forgiving, as were Skippers and Execs, of transgressions of both Officers and men. Returning from patrol crews were treated extremely well.
- Another "perk" of the submarine force was that any record of "minor" disciplinary action that a member of the crew suffered would be entered into the "page 9" of his service record. Virtually all disciplinary action was handled internally on the boat. However, both the original and carbon copy (BuPers Copy) retained in his jacket. When transferred, the original and copy, removed by the Yeoman to be deep sixed. Unless there was a serious offence personnel transferred with a clean record.
- Many friendships were formed in sub school, plus other training and schools and transfers were not uncommon due to the needs of new construction, promotions, etc. Consequently, the force became even more closely knit. It was the rare boat that did not have personnel whom you knew.
- Submariners were very independent and resourceful, both individually and as a group. Needs (and desires) of the boat as prescribed by the U.S. Navy, did not always coincide with what was considered proper nor adequate. Therefore, a system of "midnight requisitioning" and "midnight small stores" developed to enhance efficiency. This avenue of acquisition considered a solemn duty in promoting the war effort. Those proficient and innovative in this endeavor were greatly admired. It was an art as well as a science executed individually or as a group cooperative effort. Some of these escapades took great ingenuity as well as "brass balls". As a term of affection they were called "scroungers" and/or "dog robbers". If a Skipper or Exec made an "innocent" passing remark that some particular thing might be "nice" it would appear mysteriously in due time.
- On board an informal, but professional, attitude prevailed. Although we had an evaporator to make fresh water, battery watering was primary. In the design and scheme of things, personal hygiene or washing of clothes did not seem to be considered. One Engineering Petty Officer, called the "Water King" ran the evaporators. Personal hygiene or washing of clothing was an afterthought. The use of after-shave lotions, deodorants and especially talcum powders prevailed. Large cans of "Lilac" were the norm, purchased inexpensively and sprinkled liberally.
- To the unacquainted it could appear that the rapport between Officers and men was quite informal and to a degree it was but it in no way detracted from efficiency, military courtesy, tradition or discipline. There was a strong mutual respect. Aye-Aye Sir, Very Well and Well Done were accorded as appropriate. The vast majority of the crew was rated and competent in their skills. Obviously so were our officers. There was no such thing as stenciled ratings on dungaree shirts so a person coming aboard a submarine at sea would have a difficult time determining any individuals rate. Also there was an axiom that in submarines "you left your rate on the dock". Ability was the hallmark.
- When conditions approached that of a Chinese garbage scow junk with an over flowing head and the crew in dire need of fumigation the Skipper might decide to allow showers piecemeal by sections. You lined up to enter the shower, the Chief of the Boat turned on the water for 2 seconds and shut it down while you soaped down. You were then allowed a correspondingly brief rinse.
- Each member of the crew was allotted one locker which measured about 12" high, 18" wide and about 18" deep. You kept your uniforms under your mattress. Your rack had a plastic zip around cover. Your mattress was encased in a "mattress cover" which was akin to an oversized pillow case. Able to be turned over once and some even turned them inside out and got two more uses. Less the uninitiated be stunned by that you must be cognizant of lack of water for regular laundry.

- Internal communications on board were conducted by the 1MC and 7MC phone and speaker systems.
- To reenter a submarine after handling lines etc. when returning to port was a shocking revelation. It was impossible to believe that you had survived that malodorous environment. Politely put the atmosphere was conducive to a shanty town house of ill repute that also was inundated by a backup of its sewer system. Pity the poor relief crew that had to come on board and make the boat shipshape again.
- You could immediately identify an Electrician on a submarine. He was the individual with the most shredded moth eaten dungarees.
- Ribald humor was the tenor of the day. No topic or human frailty was off limits. Nothing was sacred. Horseplay and trickery were the order of the day. The antics and demeanor of the crew, both at sea and ashore, would not be socially acceptable nor politically correct nowadays. I fear that the late Admiral Rickover would have been aghast.
- One real advantage was food, especially when you first went out. Although they were ridden without mercy the cooks did an excellent job of feeding the crew. We ate family style off china plates. Our officers ate exactly what the enlisted personnel did. The stewards would come back to the After Battery Galley and fill their serving plates and bring it to the Forward Battery for the Wardroom. When leaving port rations were stored in every conceivable space (including the shower since it wouldn't be needed). However, as supplies diminished the cooks were hard pressed to come up with varied favorable menus. All boats had "open icebox" so you could prepare and cook anything you wanted at any time as long as you cleaned up after yourself. The After Battery "Mess" was for chow, off duty recreation, meeting space and a hang-out.

This is a collective attempt at recollection after the passing of a half-century so any errors or omissions hopefully forgiven as "senior frailties". Much of this is collective memory and is a compilation of boats in general. There is no pride of authorship so any comments, additions, corrections and/or deletions are welcome and appreciated. This is merely a historical comparison as best one can do and is in no way a negative reflection between "then and now". GOD BLESS ALL

**SUBMARINERS - Past, Present and Future**

**Michael Skurat**

**Central Connecticut Chapter U.S. Submarine Veterans World War II**