

Arizona Sub Vets Perch Base



Midwatch

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Arizona Sub Vets, Perch Base Officers

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April Eternal Patrol Days

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|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| USS PICKEREL (SS177) | April 3, 1943 - 74 men lost |
| USS SNOOK (SS279) | April 8, 1945 - 84 men lost |
| USS THRESHER (SSN593) | April 10, 1963 - 129 men lost |
| USS GRENADIER I (SS210) | April 22, 1943 - 4 men died as POW's |

Lest We Forget Those Still On Patrol

Arizona Perch base Submarine Centennial Picnic



HERE'S A FREEBIE YOU DARE NOT MISS. Your Arizona Perch Base, like many Bases all across the Nation, is holding its Submarine Centennial picnic on April 9th, at 10 am at beautiful ENCANTO PARK in downtown Phoenix. This marks the 100th anniversary of the United States Navy's Submarine Force and is tailor made for all us former submariners. Encanto is like no other city park in Arizona...it is the Central Park of the State, and has PADDLE BOATING, BALL FIELDS, PLAYGROUNDS, and an AMUSEMENT PARK for your kids. I have reserved an entire island sanctuary just for us...with grills, tables, and restrooms very near by. Parking too, is but a very short walk away, over a picturesque foot bridge....about 150 feet away. But to assure a parking space in this parking field you must arrive no later than 10:15am. Members will be there as early as 9:00 to welcome you. The park is located on 15th AVE, between Thomas and McDowell (see map enclosed). The cost is free to all SUBVET members, their immediate family, and as recently revised, to their invited GUESTS. Another revision made by the picnic committee is that this will NOT be a pot-luck...just come as you are (with another SUBVET buddy perhaps who may want to check us out) with one thing in mind....HAVING A BALL WITH YOUR SHIPMATES and meeting your extended submarine "Family" for perhaps the first time. Those wishing to take advantage of this MONUMENTAL occasion, MUST contact VC **Don Wannamaker** (phone # on front cover) by April 6th. But, DONT WAIT, food must be gotten, so...CALL NOW. To be safe, bring folding chairs....EVERYTHING else will be supplied. You guys from Tucson and points south, and youz guyz from Prescott and points north, this is as much your event as it is mid-staters....please try to make this one.

Hope to see you at the meeting Saturday at American Legion in Glendale....read your newsletter for directions and while I have your attention, Don't forget our submarine centennial Perch Base Picnic on April 9th at Encanto Park., Phoenix.....members, wives & kids free.....Guests \$6 a head. Must let me know if you're coming so we can better plan and recommend what you can bring. Please let me hear from you ASAP as food quantities must be purchased in advance, and the menu fixed. My phone number and e-mail address is located on the cover of **Midwatch**.

Also wish to thank **Don Wannamaker**, **Dave Harnish**, and **Gary Patterson** for all their help. Don takes over the job as Social Chairman at the picnic.

On Line Auction

Buffalo Base has put out the plea for help in order to assist in their raffle program to replace the

tiles in their Memorial Submarine, the **USS CROAKER (SS246)**. Your Base stepped forward by authorizing 5 Perch Base Cookbooks, "Dishes From the Deep" and 2 Centennial Calendars for this event. The date of the online auction is April 1 thru 15. You can view the items for sale at wavecom.net~rontini/auction.htm. The bidding war will take place on the same web site.

On March 2nd, I received the following thank you:

"Roger, Your package of cookbooks and calendars arrived today in good shape.

We thank you very much for the contribution. I'm gonna get one of the cook books for myself. I love Southwestern food. I visited my sister in Apache Junction a couple of years ago and brought back some cookbooks from the Sedona area. Again, thanks to you and the Perch Base members. Be sure to pass the word that the auction opens on April 1. There is lots of stuff to see. John Trubee, Buff Base Cdr."

In an unassociated event, Perch has also submitted our cook book for the "Best of the Best" . . . classic recipes from every corner of the USA and particularly in Arizona. Should we win, or some of our recipes win, Perch Base will be recognized throughout the State and quite possibly the Country.

We have our former Ladies Auxiliary Commander, **Gayle Loftus** and her "Auxiliaryettes" to thank for this if we are the recipients of any award. Thank you ladies.

Memorial Day Observance

I am asking all Perch Base shipmates to join us for our Submarine Centennial Memorial Day Service at the Arizona National Cemetery, off Cave Creek Road on Pinnacle Peak Road, on Monday, May 29th, at 7:45 a.m. We are hoping for seating alongside of our WW 2 brothers, but seating cannot be assured unless you get there early. I have been informed by the Cemetery that the Submarine Torpedo Monument will be in place by that time. The WW2's have given us the honor of tolling the bells. This is the first year that Perch Base will be unfolding their memorial wreath, please make it a point to show up. Wear your SUBVET hats, jackets or vests. Lou Tejera is trying to find us a restaurant for breakfast after the ceremonies. No promise of success.

Directions: From I-17, get off at Deer Valley Road, head east past the airport to Cave Creek Road. Then head north to Pinnacle Peak Road, head east about ¼ mile, entrance is on the right, festivities under a tent to your left.

Military Funeral Honors

Submitted by **John Redding**: As of January 1, 2000, all eligible veterans, including military retirees, are entitled to military funeral honors. At a

minimum, the funeral honors ceremony will consist of the folding and presentation of the American flag and the playing of Taps. At least two uniformed military personnel, in addition to a bugler, if available, shall perform the ceremony. If a bugler is not available, a high-quality CD will be used. One of the uniformed military personnel will be from the deceased veteran's parent military service and will present the flag to the next of kin.

The Military Services may provide additional elements of honors and may use additional uniformed military personnel or other authorized providers, such as members of a veteran's organization to augment the Funeral Honors Detail.

The next of kin or appropriate individual must request the funeral honors, they are not provided automatically. Department of Defense (DOD) policy calls for the funeral directors, rather than the next of kin to contact the military. This toll-free number 1-877-MIL-HONR (645-4667) has been set up for funeral directors to coordinate ceremonies. DOD has established this web site, www.militaryfuneralhonors.osd.mil that explains the funeral honors process.

Meeting Minutes 12-Feb. 2000

E-Board Meeting:

Convened by **Roger Cousin** at 12:15, 12 Feb. 2000. Roger suggested we have a co-chairman for Perch Base officers. He will publish the list in a future newsletter.

Perch Base will send 5 cookbooks and 2 calendars to Buffalo Base for raffling. A motion was passed to publish the minutes in the newsletter. They are due the first of the month. Discussion on 2000 calendars and where we stand to date was held. Calendar sales are going very well and we are finally in the black. Meeting adjourned at 1256.

Treasurer's Report was given. Sailing List: 26 members. New Members: **Howard Dail, Robbie Robinson, Les Hillmen** (Welcome Aboard). Guest: **Tom Tilley**.

Base Business

A discussion was held on Memorial Day arrangements. Approximately 12 or more, by show of hands, will come to the Memorial Day service. Proposed changes of the bylaws of Perch Base were read for the second time. A motion was passed to provide all members with a copy of the bylaws.

A motion was passed to give Perch Base calendars to selected senators. A motion was passed to advertise calendars in WWII SUBVETS newspaper. Action is needed on this item. A discussion was held concerning the time capsule that is planned by the SUBVETS this year. It was suggested that Perch Base provide a calendar and a picture of the membership. No decision was made on this item. Contact **Roger** if you have any other

ideas. A motion was passed to purchase a TV-VCR combination for Perch Base.

Special Announcement

Gayle Loftus works for the DMV. She writes about a possible submarine veteran license plate: ".... I can tell you that we have exactly 5 Medal of Honor & 3 Purple Heart plate holders in the State of Arizona. I do not know how a design for a new plate gets to the point of review and approval by the State, but I am sure I can find out. If you're interested in this, let me know, and I'll do some research." (5 MOH & 3 PH's in the entire State? They must ALL live in the Sun Cities...I could swear I've seen at least 20 or 30 of them out here alone.)

On behalf of Perch Base, I gave **Gayle** the go ahead as soon as I read it. She will notify **Brian** and me ASAP. I don't think we stand much of a chance, but neither did I feel that a few dissenters could take God out of the classrooms. One thing is certain, we definitely wont get it if we don't try.

Good of the Order

Perch Base has two members running for USSVI National positions. **John Anderson** is running for Vice President Nationals. **Jim Strassels** is running for National Treasurer. Both of these gentlemen would serve their office with purpose and dedication.

Holland Club requirements have changed. Service dates prior to 1951 are eligible. 50/50 raffle was \$47.

Membership

Perch Base gained four new members in March. Welcome Aboard to the following:

Acosta, Ben, ETC(SS), Active Duty as a Tri-State Nuclear Recruiter, qualified on **GURNARD (SSN662)** in 1981. He has also served on **SCULPIN (SSN590)**, **LAPON (SSN661)**, **SALT LAKE CITY (SSN716)**, instructor at Nuclear Power School, Orlando and the Nuclear Power Training Unit at Balston Spa, NY. Ben and his wife, Virginia, make their home in Avondale and he is sponsored by **Don Wannamaker**.

Keating, L. A. "Mike", FTG1(SS), qualified the **QUILLBACK (SS424)** in 1964 and has also served on board **ATULE (SS403)**, **AMBERJACK (SS522)**, **BERGALL (SSN667)**, and **CAVALLA (SSN684)**. Mike is sponsored by **Don Wannamaker**. He and his wife, Lois, make their home in Chandler.

Southern, Bob, EM3(SS), qualified on the **BUGARA (SS331)** in 1946. Bob is sponsored by **Kenny Wayne** and makes his home in Prescott with his wife, **Lorraine**.

Crider, George L., STSCS(SS), USN (Ret), qualified on **SEA DEVIL (SS400)** in 1960. He has also served

on board **POMODON (SS486)**, **NATHANIEL GREEN (SSBN636)**, **WOODROW WILSON (SSBN624)** and **ETHAN ALLEN (SSBN608)**. George is sponsored by **Joe Bernard** and he and his wife, **Sharon**, live in Phoenix.

Lost Boats & Crews for April

Because this is the US Submarine Centennial, I feel it appropriate that we not only mention those boats and crews on Eternal Patrol, but also give a short bio of each. They are our Tradition.

USS PICKEREL (Launched 7 July 1936) Lost 3 April 1943, 74 men lost. **PICKEREL** departed Pearl Harbor for her seventh war patrol March 18, 1943 and refueled at Midway, March 22. She then headed for the eastern coast of Northern Honshu, Japan, and was never heard from again. Post-war analysis of Japanese records credited **PICKEREL** with sinking Submarine Chaser No. 13 on April 3, and a cargo ship on April 7th. Enemy aircraft probably sank her the same day.

USS SNOOK (SS279) (Launched August 25, 1942) Lost April 8, 1945, 84 men lost.

USS SNOOK was lost while on her ninth war patrol, in the South China Sea and Luzon Strait. On April 8, she reported her position to **USS TIGRONE** and when she did not acknowledge messages the next day, it was presumed that she had headed toward Luzon Strait. Nothing was ever heard from the submarine again. **USS SNOOK** was credited with sinking 17 enemy vessels in her two and one-half years of active service, presumed lost the victim of unknown causes. **USS SNOOK** received seven battle stars for her World War II service.

USS THRESHER (SSN593) (Launched July 9, 1960) Lost April 10, 1963, 129 men lost.

Following sea trials to evaluate their new sonar and Submarine Rocket (SUBROC) systems, **USS THRESHER** participated in an exercise designed to improve the tactical capabilities of nuclear submarines, and in antisubmarine warfare training with Task Group ALPHA. However, while mooring at Port Canaveral, she was accidentally struck by a tug, which damaged one of her ballast tanks. After repairs at EB in Groton, CT., the boat returned for more trials off Key West. Following these trials, with something obviously amiss, the boat returned to EB and remained in dockyard hands through the early spring of 1963. In company with USS SKYLARK ASR-20, **USS THRESHER** put to sea on 10 April 1963 for deep-diving exercises, with 17 civilian technicians aboard to observe her performance. Minutes after reaching her test depth, the submarine communicated with SKYLARK apprising the rescue ship of difficulties. Garbled transmissions indicated that - far below the surface - things were going wrong. Suddenly, listeners heard a noise "like air rushing into an air tank," - then silence. The **USS THRESHER**

was lost. Rescue ships recovered only bits of debris, including gloves and internal insulation from the sea. Later, photographs by TRIESTE showed that the boat had broken up in 1,400 fathoms of water (approximately 8,500 feet), some 220 miles east of Boston. The photos indicate she is in six major sections on the ocean floor, in an area about 400 yards square.

USS GRENADIER (SS210) Launched 29 November 1940, Scuttled 22 April 1943, 4 Men Died as POW's. **USS GRENADIER** left Australia 20 March 1943, on her last war patrol and headed along the Malay and Thai coasts where she sunk a freighter off Phuket. Running on the surface at dawn of April 20th, she sighted two merchant ships and attacked. Her score is not recorded. The next morning she was spotted by a Jap plane and as the sub crash-dived, bombs rocked **USS GRENADIER**, causing her to roll over 20 degrees. Power and lights failed completely as she settled to the bottom at 267 feet. As she was trying to make emergency repairs, fire broke out in the maneuvering room. After 13 hours on the bottom, **USS GRENADIER** managed to surface at night to clear the boat of smoke and to inspect damage. The damage to her propulsion system was irreparable. As dawn broke on the 22nd, **USS GRENADIER's** weary crew sighted two Japanese ships heading for them. A Japanese plane attacked the stricken submarine but **USS GRENADIER** though dead in the water and to all appearances helpless, blazed away with machine guns, hitting the plane. Reluctantly opening all vents, **USS GRENADIER's** crew abandoned ship and watched her sink. A Japanese merchant ship picked up the crew and took them to Penang, where they were questioned, beaten, and starved before being sent to other Jap prison camps. They were then separated and transferred from camp to camp along the Malay Peninsula and finally to Japan. Despite brutal and sadistic treatment, all but four of **USS GRENADIER's** crew survived 2 1/2 years in Japanese camps. (Roger's Note: I proudly served on **USS GRENADIER II (SS525)** during the Korean War.)

I wish that the scenario of the **USS GRENADIER** and **USS THRESHER** had come in different months for editorial purposes, but they didn't. So these events will take over much of this newsletter. I hope you find them interesting and informative.

THE IMPRISONMENT OF THE CREW OF THE **GRENADIER**.

.. A First Person Account:

"The destroyers circled and photographed the submariners before they picked them up via a Jacob's Ladder, stripped them, and searched their belongings. The destroyer then continued to Penang, Malaysia, and arrived there the morning of April 24 with its hungry, tired, and discouraged prisoners.

We were spared because they wanted information from us. We were marched onto the dock and taken to what once was a British school. In about a

half-hour a Nip officer showed up with a club and brandished it. We stood in a zigzag row and clubbed for the slightest movement of the body or eyelash until late evening. Then our positions were changed to hands over head, knees bent. We had had no food since our capture.

Then the clubbing became more frequent. The men were taken one at a time to a room, the door of which was marked "Art Room", and tortured by clubbing with the flat of a sword and a round club. Matches were stuck under fingernails. We were tied across a three-quarter bed, face down, and worked over with clubs. They would lash a man to a bench tilted at a 20-degree angle, head down, and pour water down his nose. Fitzgerald really went through hell for us. They beat him, jumped on his stomach and struck knife blades under his nails. He never talked, except to cuss out the Jap commander; and they put him to work unloading coal from their ships and cracking rocks.

This treatment continued for five days and nights without food. On the evening of the fifth, we got wormy rice broth. Occasionally, a guard would let us lie down for an hour, then awaken us with the butt of his gun.

They asked the skipper for the location of other subs, for call signals and frequencies. Some of the men did give erroneous information, such as the name of the submarine as the "Goldfish".

The officers and enlisted men were kept apart but they used the same toilet. Whenever the captain went there he scribbled messages to the crew on the bulkhead, such as "Don't tell 'em anything," and "Guard the T.D.C.". The Target Data Computer was one of the Navy's secret mechanisms that were used to establish and hit the target.

We ate hedge blossoms, stems, and grass. After the eighth day, the treatment changed from purposeful questioning to individual sadistic satisfaction of the Nip guards, like sitting on deck, hands on knees and staring rigidly ahead. Also, all men were put into a circle with head between the legs of the man next to him, and then made to crawl about the cement deck imitating a train and animals until our knees and hands were raw. We had no baths; we still got rice broth at 8 a.m. and 9 p.m. This treatment continued for two months. Men became weak and they were beaten. They wanted our jewelry and made us wish we had given it to them. We were under this treatment for four months.

On July 18, 1943, the survivors left Penang for Singapore, arriving three days later. We worked at the Singapore Naval Base until September 26, when we were put aboard another ship and taken on a 17-day voyage to Japan.

Two days out of Japan they tortured the men beyond all comprehension.

We arrived at Shimoda Saki on October 10 and

divided. Twenty-nine men were sent to Ofuna Interrogation Camp where we encountered Fitzgerald, Whiting, and Harty, who had previously been flown there. The remaining men remained in a steel mill at Shimoda Saki. Ofuna was another nine months of hell. High-ranking officers were at this camp, but no distinction was made as to care and treatment. They and we were put to work in the Ashio copper mines. The treatment continued as usual death and torture.

There was no medicine. Working hours were from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m. We got two days a month off. All the men who died were cremated. Food conditions during the last six months of the war were acute. Our morale, by this time, was rock bottom and our thoughts and dreams were of food.

In a group statement, for Navy records, 17 other **USS GRENADIER** crew members noted: "By the end of June we were all swollen up with beriberi. One guard who we called 'Banana Nose' was truly a sadist. 'Banana Nose' had a pal whom we called 'Gold Tooth,' and it was from these two perverts that we received our most insensate treatment . . . We started working in the steel mills . . . Four of our crew died there, mostly from malnutrition. They seemed to have a personal grudge against the submarine men, because when anything went wrong they would take it out on us. We figured they had a good reason for this due to the success of our submarine blockading their shipping. ~~There is one man, Dr. Herbert A. Markowitz (Lieutenant, Junior Grade), who will always live in our minds. He worked night and day taking care of us. Sometimes it was even necessary for him to steal medical supplies to care for the sick."~~

Warren E. Roberts, a Torpedoman, Second Class, remembered: "When we got to Nagasaki we were placed in a Japanese Navy camp. The treatment was pretty rough there. They ran us up and down the highway with no shoes on in front of people who threw stones at us. No one ever received any of the Red Cross supplies because the Japs sold everything. We were first bombed in August of 1944 (at Yawata). We had no air raid shelters and were put up in a second story of a pipe shop. Shrapnel was constantly beating down on this shop".

Excerpt From: *"They Fought Under the Sea"*.

The Mystery of the **THRESHER**

Into the storm-tossed waters of the Atlantic one April morning, 1963, pushed the 3,700-ton atomic, attack submarine **USS THRESHER**. She had been commissioned since August, 1961. Possibly because she was designed as a deep-diver . . . "The deepest in the world," it was said . . . she had become an underwater Pandora's box of structural flaws and "bugs" which impeded smooth, trouble-free operation.

USS THRESHER was ending a tedious nine months in the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. She had undergone overhaul. The Navy called this expensive, time-consuming process "shakedown availability".

Shepherded by the submarine rescue vessel **SKYLARK**, **USS THRESHER**, certified by her own captain as "in all respects ready for the sea", left New England on April 9th. En route to her designated area, she conducted routine shallow dives of brief duration.

By dawn of the 10th, the **USS THRESHER** was where the continental shelf drops off into a 2-mile-deep sea bottom, 220 miles due east of Cape Cod, and ready for her major plunge. Only the **SKYLARK** would be left far above on the surface.

At 7:47 a.m. **USS THRESHER** slid under the gray-green froth of the turbulent Atlantic. By hydrophone, the submarine reported, routinely, that she was commencing her deep dive.

Five minutes later, **USS THRESHER** announced over the sonic telephone that she had dove to 400 feet, had momentarily leveled off, and was generally checking her gauges while her crew was busy checking for leaks. At 7:54, the "talker" on the **USS THRESHER** said he would transmit test depths every 15 minutes.

Eighteen minutes later, the Captain, assured of success, ordered the sub down to its furthest test depth, perhaps a quarter mile.

At 9:02 **SKYLARK** received a request from **USS THRESHER** asking for verification of a course heading. Something was wrong.

At 9:12 this message: "Experiencing minor problem .. (a pause) .. attempting to blow."

The **USS THRESHER** was obviously trying to blow her ballast tanks for emergency surfacing.

Men on the bridge of the **Skylark** heard the sound of air rushing into **USS THRESHER'S** ballast tanks. The noise obscured another vocal message crackling over the phones. At 9:14 **SKYLARK** advised **USS THRESHER** that it was losing contact. Then, a minute later, an increasingly frantic Commander Hecker, grabbed the microphone and shouted: "Are you in control?" Watson continued to hear blowing sounds - nothing else.

Finally, at 9:17, **SKYLARK** heard a garbled message, out of which the two words "test depth" were audible. Then Watson recognized a sound familiar to him during the war, " . . . a ship breaking up - like a compartment collapsing . . . a muted dull thud." And then - - nothing.

At 11:04 the rescue vessel notified Submarine Headquarters in New London that she had lost contact with the **USS THRESHER** and Hecker now began to crisscross the rough surface of the ocean in the vain hope that **USS THRESHER**, conceivably plagued with communications difficulties, might somehow have surfaced. All he saw was what he

made out to be a gray fishing boat, some 2 1/2 miles distant. By evening, aircraft and other naval vessels, including submarines, were on the scene. The **RECOVERY**, a salvage ship, made the first grim discovery an oil slick, cork, plastic, and a tube of caterer's cake frosting.

Now there was little doubt that **USS THRESHER** was on the bottom - 8,400 feet down, and crushed. Whatever the designed limit, **USS THRESHER** had not been constructed for depths nearly two miles below, where the water pressure is in excess of 3600 pounds per square inch and average steel hulls become as fragile as egg shells. What happened to cause history's worst submarine disaster?

A Navy court of inquiry was immediately convened. The bathyscaph **TRIESTE**, an exploration craft that had been lowered seven miles below the surface of the Pacific, was ordered to the scene. All **TRIESTE** could do, however, was to photograph objects on the bottom of oceans. It was not a salvage vessel. **TRIESTE'S** fine photographs taken two months later revealed the remains of **USS THRESHER**, broken in six pieces and strewn over a 400 square yard area. Cause still unknown.

Admiral Anderson, at the very first, wanted to make the Navy's job somewhat easier by virtually eliminating two theoretical factors. "We will certainly cover two possibilities which have been raised," he said, "that first one of sabotage, which is in my judgment very remote but one which must be considered, and second; whether or not there was enemy action. I certainly rule this out but it is one that would be examined in the course of the inquiry."

The fact that Russian trawlers had repeatedly been sighted off the New England coast sparked the latter question. Some conjured up sinister implications of the mysterious, disappearing vessel, thought by **SKYLARK** to be a fishing boat, near the area of the **USS THRESHER'S** last plunge.

Anderson, and others more technically qualified, were unanimous in denying that the atomic reactor on the **USS THRESHER** could in any way have contributed to the disaster. They also scoffed at the assertion of a retired Russian admiral that the accident would result in contamination of Atlantic waters, especially the Gulf Stream. (We'll see, one day.)

As often happens in a major disaster, there was someone who had narrowly missed being on the casualty list. Lieutenant Raymond A. McCoolle, the **USS THRESHER'S** electrical officer, had remained ashore because his wife had burned her eyes in a home accident. One of the first to testify at the inquiry, McCoolle said engineers were still testing the submarine's diving planes and rudder mechanisms the night before she left Portsmouth on her fatal voyage.

He added that there had been trouble with her main seawater valve during the nine months of overhaul. Air systems, as well, had been a continuing problem, and there had been errors in angle indicators. He asserted that 20 per cent of the hydraulic system valves had been installed backwards, and that the plane and rudder mechanisms had been replaced only the day before sailing.

While Admiral Anderson reported that it had been necessary to "make some penetration of the hull" (cutting through plates during overhaul) in order to install machinery, the **USS THRESHER** "seemingly" was sound when she put to sea.

Curiously enough, Admiral Rickover, in 1962, criticized poor metallurgical execution. "On more than one occasion," he declared, "I have been in a deeply submerged submarine when a failure occurred in a sea-water system because a fitting was of the wrong material. But for the prompt action of the crew, the consequences would have been disastrous. In fact, I might not be here today . . ."

"Some of the types of difficulties we constantly encounter have to do with faulty welding, faulty radiography (x-ray) and defective castings.

Rickover mentioned that there were 99 carbon-steel welds in one particular nuclear submarine steam system. In checking one such system, he said, only 10 per cent of the welds met specifications. Incomplete understanding of basic manufacturing and inspection processes was shoddy.

This talk did not necessarily relate to the **USS THRESHER**. After the tragedy, he confirmed that the reactor in a submarine could not possibly blow up - not being analogous to a bomb - or contaminate surrounding waters. Something "of a flooding type nature" - a ruptured valve, for example could have sunk the **USS THRESHER**. Noting the absence of a distress message - although the implications from the last garbles were that an emergency existed - which leaves the Navy to conclude that whatever happened, happened quickly.

Some days after the disappearance of **USS THRESHER**, one baffling bit of evidence washed up from the depths of the Atlantic. It was a charred bit of plastic, about 18 inches square, of the type used for nuclear reactor shielding on submarines of the her class. According to Frederick L. Downs, a chemist at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, the damage was caused by "a rush of flame," rather than a scorching that could accrue from prolonged exposure to heat. This hint of reactor fire was a puzzler since an explosion had already been termed impossibility. Further, no radiation had been detected in any of the early-recovered debris.

What DID go wrong with **THRESHER**? Will

we ever know for certain?

The Non-Qual Ensign (Forwarded by **John Redding**)

A young non-qual Ensign had nearly completed his first WESTPAC tour when he was given an opportunity to display his ability at getting the boat underway. With a stream of crisp commands, he had the linehandlers buzzing with work and soon the boat left port and was streaming seaward down the channel. The ensign's efficiency has been remarkable. In fact, the maneuvering watch was abuzz with talk that he had set a new record for getting the submarine underway. The ensign glowed at his accomplishment and was not all that surprised when the bridge talker turned to him with a message. He was, however, a bit surprised to find that it was a personal radio message for him from the radio shack. Taking the talker's headset he was even more surprised when he heard the Radioman read, "My personal congratulations upon completing your underway preparation exercise according to the book and with amazing speed. In your haste, however, you have overlooked one of the unwritten rules - make sure the captain is aboard before getting under way."

Commander's Remarks

All of us have sea stories, but in keeping with John's Ensign story, I have a similar one. In 1952, after being assigned to the **USS GRENADIER (SS525)**, I was "asked" to become qualified in scuba to assist the other diver, John Day, an American Indian from Massachusetts. It seems that the man I was replacing had been the "other" diver" and I suppose no other crewmember had the hots to follow in his footsteps. Either that or they were smarter than me. At age 18, what did I know? Anyway, I became certified at St. Thomas, while the rest of the crew laid around the beach getting tan and drunk. Shortly thereafter, we were off to other Caribbean ports.

Finally, a few weeks later, we arrived at our final port, Nassau, before heading back to our homeport at New London. For those who have never been to Nassau, this port is ideal for bringing a cruise ship, submarine, or cargo vessel right in. The concrete pier or docking location is alongside the shoreline of the island and the water at low tide is more than 30 feet deep. Our draft was less than 17 feet so there was no big deal or concern. As we were coming in, I was topside with the rest of the deck apes handling the lines. I held one of the monkey fists and was ready for orders from the bridge to let go the heave to those waiting dockside to retrieve the small line, which was attached to the mooring line. LT(jg) Schmuckhead was on the bridge as OD and was undergoing his submarine qualifications with the XO standing alongside. The boat should have cruised right

in without a hitch, no other ship was in our way . . . but not with Schmuckhead giving orders.

On the first pass, the young (jg) apparently thought we were parallel parking his car. From about 25 feet out, he shot past the dock at about 6 knots and immediately screamed "hard right rudder, back 1/3rd, which caused the boat to come to an almost sudden stop, then lurch, stern first, toward the cement pier at a speed that could not be controlled. The XO sounded the collision alarm, but it was too late. The boat hit the pier with force, mangling the starboard screw. One of the deck apes that hadn't seen what was happening, dropped off the deck, hit a ballast tank, and was thrashing around in the water like a wounded alligator. He was fine. But not so, the boat. Day, a 2nd Class Boatswain's Mate was in hysterics laughing. His laughter was infectious as I never knew of an Indian to even smile. Like a stupid kid, I, too, began to laugh hysterically. It was noticed. Once the boat was secured to its moorings, Day and I were summoned to the Wardroom. The entire Officer complement, including the Captain, was there waiting for us. "You men think this "accident" was funny?", asked the Captain. "No Sir," we replied. "Then why the hell did you lead the entire deck-gang in making a mockery of our boat? Wasn't it bad enough that all of Nassau was witnessing it?" "Yes sir," Day replied. "It WAS bad enough that all of Nassau was witnessing it".

When I heard him say that, I couldn't control myself . . . I began trying to hold back my laughter, but couldn't. Day, seeing me, also broke up. Not the officers. "Enough" cried the Captain . . . and we immediately stopped as if being hit with a sledgehammer. "You men are our divers. I want you to assess the damage, NOW!"

Without even a breath coming out of either of us, Day returned to After Battery and I to my Forward Torpedo Room bunk for a hasty change into our bathing suits. Once topside, surrounded by the entire officer contingent and many of the crew, Day assumed his rightful spot as lead diver and had us both don scuba gear, less flippers, to determine the damage. At first, I couldn't get over the sea-life that was either gliding by us or lying on the ocean's floor. Swimming by us almost without a care in the world were barracuda. Below us, half buried in the sand were rays. I watched Day who showed no emotion whatsoever, kind of like Crazy Horse at the Battle at Little Big Horn against Custer. I wasn't as happy.

Within moments we found ourselves alongside the mangled starboard screw. Day looked at me . . . and I looked at Day . . . then we once again began to laugh hysterically UNDER WATER. Apparently, this laughter was heard on deck, for when we came up to give our report, the Captain had already called for air lines to be rigged and the hose masks to be brought up from below. We were then ordered to remove our scuba gear and attach ourselves to the umbilical air hose . . . this could only mean one thing . . . we were being sent

down to cut away the damaged tips of the screw while underwater . . . no matter how long it took. LT(jg) Schmuckhead was told to adorn scuba gear and go down with us to witness the procedure. Unfortunately, the Lieutenant apparently had positive buoyancy and dropped to the bottom like a rock. Day and I dove in after him amid the stirred up sand strewn about by the frightened rays, brought him to the surface. He was in a state of panic. Then, when we saw that he was OK, once again, we became hysterical . . . but not for long. Ordered to put on the airline and mask, Day and I spend almost six hours, on and off, cutting away the edges of the damaged screw.

For some strange reason, Day and I rarely, if ever, spoke to one another after that. We dove together, but Day kept his distance. Some kind of an Indian thing, I suppose.

As for the boat, we ran back to New London for repairs on two main engines using only the port screw. The starboard could be used, but any vibration could have caused more serious problems. **USS GRENADIER** was repaired in record time and we were off to new adventures. Day and I stayed aboard for a while, and so did LT(jg) Schmuckhed. He and I both "qualified" a short time later. No mention of the mishap was ever discussed.

Sub Stories

Do you have a sub story? All submariners have ballast tanks full. Send us yours in 450 words or less (May be anonymous). Or, better yet, come forward and tell us about it at a meeting.

On the Lighter Side

A Sonarman married one of a pair of identical twins. Less than a year later he was in court filing for a divorce. "Tell the court why you want a divorce," the judge said.

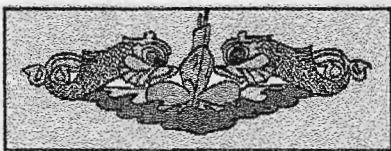
"Well, Your Honor, the submariner started, "My boat is in dry dock and every once in a while my sister-in-law would come over to my NCO club for a visit, and because she and my wife are identical, sometimes I'd end up making love to her by mistake."

"Surely there must be some difference between the two women," the Judge said.

"You're right, Your Honor. That's why I want the divorce."

Western Regional Director

John Fredricks, USSVI Senior VCDR will be taking nominations for Western Regional Director through 15 April. He can be reached at 281-476-4609 or jhfss478@swbell.net.



Perch Base Booster Club for 2000

I wish to thank the following members for their above and beyond financial assistance to our Base:

Jerry Allston, Ken Anderson, Joe Bernard, Wayne Braastad, Mike Brietner, Tom Burke, Jim Clewett, Roger Cousin, Earl Crowley, Steve Day, Jeff Duncan, Doug Eddy, Tom Foosee, Billy Grieves, Lee Graybeal, Warren Grossezza, Dave Harnish, Glenn Herold, Steve Hough, Jim Johns, John "Gully King" Lang, Hubie Maxey, Bob May, Jim Michaud, Roger Miller, Bob Mitchell, Bob Moore, Joe Mullins, Jim Nelson, Jim Newman, Joe Otreba, Tom Patterson, Royce Pettit, Scott Protero, Ray Samson, Frank Rumbaugh, Joe Schwartz (deceased), Tyler Smith, Adrian Stuke, Lou Tejera, John Wilson, Don Whitehed, Bob Wonsley, Jerry Yowell.

Should you care to make a contribution to this worthy cause, and in ANY amount, make your checks payable to "USSVI Perch Base", indicate "for Booster" (for recognition) and send to **Bob May**, Treasurer (see front cover). As usual, if I missed anyone, please let me know.

Next Meeting Location

April's meeting will be short and sweet and will be held during our Phoenix Picnic on Sunday, April 9th. May's meeting will be held on Saturday, May 13 at 1300 at the Disabled American Veterans, 8447 N. 61st Avenue, Glendale, between Northern and Dunlap /Olive. A free lunch is served from 1200.

BRING A FRIEND TO OUR MEETINGS: All that's necessary is a legitimate interest in submarines. He will be offered Associate Membership, but won't be pushed one way or the other.

Reunions

Another great Reunion page has been setup at: thewall-usa.com/reunion. Reunion coordinators and attendees will appreciate this site which is totally free. Check it out.

Perch Base Year 2000 Centennial Calendar

What started off slowly, really took off at the end. At first there were a few skeptics among us who thought the calendars came out too late in order to sell a thousand of them, but thanks to the undying efforts of **Don Wannamaker, Jim Strassels, and John Redding**, we have not only broken even but are already \$1200 in the black. Kudos to you gentlemen for your hard work.

Should anyone care to purchase the Centennial

Calendar, with beautiful colored photos of Nukes, please contact **Don Wannamaker** (see front cover).

Jim Newman's "Did You Know"

- 1) Which U.S. Submarine ended WWII with the highest record for total enemy tonnage sunk?
- 2) What U.S. Submarine ended the war with the highest number of enemy ships sunk?
- 3) What U.S. Submarine is credited with blowing up a Japanese railroad train in Japan during WWII?
- 4) How many U.S. aviators were saved by American submarines either while on war patrol or lifeguard duty during WWII?

New Social/Activities Chairman

Vice Commander **Don Wannamker** has stepped forward to take over this important chair, relieving your Base Commander, who has held this post for four years. Don graciously accompanied me to Encanto Park and helped in acquiring that location for our April 9th Picnic. Kudos to Don.

Whatever Happened To The After Battery Rat?

For all you "Diesel Boats Forever" guys . . . you're going to love this one. Hope you "nukie" kids understand what we're talking about.

Original by Bob "Dex" Armstrong, submitted by **Gary Patterson**.

We Diesel Boaters are getting fewer and fewer. You know you're part of a thinning group when guys you used to pull liberty with start showing up on the Discovery Channel, explaining life on diesel powered submersibles in the days before the gahdam moonbeam nukie navy. Went to see one of those recently released submarine films . . . you know the one . . . "The U.S.S. Gee Whiz SSN-So-and-So goes to 40,000 feet"

And the mind-reading skipper does perfectly timed wiggle-waggle moves to elude an M.I.T. designed underwater ordinance made in China. The crew has clean, neatly tailored and dressed dungarees. The wardroom gentlemen all wear ties or ascots, the cook has a clean apron and the Chief of the Boat uses the term, "Yowee, that hurts?" when he inadvertently drops an anvil on his big toe.

What's happened to the submarine force? What did they do with the old diesel After Battery Rats? What happened to Monday morning quarters, where it was like an Easter Parade of hangovers? And whatever happened to the Chief Petty Officer whose vocabulary contained descriptive adjectives and pronouns that could blister paint off a bulkhead and embarrass houseplants? Where did these guys go?

If they're dead, Hell must be overcrowded. I've noticed that some of these guys are still around as sub vets, although plans are currently underway to embalm and stuff them for the Smithsonian One of their plaques will read, "Frank 'Ol goat' Stone, TM Chief, Worthless Good For Nothing Sonuvabitch and Qualified

Submariner". Not much of a testimonial to serve as prototypical illustration of today's modern Navyman, but a fine example of how it was possible to fold, bend, spindle and mutilate just about every rule in the book, make it through an enlistment without getting hung or shot, then somehow end up as a Chief in the process. Another was the same way, only worse.

Ah, those were the days . . . the end of a hot war and the beginning of a Cold War . . . Where grown men went to sea in leaky boats with obsolete, no longer available parts . . . to smoke five cents a pack, ten year old 'instant ash' cigarettes, read socially unacceptable literature and all for a wage scorned by the Shanghai Coolie union.

Boat sailors, Hell, you could always spot an old diesel submariner, he smoked Pall Malls, Camels, Raleigh's, or some other non-filtered thing carried in his sock next to his ankle . . . Wore foul weather gear often mistaken for used leper bandages found floating in the Ganges River. Cuffs on his blue jumper unbuttoned and rolled back one turn, so his 'liberty cuffs' stood out like port n'starboard running lights.

And cooks . . . would never have admitted it at the time, but they were the best damn cooks in the Navy. Sonuvabitches could marinate a gahdam rubber boot and cook it so it tasted great. Rodney A Johnson, a.k.a. 'Rat' Johnson . . . If you ever stood midwatch on the **USS REQUIN** when Rat was night baker, and he started cooking his famous "Git-yer-gahdam hands off'em" cinnamon buns . . . hell, you'd be chewin' chunks out of the T.B.T. before he got the first batch clear of the oven. You have to wonder, do nuclear boats have freckle-maker heads and sanitary tanks? Or do they have little 'Poop in the Bags' with self-cleaning envelopes that they leave at the mail buoy? Not to brag, but the author remains one of the few (limited number) individuals who while serving as an honored member of the ships' company, found himself a grand prize winner in the "Who gets to Visit the Inside of Number Two Sanitary Tank" contest.

I wish I could find words to describe the wonder and magic of that award winning tour; and whatever happened to sailors who could find something to bitch about even with a mouthful of a woman's breast? Not whining mind you, but 'creative complaining' . . . The art of going out of your way to find insignificant molehills to jack into mountain ranges. It was all part of submarine duty.

What happened to officers named, "Big Mike" Mahoney, Slade Cutter, "Blackjack" Richardson, and "Dutch"? The new guys are called Peyton, Kevin, Brad, Ruppert, and Reginald. Call some sonuvabitch "Ruppert" in the 50's Navy and you could count on some large piece of bar furniture being wrapped around your ears. Oh, and one other thing . . . How come submarines in the movies never have dog shacks for visible topside watches? Where in the hell do they go to light cigarettes . . . and drink coffee. And what do they hide behind when

they take a midnight whiz on the outboard tanktops? Who signs for the Krispie Kreme donuts? If they've gone and replaced topside watches with some kind of Buck Rogers "Welcome Aboard" robot contraption, who gets the word to the guys below that some gal with some very serious sweater pups is standing on the pier?" Doesn't the moonbeam navy care anymore?

Well, for those of you who give a damn, Frank" Stone" & Manny Burrel, fully frozen in time . . . varnished . . . and mounted on their own marble pedestal . . . will be on display in the Smithsonian Museum of Old Barnacle-Encrusted Junk, in the "Nasty Bastard" collection. And the next time the History Channel runs a special on "USN submersibles before they were named after locomotives, and the ol'farts and geezers that rode 'em", turn on your VCRs 'cause we Diesel Boaters will be in it.

Chaplain's Corner

No illnesses to report, thank God, so:
 Count your blessings instead of your crosses;
 Count your gains instead of your losses;
 Count your joys instead of your woes;
 Count your friends instead of your foes;
 Count your smiles instead of your tears;
 Count your courage instead of your fears;
 Count your full years instead of your lean;
 Count your health instead of your wealth;...and...
 Count on God instead of yourself.

A Navy Chaplain, a sub-base doctor and a Chief of the Boat, were waiting one morning on particularly slow group of golfers. The COB fumed, "What's with these guys? We must have been waiting 20 minutes!" The doctor chimed in, "I don't know, but I've never seen such ineptitude!" The Chaplain said, "Hey, here comes the greenskeeper. Let's have a word with him."

"Hi George. Say, what's with that group ahead of us? They're slow as hell. The greenskeeper replied, "Oh yes, that's a group of blind former submariners. They lost their sight trying to put out a fire onboard their sister sub last year, so we always let them play for free anytime. The group was silent for a moment. The Chaplain said, "That's terrible. I must say a special prayer for them tonight." The doctor said, "Good idea. And I'm going to contact my ophthalmologist buddy and see if there's anything he can do for them." The COB turned and said, "Why can't these guys play at night?"

Your Money

Tax managed funds are essentially a marketing gimmick. Most of these funds claim to use an investment strategy that minimizes taxable distributions and therefore cuts investors' income taxes. REALITY: Many funds that do not claim to be tax-managed do better

for investors on an after-tax basis than tax-managed ones do, simply by picking better-performing stocks. Only a very low-turnover fund, such as an S&P 500 index fund, may have as long-term impact on taxes. Bottom line: ignore marketing labels, and compare funds' long-term, after-tax yields before investing. (Harold Evensky, CFP, principal, Evensky, Brown & Katz, Coral Gables, Florida.)

Insights

Remember the old adages: There are two theories to arguing with women. Neither one works . . . and the second: I didn't say it was your fault. I said I was going to blame you.

Answers to "Did You Know"

- 1) The USS **FLASHER** . . . 100,231 tons
- 2) If you picked **FLASHER** . . . WRROONGG! It was the **TAUTOG** with 26. (**FLASHER** had 21).
- 3) This is a trick question . . . the **USS BARB** under CDR Eugene Flucky, put a reconnaissance party ashore. Before leaving the Japanese mainland, they planted explosives under the tracks, waited for a supply/troop train, and blew it up. This earned **FLUCKY** . . . not the guys who did it . . . the Congressional Medal of Honor!
- 4) Oh well; besides President George Bush, there were 503 others.

Gripes

Do you have any gripes pertaining to our Base? To me? Call me, or e-mail me, **Roger Cousin** (front cover). Let's talk about it. WE NEED INPUT: What would you like to see in **Midwatch**? Let me know.

START 1, START 2, START 3, SURRENDER?

The following was submitted by Frank Rumbaugh.

SEVERODVINSK, Russia - U.S. and Russian officials at the Zvezdochka Shipyard recently showed Defense Secretary William S. Cohen the fruits of their labor massive mounds of scrap metal, miles of twisted cable and barrels filled with copper bits. (Presumably) That's what remains of Soviet-era nuclear submarines after American-supplied heavy equipment gripped, grabbed, sheared and stripped them.

The United States is helping Russia dismantle 31 nuclear submarines by 2003 as part of the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program. So far, U.S. specialists have helped disassemble one Yankee and six Delta-class submarines. The Russians have destroyed another five ballistic missile subs on their own.

U.S. officials awarded a contract to SevMash Shipyard, across the bay from Zvezdochka, for the next boat on the chopping block, a Typhoon-class submarine. The world's largest subs, the Russian's six Typhoons are about 570 feet long, 75 feet wide and displace 48,000 tons submerged. They dwarf the next-largest Russian Delta IV and U.S. Ohio subs, which

are about 10 feet shorter, half the width and have one-third the displacement. The Russians plan to eventually destroy all but one of these giant subs.

The U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency contracts Russian shipyards to disassemble the submarines, according to retired Air Force General Tom Kenning, who heads the program in Washington. Kenning and Army Major Ron Alberto, the agency's Submarine Elimination Project Manager, spend much time in Russia, verifying the work and monitoring the program. The two accompanied Cohen on this visit to witness Russian operations.

At one site they walked through a huge scrap yard where a shearing machine compacted and chopped a submarine hull into slices. Overhead, a giant mechanical claw tugged and hoisted 20-ton metal pieces away, while Russian workers cut up missile launch tubes with acetylene torches.

For so many years, the United States and the Soviet Union were engaged in a massive arms race," Cohen recalled. "Yet less than a decade ago, we negotiated START 1 Agreement, which called for the reduction of our respective nuclear arsenals from 10,000 strategic weapons down to 6,000. "If Russia ratifies START 2, we'll be able to reduce those levels to 3,000. We can then move on to Start 3 (and) reduce those levels even more - as low as 2,000 weapons. Reducing both nations' arsenals contributes greatly to world security and stability (he's got to be kidding) and at the same time

provides jobs for both Russians and Americans. He then pointed out that the United States has already destroyed 23 submarines and 368 submarine-launched missile launchers per START 1.

This program will go down in history (I bet) - as we enter the new millennium - as a very bright example . . he said, "It opens the door for many opportunities for us in the 21st century."

Kommander's Komments

So there we have it! Not only are Army and Air Force brass setting the standards and overseeing the dismantling of Russian submarines, but they've left out US Navy involvement entirely. By Salt 4, there'll no longer be American nuclear weapons, but hell, who's afraid of China, India or Korea anyway? Wasn't it Nostradamus who predicted "...and the yellow race will rule the world"? Sleep well, America.



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