

# THE MIDWATCH

USSVI Perch Base Phoenix, Arizona Quarterly Newsletter Fourth Quarter 2024



*May peace and plenty be the first to lift the latch  
on your door, And happiness be guided to your  
home by the candle of Christmas*

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"To perpetuate the memory of our shipmates who gave their lives in the pursuit of their duties while serving their country. That their dedication, deeds and supreme sacrifice be a constant source of motivation toward greater accomplishments. Pledge loyalty and patriotism to the United States of America and its Constitution.

In addition to perpetuating the memory of departed shipmates, we shall provide a way for all Submariners to gather for the mutual benefit and enjoyment.

Our common heritage as Submariners shall be strengthened by camaraderie.

We support a strong U.S. Submarine Force.

The organization will engage in various projects and deeds that will bring about the perpetual remembrance of those shipmates who have given the supreme sacrifice.

The organization will also endeavor to educate all third parties it comes in contact with about the services our submarine brothers performed and how their sacrifices made possible the freedom and lifestyle we enjoy today."



# Perch Base Ward Room

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# *Base Commander* George Woods commander@perch-base.org

## **From the Wardroom:**

Three quarters of 2024 have gone by and we are grateful to have survived another record hot summer.

Congratulations to Chris Gahan, Perch Base Communications Officer and Newsletter Publisher who was recognized by National by receiving a Silver Anchor Award for his continuous work for Perch Base.

Congratulations to Alice Woods was recognized by National with a Silver Anchor Award for her Shopping Showcase at the 2023 USSVI National Convention in Tucson.

Before you know it, we will be approaching the holidays. We wish our Jewish members and friends a blessed Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. As we make plans for celebrating Thanksgiving and Christmas, let us not forget the many veterans that are alone for the holidays.

The Annual Phoenix Veterans Day Parade will be held on November 11<sup>th</sup>. And will start at Central Ave. and Bethany Home Rd. and we hope to have a good turnout of base members.

Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day will be observed on Saturday December 7<sup>th</sup>. At Wesley Bolin Plaza.

The annual membership drive is underway. See our membership chairman at our next base meeting!

Our Annual Awards Banquet will be on January 25<sup>th</sup>. 2025 at the Pebble Creek Country Club in Goodyear.

Tickets will be available at our December Base meeting from our Treasurer, Kevin Sheehan.

Perch Base will present the Sailor of the Year Award and conduct a Holland Club induction at the banquet, we look forward to seeing you and your family and friends there.

It is our desire to have a Silent Auction, so time to start gathering up any NEW items you may have submarine related or not. It is a perfect way of re-gifting those unwanted holiday gifts.

I wish you all the best or the remainder of 2024. It has been a year of many ups and downs.

George C Woods

God Bless America!

Pride Runs Deep



**From Snipes Castle**

The fall is upon us and unlike the rest of the country the temperature has started to abate a little. I saw that Window Rock had an overnight low of 34 degrees, so maybe there is hope for us here in the lower desert. The NFL has started the regular season, and MLB is slowly working its way to the world series. This also means, that Veterans Day is fast approaching with parades to honor veterans. I strongly urge you to come out and ride the people trailer along with our float of the USS Phoenix.

With the end of the year fast approaching, we also need to thinking about national elections, but the Perch Base Commander, George Woods, is term limited. So, if any of you are so inclined, get your name on the ballot and start campaigning.

“Remember the ALAMO—FREEDOM IS NOT FREE”!

‘PRIDE RUNS DEEP”



*Webmaster*

**Dan Marks**

**webmaster@perch-base.org**

**Webmaster’s September Midwatch input:**

I have been posting updates for all our events. If you have not been a participant at our events, I hope you are at least checking the website to see what you missed. Activity with the website since the last MidWatch included posting photos of the 2024 USSVI National Convention held in August in Cleveland, OH, the Troop 2019 Eagle Scout Court of Honor for four Eagle Scouts, the Eternal Patrol Celebration of Life for Bob Bissonnette, STCS(SS) (ret), and the installation ceremony for our new Treasurer, Kevin Sheehan, and Paul Miller, as our new Membership Chair. (Thanks to Joe Trotter and Chuck Luna for their service to the base.). Other events posted included the Prescott Frontier Days® Parade, the 2024 Drop Zone event in Mesa, AZ, and Eternal Patrol notices for Perch Base members Ed Brooks, LT(SS) (ret), and Ed Wolf.

Similar updates have been maintained on the Perch Base Facebook Page.

Since the last Midwatch, 16,606 page views on the Perch Base website during 7,828 visits by 5,476 users based on AWSTATS. Most of the traffic was to the home page followed by the Glossary and the Sailing Orders. Our Facebook page Post Engagement (The number of reactions, comments, shares and clicks on your posts) was 1437. Our Facebook page had 6 new Page Likes for a total of 197 and a 11 new Followers for a total of 240 Followers. All of these statistics are significantly higher, which appears to be influenced by the Prescott Frontier Days® Parade.

If you have any suggestions or input for the website, send an email to [webmaster@perch-base.org](mailto:webmaster@perch-base.org).

Dan Marks

## *Membership*

*Paul Miller*

*membership@perch-base.org*

Shipmates, first let us thank Chuck Luna for his past duty as our Membership Chair. Chuck has done an excellent job and given me a thorough turnover. While Chuck did his best preparing me, please be patient as I gain experience in the new role. Thanks for entrusting me as your next Membership Chairman.

It's that time of the year, our annual Membership Drive starts October 1st and lasts for 3 months, ending December 31st. Members who pay annually will receive a letter in the mail with a self-addressed return envelope to mail their check to me. And remember, annual members that pay their dues in October will be entered into the early bird raffle for next year's base dues.

Life Members will receive an email requesting they consider a donation to Perch Base and/or the Perch Foundation.

All please consider making a generous donation to the Base and/or the Foundation. A donation to the base will help support our duties and activities throughout the year and the scholarship fund.

Making your payment and donation as soon as possible would be greatly appreciated, and it would be one less thing to remember as we enter the busy holiday season. Be watchful for a letter in the mail or an email with more information. Thanks for your support!

Equal ups as downs,

Paul Miller

**Life is Simple** 

*...either you're qualified or you're not!*



# *Communications* Chris Gahan

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## Thank You For Your Service!

How often have you been thanked for your service. It happens to me fairly regularly as long as I am wearing apparel that identifies me as a veteran. I sometimes feel that a thank you is an obligatory response for customer service reps and restaurant wait staff. Nevertheless, it is appreciated and sometimes a discount is applied to the service rendered. That is a firm thank you in my book. As we migrate into the veteran season, you will probably see an uptick in these salutations and then they will taper off after Veterans Day as everyone starts focusing on the holidays. However, they will not dry up as the New Year begins. A simple thank you response is usually sufficient, but sometimes more is expected. Trying to decipher the intent and expectation of those greetings can be puzzling, at times.

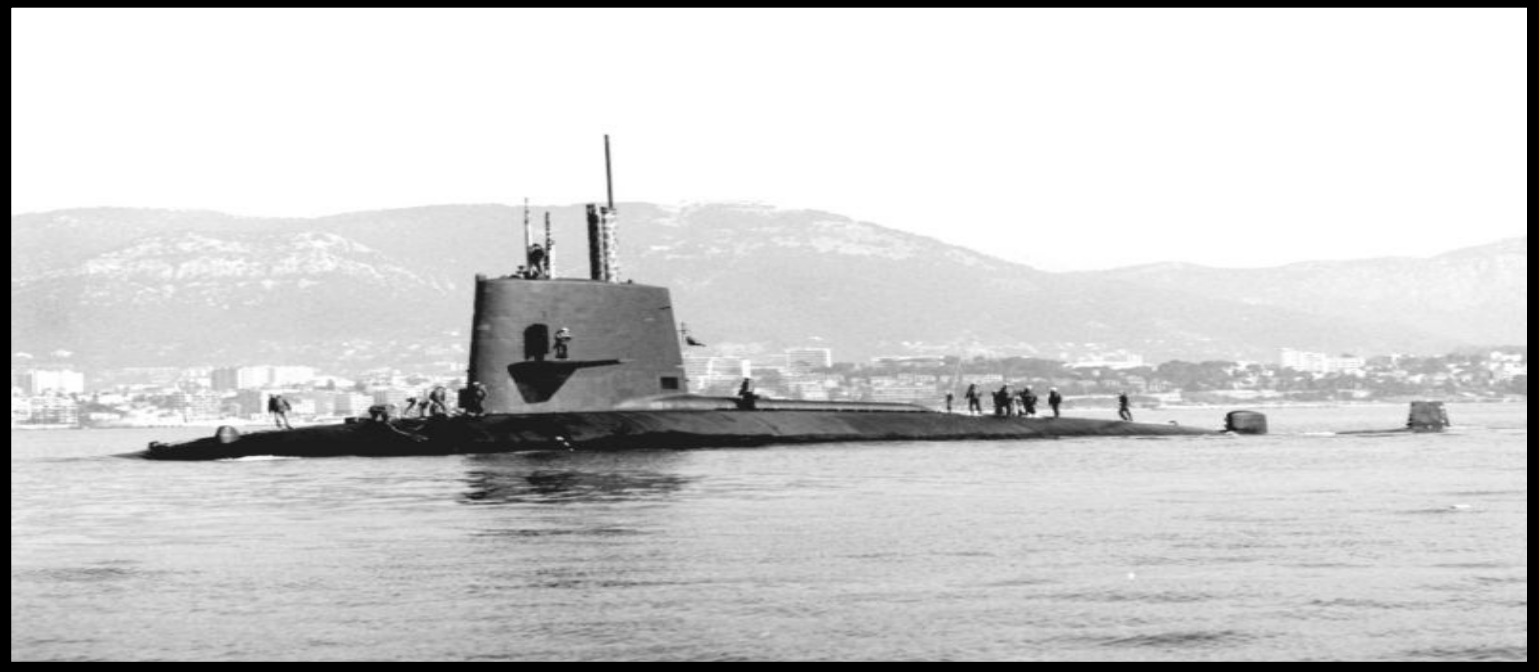
During my first 22 years in the service, I received little recognition for my service except from family and that was tepid at best. The Vietnam era had poisoned the general respect and appreciation for our military. Fortunately, that would change.

Our family was driving across the country after I had completed an assignment at Pearl Harbor Submarine Base in March of 1992. The last leg of our journey to the next duty station at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, required an overnight stop in Staunton, VA. After eight plus hours on the road, the family needed to decompress and recreate, especially my 9 year old daughter. I don't remember which motel we stayed at, but Georgianne made sure it had an indoor pool. Excellent choice to unwind a 9 year old. We checked in and then we were off to the pool and the jacuzzi to decompress. The first Iraqi campaign was just wrapping up and the country was in a more appreciative mood regarding the military.

We met another couple who were also traveling through Virginia and they also had a daughter about the same age as ours. The girls hit it off and we all let them romp and swim while we got to know one another in the jacuzzi. When they discovered, we were a military family, the unsolicited gratitude for my service started to flow like a flood. They were a bit puzzled over how submarines contributed to the Iraqi campaign, until I reminded them that many of the cruise missiles were launched at Bagdad were targeted from submarines. I really did not know, at first, how to handle all of this adulation but a simple Thank-You seemed to work best.

Since then, I became more adept at responding to unsolicited "Thank You for Your Service" when in public. It is especially gratifying when it comes from a young person who may not be tainted by past history. It is also an opportunity to tell our story and keep the submarine legacy front and center in the public eye. I don't doubt that Don Unser probably has some creative replies. If any of you have had similar experiences or an unusual response, please share them with the rest of us.

# UNDERSEA WARFARE NEWS



## The Sculpin's Lost Mission

The Sculpin's Lost Mission: A Nuclear Submarine in the Vietnam War  
By Admiral Charles R. Larson, U.S. Navy (Retired), with Captain Clinton Wright,  
U.S. Navy (Retired), and Paul Stillwell.

One would expect that Cold War “special ops” involving U.S. nuclear-powered submarines are shrouded in secrecy. Other American sub-activities during that era, however, are also hidden, one for a very strange reason.

In 1971, after he had spent two and a half years of duty in the White House as naval aide to President Richard Nixon, Commander Chuck Larson was ready to go back to sea. He was ordered to be executive officer of the attack submarine *Sculpin* (SSN-590), under Commander Harry Mathis. For several months, the boat went through workups off the coast of southern California to prepare for a deployment to the western Pacific. That deployment included active participation in the Vietnam War.

After leaving the West Coast in January 1972, our first assignment was a classified special operation that lasted about two months. It went very well. The mission helped us hone our ship-handling and intelligence-gathering skills and made us confident in our capabilities and feel good about the way the ship was operating. Although it is still classified after all these years, it's safe to say that it was intelligence-gathering targeted against the Soviet Union. Years later, Sherry Sontag and Christopher Drew's book, *Blind Man's Bluff* (New York: Public Affairs, 1998), described Cold War submarine operations. Because of security concerns, I can't specifically discuss the contents, but the book is a good read.

After the special operation, the *Sculpin* went into Yokosuka, Japan, for some liberty, and my wife, Sally, met me there. I had grown my beard while at sea and that, combined with my black hair and pale complexion after the extended period underwater, made me look—according to Sally—like Rasputin, the mad tsarist Russian.



# UNDERSEA WARFARE NEWS

In March, shortly after we began our second operation, patrolling the South China Sea, we were diverted for a specific mission. The U.S. government believed supply trawlers were operating out of Hainan Island, off the southern coast of the People's Republic of China. They were running arms, ammunition, and supplies from the northern part of the Gulf of Tonkin down to the Vietcong in the IV Corps region, the southernmost portion of Vietnam. U.S. forces discovered this when ground troops caught the enemy in the act of off-loading a trawler on a South Vietnamese beach. The incident sparked a big firefight, creating the legend that the trawler crews were elite forces willing to fight to the death. It also initiated a concerted effort to stop the traffic by convincing the enemy that it could not succeed.

Each of the trawlers could carry about 100 tons of munitions. Several suspect ships were photographed, so we knew generally what they looked like, but as long as they were in international waters, we had no means to interdict them other than to turn them around by making low passes with a P-3 Orion patrol plane or a close approach by a surface ship. This was complicated by the fact that so many legitimate trawlers like them were in the area. Several gunrunners had been turned around, but this would not stop the at-sea resupply effort. To convincingly discourage the effort, it would be necessary to destroy them in the waters off South Vietnam before they could land their cargo. The plan that evolved was to use a submarine to follow one from Hainan to South Vietnam and finger it for our forces to destroy. We were selected for this mission.

The ship we followed was probably 200 feet long, a large trawler, certainly suitable for open-ocean fishing. We did, of course, identify her by periscope before we started to trail, but we weren't able to follow her totally by periscope and maintain visual contact. We didn't want to take the chance of having our periscope seen in the flat, calm waters of the South China Sea. Also, she was making a speed of advance through the water of about 11 knots. That meant that if we were going to do our periscope operations every now and then, get out radio messages, and do our required housekeeping evolutions, we were probably going to have to run an average of about 18 or 20 knots submerged to keep up with her. We also had to include time for ocean analysis and tactical maneuvering to make certain we were staying with the correct target.

One more challenge was that the trawler was heading south, right through the "dangerous ground." On charts of the South China Sea, an area about 180 nautical miles wide and 300 miles long is simply labeled dangerous ground. Our charts had one track of soundings through that area—taken in 1885. We assessed that the terrain was fairly level, but the depth was 200 feet or less in most of this area. So we were in a position of running up to 20 knots in 200 feet of water, with between 30 to 80 feet under the keel at that high speed. Our ship could react very quickly to plane (control surface) movements, so we had only our most experienced officers of the deck, diving officers, and planes men on station. Our chief petty officer diving officers controlled the ship's depth by supervising the planes men. They did a superb job.

As the trawler headed south, she vectored a little to the east and went into an area in the dangerous ground where we couldn't go. Up to then, although we were in the dangerous area, we felt secure in knowing the bottom was fairly level. But now she went into an area that was littered with rocks, shoals, and shipwrecks. I wondered then if the trawler's crew was smart enough to do what we called a "sanitization move"—go where even surface ships wouldn't follow. She doubtlessly believed that if she went through there she would come out the other side well clear of any tailing vessel.

I was absolutely convinced that the trawler was unaware of our presence (that became clear later when we intercepted a radio message). We believed the ship's course change was simply a safety move. While we were able to use our fathometer to plot the bottom and know the depth under our keel, the device looks only directly down; it doesn't look ahead. We were genuinely worried about what we couldn't see ahead—an undersea mountain, a wreck, or something else.

When the trawler had entered the dangerous ground, we requested cover from an on-call P-3 Orion. Although we were under the operational control of the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) in Saigon, we had the ability to call the shots on the scene. We wanted the aircraft to remain covert, so it would not scare the trawler back into port by making low passes near her. During the ship's voyage through this very shallow, wreck-strewn portion of the dangerous ground, the plane, remaining at high altitude to minimize the chance of being seen, kept track of her by radar and visual observation. We dodged around the area by hauling off to the west, then south, and finally back to the east, to an area where we predicted the trawler would emerge, still in the dangerous ground. As the P-3 turned the contact over to us, the trawler appeared just about where we thought she would. We picked her up from the distinctive shaft rub and propeller sound and got in close enough to get a good positive periscope observation. We then went back in trail.

# UNDERSEA WARFARE NEWS

As we headed south in the South China Sea, we approached a new hazard. We found a large number of oil-drilling platforms near the coast of Borneo. We first became aware of this hazard through the prolonged tracking of a diesel contact, which prompted the CO, Commander Harry Mathis, to go up to periscope depth for a look. We spotted an uncharted platform. If the rigs were operating, that was no problem; we could plot the location of their noisy diesel engines. We found some charted, some not, some operating and others not. Our concern, of course, was about those uncharted and not running. We made frequent periscope observations to avoid the platforms, which forced us to run faster to maintain the quarry's speed of advance. We continued south at higher speeds for longer periods of time, sometimes with barely 20 to 30 feet of water beneath the *Sculpin*'s keel.

As our target passed between the Great Natuna Islands, we made an end run around North Natuna. After that, our quarry was on a beeline for the Gulf of Thailand, passing through the busy sea-lane between Hong Kong and Singapore. The density of the large shipping traffic in this lane was incredible. Crossing it was like running across a busy freeway. It was night time, and sonar was useless amid all the traffic noise, so we crossed at periscope depth following our quarry's stern light, maneuvering to avoid the large ships bearing down on us from both directions.

The Gulf of Thailand presented a new challenge. The water was hot, 86 degrees Fahrenheit, and shallow averaging 110 feet deep, and the bottom was flat. The surface was a dead calm mirror with fishing buoys and nets everywhere, not to mention small fishing boats of every description. It was also very hazy and so hot that the horizon was somewhat obscure. Such were the wartime circumstances that our operation order authorized us to operate in water as shallow as six fathoms. Who says nuclear-powered submarines can't operate in the littorals?

During this time we half-jokingly talked about "the hump." We were trying to visualize what the *Sculpin* looked like on the surface, running at 20 knots, with maybe only 40 feet from the top of the sail to the surface. We visualized a hump—the water displaced above the boat's hull—roaring through the South China Sea like a mini tidal wave, with observers wondering what it was. We assumed the ship left some sort of trail but were certain one would have to be very close to be able to see it.

An incident when I had command duty got my attention. I brought the *Sculpin* up to periscope depth and saw what I thought was a periscope going by. My first reaction was, "Holy smoke, there's another submarine up here." Then I realized it was a small water-saturated log that was floating vertically. Just for a moment I thought there were two submarines staring at each other and wondered which one was going to blink first.

As the trawler moved farther south, she made a distinct turn to the west and then to the northwest. We were absolutely sure she was a gunrunner, going into land and off-load her ammunition. Then, two things happened. We were ordered by MACV to photograph our target and alerted to prepare to execute a provision in our operation order for us to sink our target with torpedoes.

The photographic mission meant leaving our trail position and speeding up ahead of the target to take pictures as the trawler cruised by. The risk of detection was great because of the flat calm sea and our hump as we repositioned at high speed. To avoid this, we had to go as deep as possible. Commander Mathis selected 90 feet keel depth, leaving 20 feet between the keel and the bottom. We limited periscope exposure to 6 inches for less than ten seconds. We did get good pictures and apparently were not detected, although one photograph revealed three men on deck looking in our general direction. The depth control skill of our diving officer chiefs was extraordinary. Immediately after the trawler made the northwest turn, and just before we communicated with higher authorities, we lost contact for about two hours. Up to that point, our target had been somewhat predictable, cruising on a straight course to the northwest near the center of the Gulf of Thailand about 100 miles off the coast of South Vietnam, with the familiar shaft rub being tracked by sonar. It was night with a full moon, and we saw her lights through the periscope. The horizon was indistinguishable. Suddenly, sonar reported she had stopped, and while the CO watched, the trawler turned off her lights. Blind and deaf, we then lit off the radar and made several sweeps that revealed nothing. This was not too surprising. When a radar hasn't been used in months and is not tuned, taking it out and rotating it a couple of times doesn't guarantee a high probability of picking up a small target. We were not sure whether she had stopped for the night or was moving away in a new direction at slow speed.

# UNDERSEA WARFARE NEWS

We reported the lost contact, which threw the operational command authority in Saigon into a panic. They had been moving South Vietnamese naval forces along the coast to maintain a blocking position based on our updates, so the whole operation threatened to unravel. Commander Mathis and I huddled and decided: "Well, we've got to assume that she's making a run toward the border up there. Let's just go down and run as fast as we can and get about 30 miles ahead of her predicted track and set up a barrier."

So we moved up and waited for her farther up into the Gulf of Thailand. We made that sprint at 20 knots with 20 feet under the keel. At first daylight, we contacted our on station P-3 aircraft and described our quarry, particularly her white color. We requested the Orion's crew search the area from where we lost contact to the Vietnamese coast. They reported several widely separated contacts; only one of them was white. The CO authorized a low-altitude identification pass, and the P-3 made a positive ID. They reported to Saigon, and we closed the target. As we neared, we regained that familiar shaft rub and when we took another periscope look, it was her—positive identification, both sonar and visual.

Originally, MACV requested authorization for us to sink the target with our torpedoes, but this was not approved. For years, I assumed that the National Command Authority in Washington, D.C., disapproved the request. However, several years later, Harry Mathis, who by then was a captain, was commanding officer of the Submarine Base Pearl Harbor. He regularly played tennis with retired Admiral Bernard "Chick" Clarey, who had been commander-in-chief Pacific Fleet at the time of our operation. Admiral Clarey remembered the operation very well because he and Admiral John McCain, commander-in-chief Pacific, had followed our progress closely in daily briefings. Admiral Clarey told Mathis that he had argued vehemently in favor of having us shoot, but Admiral McCain was not convinced it would work. Instead, South Vietnamese naval forces were called in to do the job on 24 April.

The surface forces—led by a South Vietnamese destroyer escort—challenged the trawler, which hoisted a Chinese flag and an international flag signal designating they were fishing. The South Vietnamese commander was hesitant to take action because he was concerned about creating an international incident. Fortunately, we established communications with the U.S. liaison officer on board the destroyer with the UQC underwater telephone. His first question was whether we could verify this ship as our trawler. We told him, "Absolutely, this is the one without a doubt." We then went to periscope depth to observe.

The trawler tried to convince the South Vietnamese destroyer that she was an innocent fishing vessel. We spoke once again with the liaison officer and with higher authorities and said: "We are absolutely sure that this ship came out of Hainan flying a PRC [People's Republic of China] flag. We have tracked her 2,500 miles to this position, and in our opinion, she is a gunrunner making a run toward the border and certainly is not a fisherman. We can verify who she is, which should allow us to take whatever action is appropriate."

As we later learned from the intercepted communication, the trawler at one point said, "I think there is a submarine out there." This was the first indication that the trawler crew was aware of us as we coordinated with the destroyer. Based on our identification, the destroyer escort ordered the trawler to stop, and when she failed to comply, began making intimidating runs at her, finally opening fire from a standoff position with her 3-inch guns. The trawler was hit and began burning, running in a circle as if the rudder was jammed hard over. We watched through the periscope, and our crew gathered in their mess to watch on the TV monitor. Suddenly, with a thunderous roar, clearly audible through the *Sculpin*'s hull, the trawler exploded and disintegrated as its cargo detonated. Flames leaped hundreds of feet in the air, accompanied by the cheers of our crew.

At this moment, Commander Mathis asked the crew over the 1MC for a moment of silence. Enemy or not, they had perished doing their mission. Later, we were pleased to learn that 16 of the trawler crew had been rescued and they spoke Vietnamese, not Chinese. The captain and the navigator were among them and able to provide valuable intelligence about their operations. One of the few casualties was the political officer.

Our communication with command headquarters, through the loitering Orion during the urgent final search, was vital. Only later did we learn that, because of atmospheric conditions, the communications link with Saigon consisted of the P-3 aircraft on station relaying to another P-3 revving up its engines on the ground at its airbase while parked next to a phone booth. A flight crew member would run out to the phone and relay the messages between Saigon and us.

# UNDERSEA WARFARE NEWS

One other significant factor made the mission possible. It could only have been done by a nuclear-powered submarine. That experience gave me great admiration for the diesel-boat crews and skippers of World War II. We had more margin for error than they did because of their speed limitations owing to low battery capacity. If we made a mistake on the *Sculpin*, we could make it up through speed and repositioning, which couldn't be done with a diesel boat. Certainly our speed came in handy, not only in the basic trail, trying to stay up with a ship doing 11 knots and do all the things we had to do, but also during that period when we lost them. We were able to run quickly forward, reposition up the track, and get a chance to pick them up again. But that blackout period was a low point. We had trailed the ship 2,300 miles and thought we'd lost her.

The trawler's crew verified that their ship was a gunrunner. They had on board enough arms and ammunition to supply the Vietcong in IV Corps for at least 60 days. Her destruction thus made a significant contribution to the safety of U.S. and South Vietnamese troops in the area and set back the enemy's military operations there.

The surviving crew was North Vietnamese. They were split up, with U.S. and South Vietnamese intelligence each interrogating half and their stories compared. It was determined that the navigator's responses were credible because he provided interrogators with exactly the same track we plotted.

The United States learned much about the North Vietnamese at-sea resupply strategy. It also learned that the trawler crews were not elite forces that would resist until death. One engineer told of being at his station when the political officer came to the engine room hatch, told him the enemy had arrived and ordered him to stay at his post. The engineer, no doubt considering the nature of the cargo, said, "I immediately went on deck and jumped into the water."

It was an unusual operation. We spent more time submerged inside the 100-fathom curve than any U.S. submarine since World War II. Crew training, equipment reliability, ship control, navigation, sonar, communications, propulsion plant—everything and everyone performed superbly. We could not have asked for anything more. For that operation, the *Sculpin* earned the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, the only U.S. submarine during the entire Vietnam War to receive that award.

The *Sculpin* was also nominated for the submarine combat patrol pin, and our individual awards for the combat "V." If that had been approved, she would have been the first submarine since World War II to get the combat patrol pin. Instead, the nomination was disapproved somewhere up the chain of command. I assume it was probably rejected by a World War II submariner who thought the operation wasn't nearly as hazardous as what he did during his war, and it didn't measure up. I can't argue with that, but the crew had great hope that they could proudly wear the pin for their contribution, particularly to the safety of our troops. Another consideration, however, might have been that those pins would have raised questions and possibly compromised an operation that was still classified.

We covered a huge distance in trail during that operation. Someone asked me later how I slept at night. I said, "With a pillow under my head, up against the bulkhead in case we hit something."

Admiral Larson went on to serve on active duty for 40 years. His senior position was as commander-in-chief of all United States military forces in the Pacific. Captain Wright served 26 years on active duty. He was commanding officer of USS *Puffer* (SSN-652) and operations officer for Commander Submarine Group Seven. Mr. Stillwell, the former editor of *Naval History* and the U.S. Naval Institute Oral History Program, has written the "[Looking Back](#)" column since 1993.

**Editors Note:** I reported to the *Sculpin* after graduating from Prototype in December of 1972. Commander Mathis and Commander Larson were still in command. There was much scuttlebutt circulating among the crew regarding this mission which turned out to be mostly inaccurate information or just sea stories. They were obviously told to be mute on this subject. Nevertheless, it was not difficult to ignore the Vietnam Campaign ribbons they were all wearing. I would not get the real story until Captain Mathis shared it with those who attended a boat reunion in Reno in 1998. I was trained by these shipmates, their standards were high, and came to realize much later the benefit of the quality of that training.

# UNDERSEA WARFARE NEWS



The Yasen-class 'Krasnoyarsk' (K-571) sailed in to Rybachiy naval base in Kamchatka Krai .

## Two nuclear subs transferred under Arctic ice cap

As part of exercise Ocean-2024, one multi-purpose submarine and one ballistic missile submarine sailed under the Arctic ice-cap from the Barents Sea to the Pacific Ocean.

By Thomas Nielson; September 17, 2024

The subs are the newest in the Russian navy. Both were [commissioned in December last year](#) from the Sevmash yard in Severodvinsk and have since sailed the White and Barents Seas.

Sailing from the Barents Sea under the Arctic ice cap to Kamchatka Peninsula is a distance of 4,000 nautical miles. Both the Northern Fleet and the Pacific Fleet have over the last two weeks participated in Russia's largest strategic naval exercise since Soviet days. The Ocean-2024 allegedly involved about 400 warships, submarines and support vessels.

It is the Defense Ministry's own [TV channel Zvezda](#) that first told about the inter-fleet submerged transfer across the top of the world.

# UNDERSEA WARFARE NEWS

The *Krasnoyarsk* is the second Yasen-M class multi-purpose submarine to sail for the Pacific Fleet. The first to sail east was *Novosibirsk* in 2021. Two others, the *Severodvinsk* and *Kazan* belongs to the Northern Fleet and are based on the Kola Peninsula. Five more are on different stages of construction at Sevmash and another three are expected to start construction in the next few years. Russia's program to renew its nuclear-powered submarine fleet goes ahead with full speed and is not delayed due to the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Together with *Krasnoyarsk* on the inter-fleet transfer was the *Imperator Aleksandr III*, becoming the fifth Borei-class ballistic missile submarine in the Pacific Fleet. The reason why the Pacific Fleet has got a majority of the first post-Soviet generation strategic class of submarines are that the older Delta-III class urgently needed replacement. The Northern Fleet still operates the Delta-IV, a set of submarines that have been upgraded for longer life-time in recent years.

There is now only one Borei-class submarine with the Northern Fleet, the *Yury Dolgorukiy*.

Two of the Delta-IV class subs are currently at the Zvezdochka yard in Severodvinsk undergoing upgrade and change of nuclear fuel elements in the reactors. The two in Severodvinsk are *Karelia* and *Bryansk*, while the three still active up north are the *Verkhoturye*, *Novomoskovsk* and *Tula*.



Submitted by Donald Unser: *When asked what I did to make life worthwhile in my lifetime....I can respond with a great deal of pride and satisfaction, "I served in the United States Navy Submarine Force, "The Silent Service"!*

# Previous Quarter Highlights



## PRESCOTT FRONTIER DAYS® PARADE

Perch Base took the USS Phoenix float up to Prescott, Arizona on July 6th, 2024, for the Prescott Frontier Days® Parade. The parade had many entries and a very large crowd to watch the parade. We were in the parade with Gudgeon Base. Tucson Base also was there with their USS Tucson (SSN-770) submarine float. Members and family rode or walked in the parade from the 3 bases! The 2024 Parade theme was "PRESCOTT Traditions".

Congratulations to the entire group. Arizona Submarine Veterans - Gudgeon Base and Perch Base won as the 3rd place parade entry! After the parade, we had a BBQ lunch at Tom Warner's home in Prescott Valley.

l-r) Timothy Parkin (David Heighway's grandson,) Carl Miner, Chris Gahan, David Heighway, George Woods, CC Clarke, Joe Trotter & Paul Miller.

## BASE OFFICER INSTALLATION

Perch Base member Kevin Sheehan was installed as Perch Base Treasurer and Paul Miller was installed as Perch Base Membership Chair on July 13, 2024. Congratulations to Kevin and Paul and thanks to Joe Trotter for his service as the past Treasurer and Chuck Luna for his service as the past Membership Chair.



# Previous Quarter Highlights (cont.)



## EAGLE SCOUT COURT OF HONOR

Four Perch Base members: Bob Gilmore, Dan Marks, Glenn Posniack and Joe Trotter went to the Troop 2019 Eagle Scout Court of Honor on July 27, 2024 at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on Recker Rd in Mesa, AZ. Bob Gilmore, Dan Marks and Joe Trotter were all Eagle Scouts as youngsters. As part of the Court of Honor, Joe Trotter presented certificates of achievement to each of the four Eagle Scouts: Reid Spencer Nyman, Jayden Cash Boone, Blake Allen Yelverton, and Clark Isaac Heiselt. Joe Trotter's presentation included parallels between paths to become and Eagle Scout and to become qualified in submarines. Examples included the long period of study, work, and devotion required, and how the brotherhood of the "Dolphin" and the brotherhood of "Eagles" will last a lifetime for almost all of us - We are submariners for the rest of our life and we are Eagle Scouts for the rest of our life.

***Congratulations to these young gentlemen!***



Perch Base Storekeeper, John Beckett, loading a round in the deck gun aboard the USS Cod (SS-224) Submarine Memorial. Note the onlookers covering their ears!



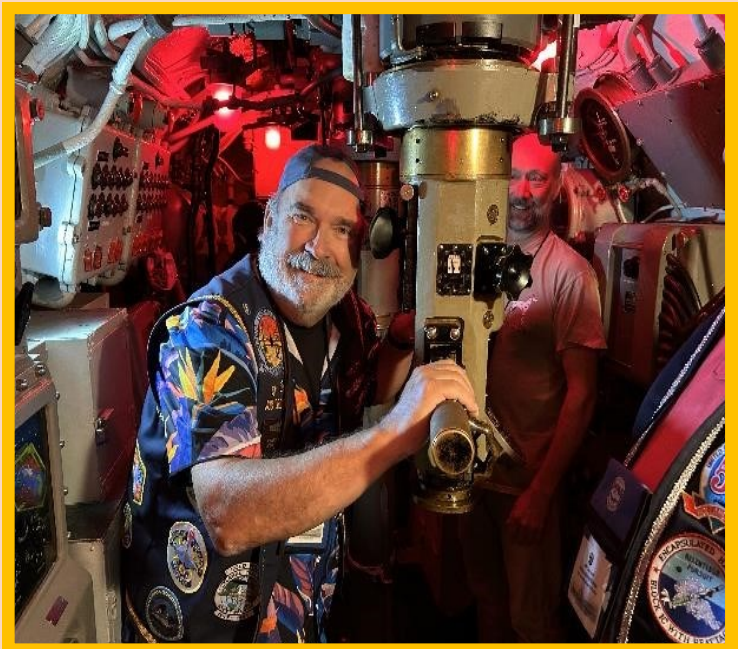
(l-r) Perch Base members Joe Trotter, John Beckett & his son, John Jr.



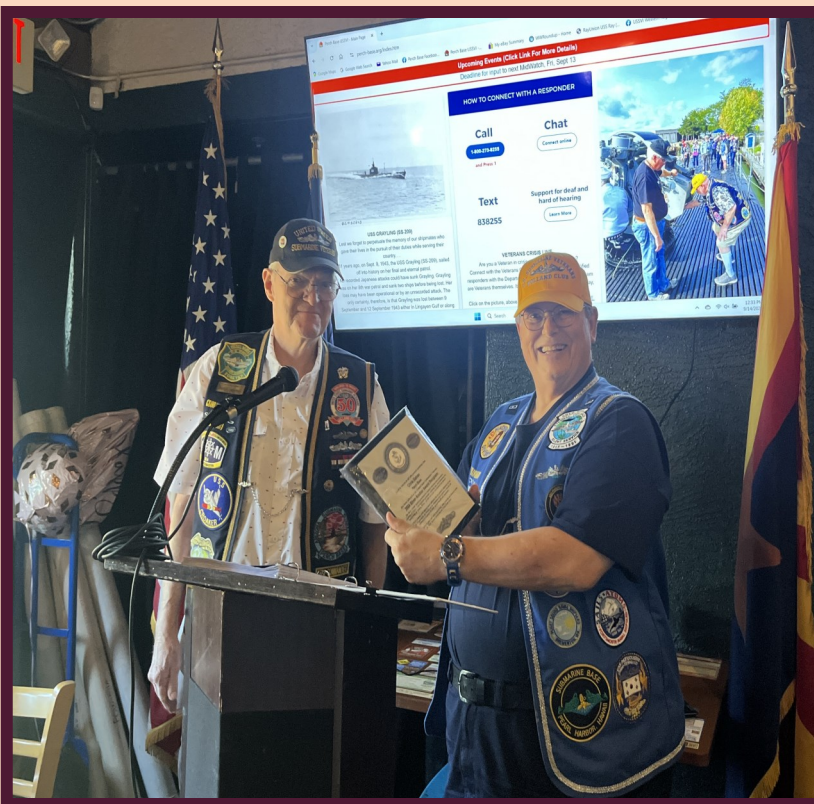
## Previous Quarter Highlights (cont.)



Saturday Annual Awards Banquet. Marcia & Don Unser.



Joe Trotter at the periscope on the USS Cod (SS-224)



### C H R I S     G A H A N S I L V E R     A N C H O R     A W A R D

Congratulations to Perch Base Submarine Veterans (USSVI) Life and Holland Club member and Communications Officer Chris Gahan for receiving a USSVI National 2024 Silver Anchor Award. The awards were announced at the USSVI National Convention held in Cleveland, OH.

The Silver Anchor Award is presented to a Regular or Associate Member in recognition of his/her efforts to support one of the primary objectives of our Creed...to provide a way for all submariners to gather for their mutual benefit and enjoyment.

This Award recognizes the Shipmate's volunteer support for meetings, projects, and events, including work to recruit new Members and to retain the current membership of the Base, and is intended to recognize recent accomplishments.

In addition to Chris' contributions as our Communications Officer, he is also our repre-



# In the Spotlight

*NOW.....HEAR.....THIS!!!*

**Admiral:**

Leaps tall buildings with a single bound.  
Is more powerful than a locomotive.  
Is faster than a speeding bullet.  
Walks on water.  
Gives policy to God.

**Captain:**

Leaps short buildings with a single bound.  
Is more powerful than a switch engine.  
Is just as fast as a speeding bullet.  
Walks on water if the sea state is less than 11  
Talks to God.

**Commander:**

Leaps short buildings with a running start  
and favorable winds.  
Is almost as powerful as a switch engine.  
Is faster than a speeding BB.  
Walks on water in an indoor swimming pool.  
Talks to God if a special request chit is  
approved.

**Lieutenant Commander:**

Can barely clear a Quonset Hut.  
Loses tug-of-war with a switch engine  
Can fire a speeding bullet.  
Swims well.  
Is occasionally addressed by God.

**Lieutenant:**

Makes high marks when trying to leap  
buildings.  
Is runover by locomotives.  
Can sometimes handle a gun without  
inflicting self-injury.  
Dog paddles.  
Talks to animals.

**Lieutenant Junior Grade:**

Runs into buildings.  
Recognizes locomotives two times out of  
three.  
Is not issued live ammunition.  
Can stay afloat if properly instructed in the  
use of a Mae West.  
Talks to walls.

**Ensign:**

Falls over doorsteps when trying to enter  
buildings.  
Says, "Look at the Choo-Choo".  
Wets himself with a water pistol.  
Plays in mud puddles.  
Mumbles to himself.

**Chief Petty Officer:**

*Lifts buildings and walks under them.  
Kicks locomotives off their tracks.  
Catches speeding bullets in his teeth and chews  
them up.  
Freezes water with a single glance.*

# In the Spotlight



## **ED WOLF ETERNAL PATROL**

Perch Base Life and Holland Club Member Edward J. Wolf, END2(SS), passed away onto Eternal Patrol, Monday, May 4, 2024. Our condolences to his wife Miriam, family and friends.

Ed joined the Navy in 1953 and left in 1957. He served and qualified on submarines on the USS Ray (SSR-271) as an Engineman (Diesel) Petty Officer 2nd Class, END2(SS) in 1955.

**SAILOR, REST YOUR OAR! YOUR WATCH HAS ENDED.  
Your Brothers of the 'Phin Have the Watch.  
Fair Winds and Following Seas, Shipmate.**



# In the Spotlight



## ED BROOKS ETERNAL PATROL

Perch Base Life and Holland Club Member Ed Brooks, LT(SS) (ret), passed away onto Eternal Patrol, Monday, May 20, 2024. Our condolences to his wife Lee Ann, family and friends

Ed joined the Navy in 1959 and left in 1978. He served and qualified on submarines on the USS Sea Leopard (SS-483) as an Interior Communications Technician ICFN(SS) in the Deck Division in 1959. He then went on to Naval Nuclear Power School, and subsequently became a Nuclear Power Plant Operator on board the USS Halibut (SSGN-587) in the Electrical Division from 1961 through 1964. Ed was commissioned as a Warrant Officer (WO1) in the Electrical Division while assigned to the USS Guardfish (SSN-612) from 1966 to 1967 as a plank owner and member of the pre-commissioning crew. His next assignment was at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, ME, as a Nuclear Ship Superintendent from 1967 to 1968, and was promoted to Ensign when assigned to the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, as a Nuclear Engineer in the Naval Reactors Representative's Office from 1968 to 1971. He became a LTjg while assigned to the Pearl Harbor Submarine Base as the Base Radiological Control Officer. He was again promoted to LT while assigned to the Submarine Tender USS Hunley (AS-31) where he served as the Nuclear Repair Officer, QA Officer and Engineer Officer from 1973 to 1977. Ed retired from the Navy in 1978 after serving at Naval Station Charleston, SC, as the Team Leader of the Human Resource Management Detachment.

**AILOR, REST YOUR OAR! YOUR WATCH HAS ENDED.**  
**Your Brothers of the 'Phin Have the Watch.**  
**Fair Winds and Following Seas, Shipmate.**



Ed joined Perch Base in March 1998 and served as our Base Secretary from 2001 to 2006. He participated as a Charter Member of the Gudgeon Base in Prescott Valley, AZ in 2004. At that time, he continued his membership with Perch Base, but became the Base Secretary of Gudgeon Base from 2004 to 2009, also served as the Gudgeon Base Treasurer in 2006, and became the Base Commander of Gudgeon Base in 2008. Ed continued to regularly attend Perch Base meetings as a dual member.

Ed Brooks was well known within USSVI as a master carver. He routinely carved dolphins for raffles and auctions to raise money for the Bases and the USSVI Charitable Fund, which he also was a supporter. He was granted USSVI National Commander's Award, also know as the Robert Link Award at the 2005 USSVI National Convention for his Charitable Fund actions. Ed was interred at the Prescott National Cemetery, VA Medical Center

# Upcoming Events

Remember to check the [Perch Base website](#) and watch for **Flash Traffic** emails for the most up-to-date information.

## Monthly General Meetings:

Saturday's, October 12th, November 9th & December 14th.

At Dillion's KC BBQ restaurant

[20585 North 59th Avenue, Glendale, Arizona.](#)

(Left click above address for a Google map.)

The official meeting starts at Noon but come join us at 1100 for lunch!

50/50 Raffle drawing (Must be present to win).

## Sierra Verde STEAM Academy Event: Friday, November 8th, 0700 – 1100

**(tentative):**

Location at 7241 West Rose Garden Ln., Glendale, AZ, 85308

0800: Veterans Breakfast.

0900: Veteran's Day Assembly.

09-1100: Sub Float Static Display Viewing Period.

1100: Depart School.

## Phoenix Veterans Day Parade: Monday, November 11th:

As in previous years, we plan on staging the Sub and People Trailer Float in the rear of the Firestone Tire Store, 241 W. Osborn Rd., Phoenix, AZ, 85013, at the SE corner of Osborne and 3rd Avenue at 8:00 am. We will load up and ride to North Phoenix Baptist Church where the parade starts. We expect to be lined up between 9:30 & 10:00 am and the parade will role at 11:00 am. Don't forget to bring your folding chair for the People Trailer.

## Pearl Harbor Day Remembrance Ceremony: Saturday, December 7th: **(tentative)**

Details from the organizers for this event have not been published. Be on the lookout for Flash Traffic with an update and details.

## Perch Base Annual Awards Banquet: Saturday, January,25, 2024:

Where: Pebble Creek Tuscany Country Club in the Chianti Room.

Price: \$65 per person and tickets will be on sale at the November meeting.

## Deadline for the Midwatch Newsletter first quarter 2025 edition

Friday, Friday 21 February, 2025

All input must be into Chris Gahan, Perch Base Newsletter Editor, to be included in the next Midwatch Newsletter to be published on Wednesday, March 9th, 2024.

**Please watch for updates on the [Perch Base website](#) and **Flash Traffic** emails as events may be updated, added or**

# Fourth Quarter Birthdays

## October

1 Michael Haler  
4 Richard Prill  
6 Robie Robinson  
7 Jessie Taylor  
8 Jim Andrews  
10 John Cash  
17 Kevin Sheehan  
17 Mark McCreary  
18 John Crane  
22 William Anderson  
23 Billy Deshong  
26 Jim Paper  
27 Bill Larime  
31 Roy Miller  
31 Martin Zipser

## November

1 Chris Franquero  
9 Romie Ortiz  
11 Larry Rankin  
14 William Tippet  
15 Larry Ruggles  
15 Joan Miner  
16 William Montjar  
21 Samuel Meham  
22 Keith Post  
30 Johnny Corbin  
30 Bob Gilmore, Jr.

## December

4 Paul Miller  
5 Ronald Beyer  
9 Wayne Hembree  
12 Pete Sattig  
15 Robert Gregg  
16 Donald Unser  
16 Laura Luna  
16 Wayne Clark  
20 Chuck Emmett  
24 Carol Culbertson  
25 George Williams  
28 DeWayne Lober  
29 James Mills  
29 Dale Holland  
31 Raymond Perron



# Binnacle List

Keep these shipmates in your prayers

**Howard Doyle Jr., Wayne Hembree, DeWayne Lober,  
Jim & Mary Denzien, Chuck Emmett, Davy Jones,  
Chuck Luna, Curtis Morgan and Richard Simmons**

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## GOOD OF THE ORDER

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### Base Ride Share

**In need of a ride to a base meeting or event? Like to help a shipmate  
in need of a lift? Please contact: Dan Marks at**

**[webmaster@perch-base.org](mailto:webmaster@perch-base.org)**

*Christmas is coming and the goose is getting fat. Who will put a penny in the Old Man's hat. If don't have a penny and half-penny will do. But if you don't have a half-penny God Bless You!! Wishing all of you and yours a Happy Christmas and Blessed New Year!!*

# Tolling of the Boats



## Tolling of the Boats for October

|    |                      |      |                              |
|----|----------------------|------|------------------------------|
| 3  | USS Seawolf (SS-197) | 1944 | 100 men lost                 |
| 7  | USS S-44 (SS-155)    | 1943 | 56 men lost                  |
| 11 | USS Wahoo (SS-238)   | 1943 | 80 men lost                  |
| 12 | USS Dorado (SS-248)  | 1943 | 77 men lost                  |
| 17 | USS Escolar (SS-294) | 1944 | 82 men lost                  |
| 24 | USS Shark (SS-314)   | 1944 | 87 men lost                  |
| 24 | USS Darter (SS-227)  | 1944 | no loss of life              |
| 25 | USS Tang (SS-306)    | 1944 | 78 men lost; 9 POWs survived |
| 29 | USS O-5 (SS-66)      | 1923 | 3 men lost                   |

## Tolling of the boats for November

|    |                       |      |                                    |
|----|-----------------------|------|------------------------------------|
| 7  | USS Albacore (SS-218) | 1944 | 85 men lost                        |
| 8  | USS Growler (SS-215)  | 1944 | 86 men lost                        |
| 16 | USS Scamp (SS-277)    | 1944 | 83 men lost                        |
| 16 | USS Corvina (SS-226)  | 1943 | 82 men lost                        |
| 19 | USS Sculpin (SS-191)  | 1943 | 12 men lost, 51 POWs ; 21 survived |

## Tolling of the Boats for December

|    |                      |      |             |
|----|----------------------|------|-------------|
| 2  | USS Capelin (SS-289) | 1943 | 78 men lost |
| 10 | USS Sealion (SS-195) | 1941 | 5 men lost  |
| 17 | USS F-1 (SS-20)      | 1917 | 19 men lost |
| 17 | USS S-4 (SS-109)     | 1927 | 40 men lost |



# 2024 Perch Base Operations

These are the Base members and Friends who donate monies or efforts (1 October 2023 thru 30 September 2024) to allow for Base operations while keeping our dues low and avoid raising money through member labor as most other organizations do.

|                 |                 |                   |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| James Andrews   | John Beckett    | John Carpentier   |
| Howard Doyle    | Howard Enloe    | Thomas Farley III |
| David Fyock     | Chris Gahan     | James Glass       |
| Howard Goldman  | David Heighway  | Governor Joy      |
| Douglas La Rock | DeWayne Lober   | Chuck Luna        |
| Laura Luna      | Dan Marks       | Paul Miller       |
| Carl Miner      | Curt Morgan     | Cynthia Morgan    |
| Noisy Can       | James Paper     | Michael Haler     |
| Don Robertson   | Donald Schafer  | Richard Simmons   |
| Joseph Trotter  | Don Unser       | Marcia Unser      |
| Vic Van Horn    | Janice Van Horn | Michael Weeks     |
| Joshua Whitmore | George Williams | George Woods      |
| John Zaichkin   | Chuck Emmett    | Georgianne Gahan  |
| Linda Hayball   | Stan Reinhold   | Steven Stanger    |
| Alice Woods     |                 |                   |
|                 |                 |                   |
|                 |                 |                   |

# CLASSIFIEDS

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Reach your fellow Base Members directly.\*

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Ad size limit: 300 characters, including spaces. Pictures may be included, and are encouraged. Please provide the picture as a separate file in one of the following formats: jpg or png. If you are not sure which one to use or the file is over 600kb, email the editor at [newsletter@perch-base.org](mailto:newsletter@perch-base.org) for assistance and to discuss options.

If your ad can not be formatted in Word, it will not run.

Send your ad to:

\*Perch Base, the Board Members, and the MidWatch editor or not responsible for the collection, exchange or storage of items advertised here or any fees exchanged for goods.

\*\*Exceptions: alcohol, drugs, anything illegal, commercial items or anything deemed by the Base Board and/or MidWatch editor to be inappropriate. Decisions of the Board and editor are final.



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**MAKE IT HAPPEN!**



# USS Arizona Legacy Foundation

The USS Arizona Legacy Foundation is dedicated to supporting the commissioning of the fourth U.S. Navy vessel to bear the name Arizona. Our vision is to honor the memory of the USS Arizona BB-39 while shaping the future legacy of the USS Arizona (SSN-803) Virginia-class fast attack submarine.

## OUR MISSION

### Celebrate

We are thrilled to celebrate the addition of the USS Arizona submarine to our Naval Fleet. Join us for a series of grand festivities and community events as we honor this monumental occasion.

### Educate

We strive to educate future generations about the history and significance of the Pearl Harbor, USS Arizona battleship, and the brave men who served aboard her. Through our educational programs and resources, we keep their legacy alive.

### Support

We are committed to supporting the crew of the USS Arizona submarine and fostering a lasting bond between them and the citizens of Arizona. Our initiatives ensure ongoing support throughout the life of the boat.

**Donate  
Today !**

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[Ussazlegacy.org](http://Ussazlegacy.org)

602-616-7664

