



The "MidWatch"



January 2010
Volume 16 - Issue 1

The monthly newsletter of
Perch Base - USSVI
Phoenix, Arizona

<http://perch-base.org>

What's "Below Decks" in the
MidWatch

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Lest We Forget Those Still On Patrol

JANUARY ETERNAL PATROLS

USS ARGONAUT (SS-166)	10 Jan 1943	105 Lost
Japanese Surface Attack in Java Sea		
USS SCORPION (SS-278)	05 Jan 1944	76 Lost
Possible Japanese Mine in Yellow Sea off China		
USS SWORDFISH I (SS-193)	12 Jan 1945	89 Lost
Possible Japanese Surface Attack or Mine off Okinawa		
USS S26 (SS-131)	24 Jan 1942	46 Lost
Collision in Gulf of Panama		

NEXT MEETING

12 noon, Saturday, Jan. 9, 2010

American Legion Post #105

3534 W. Calavar Rd., Phoenix, AZ 85053

2010 Booster and Float Support Members

Perch Base, USSVI, cannot support its on-going operations and provide funds for the Base's float activities on dues alone. While the Base tries to develop activities to raise additional funds, we salute the members, listed below, who have supported the base with additional contributions. **Shipmates, we salute you!**

These are the 2010 Contributors. Have you given you support?

Allston, Jerry N.
Asbell, F. J. "Ted" (in memory of)
Bartlett, Gary
Bernier, Richard
Beyer, Ronald B.
Braastad, Wayne A.
Brooks, Edgar T.
Butler, Bradley L.
Carpenter, David
Cooper, James J.
Cousin, Roger J.
Denzien, James R.
DeShong, Billy.
Doyle Jr., Warner H.
Ellis, Harry
Evans, James
Fooshee, Thomas E.
Graves, John A.
Heller, Harry
Herold, Glenn A.
Hillman, Lester R
Hough, Steve.
Hunt, Theodore
Keating, L. A. (Mike)
Kimball, Jack S.
La Rock, Douglas M.
Lambert, Darrell
Lancendorfer, Robert A
Lents, Robert W.
Lober, DeWayne

Loftin, Burtis W.
Marions, George
Martin, Terry
May, Robert E
McComb, Dennis
Miller, Allen H.
Miller, Roger M.
Moore, Tim
Nelson, Jim A
Newman, James F
Pettit, Royce E
Reel, Daniel J
Reinhold, Stanley N.
Robinson, Bruce "Robie"
Rycus, Mel
Sattig, Pete
Schoonejans, Emil
Shumann, Garry L.
Simmons, Rick
Smith, Wayne Kirk
Stuke, Adrian M
Wall, James L
Warner, Robert
Watson, Forrest J.
Whitehead, Donald J
Wolf, Edward J.
Zaichkin, John G.
Zomok, Ronald J.

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Sailing Orders



The **ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET** will be held Jan. 16, 2010. This is our big yearly occasion to recognize our own and have a great feast courtesy of Perch Base's resident chef, Stan Reinhold. See page 11 for full details.

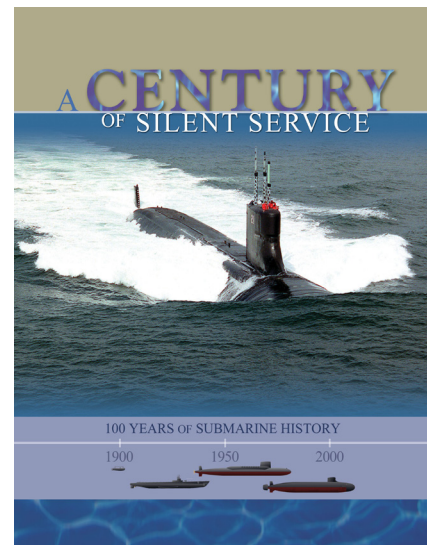
Base annual elections are held in March. The four (4) elected Base officers are Commander, vice-Commander, Secretary and Treasurer.

The only announced candidates are Howard Doyle for vice-Commander and Wayne Pettes for Treasurer.

This **YOUR** Base Only you can elected someone you want. Just think! What if **HE** got in!

NEXT MONTH'S MIDWATCH

Watch for the final chapter in "Submarines in History" series in the Mid-Watch. Follow the boats from the start of WWII into the nuclear age.



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There is only one catch. You have to use Tim (That's a catch? More like a pleasure!) to arrange the service.

We all have to have that work done a one time or the other, so think what the Base can earn!

Remember! Contact Tim at:

Tim Moore

secretary@perch-base.org

seawolfssn@q.net

(602) 574-3286

From the Wardroom Base Commander's Message

Shipmates:

By the time you read this, 2009 will have come to an end and we can look back and say that we have accomplished a lot: a new website, many new members, a productive year with our float, new goals with the "SAVE OUR SAIL" project to name just a few. I am looking forward to an equally productive new year.

Our next meeting will be January 9th with our annual Awards Dinner the following week, January 16th. Get your reservations in to Walt Blomgren as soon as possible and join us.

I hope all of you have had a great holiday and will be ready to help us make Perch Base even better in the coming year.

Fraternally,

Jim Denzien, Base Commander

December Meeting Minutes

The regular monthly meeting of the Arizona Submarine Veterans Perch Base was convened at the American Legion Post #105, Phoenix, AZ at 1205, 12 December 2009. The meeting was called to order by Jim Denzien, Base Commander.

The "Call to Order" was led in a prayer of invocation by Walt Blomgren followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and the standard ceremonial opening. The tolling ceremony was conducted for all boats lost in December and a moment of silence was observed for our shipmates on eternal patrol.

According to the sailing list, 32 members and guests were present. Guests included Pete Sattig who is a member of Internet Base and will be joining us here at Perch Base. Also in attendance was Herb Herman who is with Blueback Base in Portland and finally John Young who was invited by Tim and joined Perch Base today.

A motion was made and seconded that the minutes from the November 2009 regular meeting be approved as published in the MidWatch monthly newsletter. The motion was carried by unanimous voice vote.

Jim announced that Wayne Pettes will be taking over as Acting Treasurer the first of January and he will be a candidate for this office in the March election. As Acting Treasurer, Jim Denzien reported on the base's financial status as of 01 December 2009. A motion was made and seconded to accept the Treasurer's Report as read. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Base Commander's Board of Directors Meeting Report

Jim reported that the next All Arizona Base Picnic will be sponsored by Perch Base and will take place on 10 April 2010 in lieu of our meeting. It will be held at the White Tanks Regional Park. Additional information for that event will be forthcoming as we get closer to the event date.

Our next event will be the Annual Awards Dinner to be held in January and Walt is accepting money for reservations. The dinner will be here at Post #105 and will be catered by Stan Reinhold.

The membership was reminded that we have a nominating committee and base elections will be coming up in March. There are four elected positions; Commander which is a two year position and comes up again in 2011. The other three positions are the Vice-Commander, Secretary and Treasurer and we are looking for potential candidates for these three elected positions. Any members who might be interested in serving are encouraged to step forward and throw their names in the hat.

Chuck and Rick still working on the Policies and Procedures Manual and hope to have a working draft completed for review by just after the first of year. We want to have a final version in place shortly thereafter and we would like input from the membership for consideration for the final working document. Much of the information including job

descriptions is currently available for review on our website.

We are re-working our Memorial Day wreaths and the ladies will be taking care of that responsibility.

We are planning on having our next guest speakers on board for the February and May meetings. Potential possibilities including Jay Wisner who runs the NJROTC program for Glendale High School. Jay is a retired Navy Chief who is qualified in submarines. The other possibility is Bob "BJ" Johnson who was one of our Marines who participated in the "Chosin Few" experience during the Korean Conflict. His veteran's organization has a historic photo display that they present to groups around the valley. Because of full meeting agendas for January, March and April, we are not planning on guest speakers for those meetings. In June we will be celebrating the 15th anniversary of Perch Base.

Members were reminded that their annual base and national dues are due and payable no later than 31 December 2009. Anyone who is not paid up will be dropped from the membership rolls.

Reports of Officers and Committee Chairmen

Vice-Commander – Howard Doyle had nothing to report.

Secretary – Tim Moore had nothing to report.

Treasurer – TBA

Chaplain – Walt Blomgren reported that regretfully we lost our friend and associate member Frank Bono to cancer. Frank was instrumental in helping us with the construction of our float. Walt asked Joe Varese to give us an update. Joe reported that Frank passed at 0630 on 11 December 2009. He had been home for about 10 days with hospice care. Joe spent about 12 hours a day with Frank in his final days. The family is doing as well as can be expected under the circumstances. There will be a family memorial in the near future and Joe will give us the particulars about that when he gets the information.

Chief of the Boat – TBA

MidWatch Editor/Interim Webmaster – Chuck Emmett reported that the web page is essentially complete. Everything is there except for Ship's Stores which he and De Wayne will continue to work. Chuck would like your feedback and/or comments related to the content and format. With respect to the newsletter, Chuck reported that Booster Club recognition for monies being paid in now will be effective with the January 2010 issue. Names that currently appear are for donations for the 2009 Booster's Club. Kudos to Chuck for an excellent job on both the newsletter and web page both of which will be submitted for 2010 national awards.

Base Storekeeper – DeWayne Lober reminded the membership that he has some good deals on shirts for Christmas presents.

Membership Chairman – Rick Simmons reported that we still have twenty (20) members remaining owing base dues and nineteen (19) owing national dues. We are doing well for this time of the year and Rick will get membership cards out soon. He has been experiencing some software problems. Rick announced that longevity pins will be awarded at the Annual Awards Banquet.

Historian – Jim Newman was not present.

Float Coordinator – Barry Bowers was not present.

Past Commander – Stan Reinhold was not present.

Public Relations – Ben Acosta was not present.

Misc. Jim announced that the Gold Rush Days are being held in Wickenburg in February and we have been asked by one of our members to participate in that event. That event is on our meeting date and we are trying to work out the logistics on how we can participate.

Old Business

Jim Denzien reiterated that the Awards Banquet will be 16 January 2010 here at the American Legion Post #105. It will commence at 1730 with a no host bar and will conclude at about 2000. Walt is the POC for information and reservations. We will need an accurate head count for this event so please let Walt know your intentions.

All hands need to prepare for the March elections for which there will be three offices be chosen, Vice-Commander, Secretary and Treasurer. At this point we have one candidate for Vice-Commander (Howard) and one for Treasurer (Wayne Pettes) and Tim has not committed for the Secretary position.

There is currently an election in progress for the Western District 1 Commander position. There is currently one

candidate, incumbent Jack Messersmith. There are write-in ballots and members are encouraged to vote for their selection. Jim took a vote by a show of hands and 21 members voted for Jack Messersmith. Some members have already voted by e-mail.

New Business

Jim re-iterated that Perch Base will sponsor the All Arizona Base Picnic on 10 April 2010. He will contact the other Arizona Base Commanders regarding this event. We will provide the burgers, hot dogs buns condiments and cold drinks and the remainder will be "pot luck" provided by the picnic attendees. Participants can have beer as long as it is in plastic or aluminum containers. We have already reserved a ramada for this event. The picnic will be from 1100 until 1500. We will need an accurate head count for this event.

Good of the Order

Jim reported on an interview that Chuck did with radio talk show host, Charlie Bolts of KPHX 1480 AM. Kudos to Chuck for an excellent job with this interview. Chuck spoke about the submarine service, the USSVI and Perch Base veteran's organizations and our SOS project. Charlie Bolts is going to get Chuck an audio copy of the interview. This interview was set up as a result of Howard visiting a friend at Banner Estrella Hospital and meeting Charlie Bolts on the elevator. After a brief introduction Charlie asked Howard to participate on his radio show and Howard recommended Chuck who was available and the interview was scheduled.

For our participation in the 11 November Phoenix Veteran's Day Parade, Perch Base won first place for the Veteran's Service Organization for our float entry. We also received a trophy and a first place ribbon.

Billy Grieves wife Muriel has been hospitalized. She went in for about nine days, was released but had to go back in and that is where she is right now but she seems to be doing better.

Jim Newman has improved significantly but circumstances dictated that he should stay at home. He is continuing physical therapy and should complete that by the 21st of this month. He wanted to make sure that Jim Denzien, Chuck and De Wayne knew how grateful he was to them for preventing him from falling which could have caused more severe injuries.

Walt reported that Joe Bono, Frank's son, expressed his desire to tow the float next year in the Veteran's Day Parade using Frank's truck. Everyone agreed this is a good idea and should be doable.

Jim announced that in addition to Michael Bircumshaw, National Junior Vice-Commander, Carl Schmidt, Central Region Director has announced his candidacy for National Commander for the USSVI. Carl is a Past Base Commander for the Razorback Base, has been a District Commander and has been on the E-Board. Members are encouraged to vote online when the time comes.

Jim formally announced that "Hell has frozen over". It is indeed true that Davy Jones has acquired a computer. Shipmate Bob Warner was the one who facilitated getting Davy the computer and we want to thank Bob for his generous contribution to Davy being enabled to gracefully enter into the 21st century. Bob reported that Davy may need a little training. Davy's e-mail address is scpodavyjones@yahoo.com.

The VA is opening a new service center in the Northwest valley. It will be located at 13985 W. Grand Ave. in Surprise.

Jim announced that the board approved and we are having a plaque made for and in the memory of Frank Bono. This plaque will be permanently affixed to the float trailer. The plaque will be inscribed to say "In memory of Frank Bono, exceptional craftsman, honorary submariner and friend. December 2009".

50/50 Drawing

The 50/50 drawing was held and the winner was Richard Bernier who won \$42.00.

Adjournment

All the outstanding business having been concluded, it was moved and seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote and the meeting adjourned at 1308 hours.

The benediction was offered by Walt Blomgren.

Tim Moore, Secretary, Perch Base USSVI



A Submariner's Prayer

"Eternal Father, strong to save
 Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
 Who biddest the mighty ocean deep
 Its own appointed limits keep.
 O hear us when we cry to Thee
 For those in peril on the sea.

Bless those who serve beneath the deep.
 Through lonely hour their vigil keep.
 May peace their mission ever be,
 Protect each one we ask of Thee.
 Bless those at home who wait and pray,
 For their return by night or day."

Do you know a shipmate who is on the lee side of a fair wind? Someone who could use the help of a shipmate? Remember, we are the "**Brotherhood** of the Phin." Contact our Base Chaplain if you know of any way we can help:

Walt Blumgren
 5120 W. Gelding Dr.
 Glendale, AZ 85306
 (602) 309-4407
chaplain@perch-base.org



ETERNAL PATROL PREPARATIONS

Shipmates, while we hope your day and those of your shipmates is far off in the future, we must nevertheless prepare. Please copy this notice and place it with your will or important papers.

IMPORTANT

In the case of my death, please immediately notify the U.S. Submarine Veterans Inc., (USSVI) at 877-542-3483 or 360-337-2978 and give the person on duty the information regarding my death, funeral, and burial arrangements, plus who they can contact for follow-up and support. Please ask them to contact my local chapter's Base Commander with this information as well (they can look it up in their membership records). This information can alternatively be E-Mailed to the National Office at office@ussvi.org.

But remember, your family should always notify the Base Chaplain first. He and your local shipmates can help!!

Shipmate



Shipmate

Don't forget the Annual awards Banquet! Want to get you tast buds working? Check out the menu.

**- MENU -
ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET
SATURDAY, JAN. 16, 2010**

The cost of the banquet is \$20 per person. Either Walt Blomgren or Jim Denzien will accept your reservation. **BUT DON'T WAIT!** You don't want to miss this big event!

Appetizer

Shrimp Salad

Salad

Caesar Salad with Herb Croutons

Entree

Chicken Wellington

(Breast of Chicken stuffed with Mushroom Duxelle)

Apricot Glazed Pork Loin

(carved to order)

Vegetables

Yellow and Green Patty Pan Squash / Baby Carrots

Wild & Brown Rice Pilaf

(with pecan and orange juice)

Baby Bakers

(mini baked potato)

Dessert

Jalapeño Crème Brulee with Cookie

Assorted Holiday Bars

The Diving Alarm Ballet

by Mike Hemming

As I pass between the controllermen, the oogah, oogah, "Dive!", "Dive!" comes over the speakers and they leap to their sticks and rheostats.

The engine shut down air lever is hit, rheostats spun down, sticks are thrown, as the ballet begins. Generator electricity wanes as the huge storage batteries are called on for power. Sticks pulled to new positions and rheostats spun back up to keep the motors turning. The flurry of intense activity over, minor adjustments made and times logged while listening, always for the sound of water doing something it shouldn't.

As I walk forward at the same time into the engineroom, the two men in each one do the shutdown dance. Throttles are slapped down, hydraulic levers pulled to the closed position to shut exhaust valves and drains opened by the throttle-inboard exhaust valves the oiler or the throttleman will have yanked the pin hold-open so it falls shut with exhaust valves shut, the oiler sea valves that allow the sea-

Then, the throttleman one more time.

In the control room, the on a dive, lookouts almost tions on the bow and stern planesman rigs out his planes planesman set their charges the dive. Arriving soon after now the diving officer gives and the angle to do it. Then and will watch the planesmen changing.



man. As his oiler spins the 32 turns to shut it, either (depending on who is closer) ing the great intake air valve a loud clang. His inboard drops below to secure the water to cool the engines.

checks everything secure

other area of great activity free fall to their diving sta-planes. Quickly the bow and both he and the stern to the prescribed angles for the planesmen, the OOD, the ordered depth to reach he checks that all is well to learn if the trim needs

The Chief of the Watch having closed the huge main air induction valve, will watch the Christmas Tree to see that all hull openings are closed. Then he pulls the vents to flood the main ballast tanks and watches the depth to signal the auxillaryman on the air manifold when to blow negative tank to the mark to stop our descent into the depths. The manifold operator will hammer open the valve and then close off the roaring rush of compressed air, as needed. By this time, the trim manifold operator will have arrived from the engine room.

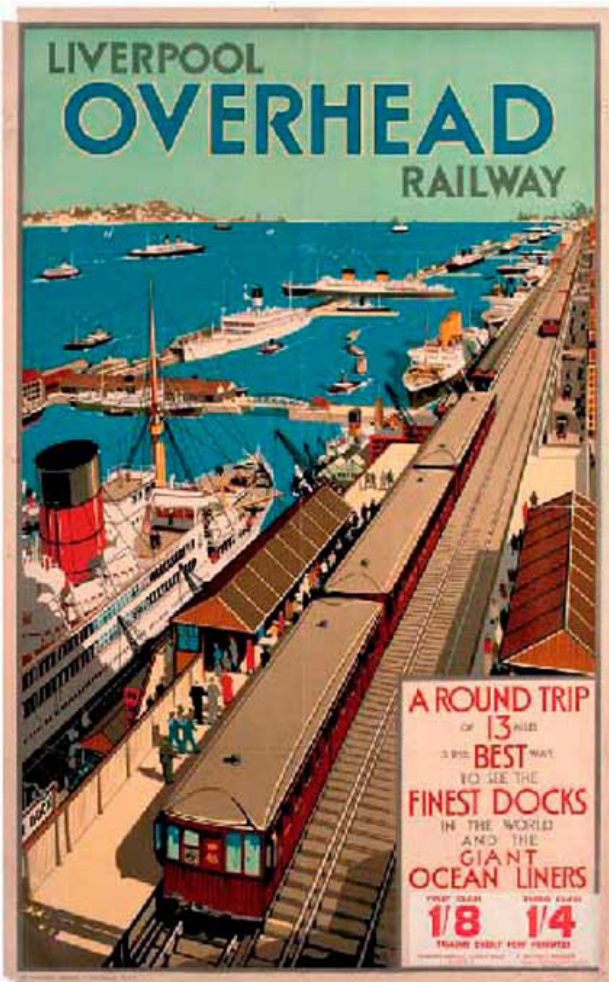
After climbing over the stern planesman he will be ready to pump and flood seawater to the tanks. This will trim up the boat to neutral buoyancy. In the Conn, the helmsman will have rung up standard speed so the boat will be driven under by the screws. The QM of the watch will dog the conning tower hatch when the OOD, the last man down from the bridge, pulls the lanyard to close it. There is no music to guide this dance except calm orders given and acknowledged. Started in a flurry of activity, it will end by winding down quietly to a state of relaxed vigilance by men practiced and confident of themselves and each other.

They have done this many times, this graceful and awkward descent into the depths. They do it as fast as is safely possible. This is where they belong, with many feet of sea hiding the strong steel of the hull. Men asleep in bunks half-awakened by the raucous alarm and noisy ballet, drift back to deep sleep, confident they are at home where they should be.

Perch Base January Birthdays



David Jones	Jan. 2
Bob Hanson	Jan. 3
Brent Nelson	Jan. 5
George Marions	Jan. 6
Roger Cousin	Jan. 7
Bob Bailey	Jan. 10
Jerry Allston	Jan. 14
Jim Denzien	Jan. 23
Stephen Day	Jan. 26
Bob Warner	Jan. 29





Eternal Patrol January 10, 1943

Editors Note: *Less we forget, each month, one boat on eternal patrol will be highlighted in this newsletter. Sailors, rest your oars.*

The Final Patrol



Lord, this departed shipmate with dolphins on his chest
Is part of an outfit known as the best.
Make him welcome and take him by the hand.
You'll find without a doubt he was the best in all the land.
So, heavenly Father add his name to the roll
Of our departed shipmates still on patrol
Let them know that we who survive
Will always keep their memories alive.



USS Argonaut (SS-166)
January 10, 1943
105 men lost



USS Argonaut (SF-7/SM-1/APS-1/SS-166)(Never formally held this classification) was a submarine of the United States Navy, the first ship to carry the name.

Argonaut was laid down as **V-4** on 1 May 1925 at Portsmouth Navy Yard. She was launched on 10 November 1927, sponsored by Mrs. Philip Mason Sears, the daughter of Rear Admiral William D.

MacDougall, and commissioned on 2 April 1928, Lieutenant Commander W.M. Quigley in command.

V-4 was the first of the second generation of V-boats commissioned in the late 1920s, which remain the largest non-nuclear submarines ever built by the U.S. These submarines were exempt by special agreement from the armament and tonnage limitations of the Washington Treaty. V-4 and her sisters V-5 (*Narwhal*) and V-6 (*Nautilus*) were designed with larger and more powerful diesel engines than those which had propelled the earlier series of V-boats, which had proven to be failures. Unfortunately, the specially-built engines failed to produce their design power and some developed dangerous crankshaft explosions. V-4 and her sister ships were slow in diving and, when submerged, were unwieldy and slower than designed. They also presented an excellent target to surface ship sonar and had a large turning radius.

Designed primarily as a minelayer, and built at a cost of US \$6,150,000, V-4 was the first and only such specialized type ever built by the United States. She had four torpedo tubes forward and two mine laying tubes aft. At the time of construction, V-4 was the largest submarine ever built in the United States, and was the largest in U.S. Navy service for thirty years.



General characteristics

Type: V-4 (*Argonaut*)-class
composite direct-drive diesel and diesel-electric submarine

Displacement:

(Surf) 3,046 tons; Sub: 4,164 tons

Length: 381 ft; **Beam:** 33 ft 9½in; **Draft:** 16 ft ¼ in

Installed power:

2 × 120-cell Exide ULS37 batteries,
2 × Ridgway electric motors, 1,100 hp each,

Propulsion:

2 × BuEng direct-drive 6-cylinder, 4-cycle diesel engines, 1,400 hp
1 × BuEng 6-cylinder 4-cycle diesel engine,
450 hp Ridgway 300 kW electrical generator

Speed: (surf) 15 kn (sub) 8 kn

Range: 8,000 nmi; **Bunkerage:** 173,875 US gal;

Endurance: 10 hours @ 5 kn; **Test depth:** 300 ft

Complement: 8 officers, 78 men

Armament:

(ORIGINAL) 4 × 21" torpedo tubes (bow; 16 torpedoes)

2 × 40" minelaying tubes aft (60mines),

2 × 6"/53 cal, Mark XII wet type deck guns;

(1942): 8 × 21" torpedo tubes (4 bow, 4 external; 20 torpedoes)

mine laying tubes removed, 2 × 6"/53 cal Mark XII wet type deck guns

Her mine laying arrangements were “highly ingenious, but extremely complicated”, filling two aft compartments. A compensating tube ran down the center of the two spaces, to make up for the lost weight as mines were laid, as well as to store eight additional mines. The other mines were racked in three groups around this tube, two in the fore compartment, one aft, with a hydraulically driven rotating cage between them. Mines were moved by hydraulic worm shafts, the aft racks connecting directly to the launch tubes, which had vertically-sliding hydraulic doors (rather than the usual hinged ones of torpedo tubes). Each launch tube was normally loaded with four mines, and a water ‘round mines (WRM) tube flooded to compensate as they were laid, then pumped into the compensating tube. Eight mines could be laid in 10 minutes.

Inter-War Period

Following commissioning, V-4 served with Submarine Division 12 based at Newport, Rhode Island.

She proved perennially underpowered, but re-engining was postponed by war, and her MAN diesels were a constant source of trouble.

In January-February 1929, V4 underwent a series of trials off Provincetown, Massachusetts. On a trial dive during this period, she submerged to a depth of 318 feet (97 m). This mark was the greatest depth which an American submarine had reached up to that time. On 26 February 1929, V-4 was assigned to Submarine Division 20 (SubDiv 20), and arrived at San Diego, California on 23 March. From there, she participated in battle exercises and made cruises along the west coast.

V-4 was renamed **Argonaut** on 19 February 1931, and redesignated **SM-1** (submarine, minelayer) on 1 July. On 30 June 1932, she arrived at Pearl Harbor, where she was assigned to SubDiv 7. She carried out mine laying operations, patrol duty, and other routine work. In October 1934 and again in May 1939, *Argonaut* took part in joint Army-Navy exercises in the Hawaiian operating area. *Argonaut* became the flagship of Submarine Squadron 4 (SubSquad 4, commanded by Captain Freeland A. Daubin) in mid-1939. The submarine returned to the west coast in April 1941 to participate in fleet tactical exercises.

World War II

On 28 November 1941, *Argonaut*, commanded by Stephen G. Barchet, left Pearl Harbor and was on patrol near Midway Island when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. After sunset on 7 December, *Argonaut* surfaced and heard naval gunfire around Midway. It was assumed the Japanese were landing a large invasion force. *Argonaut* then submerged to make a sonar approach to the “invasion force.” While designed to be a minelayer and not an attack submarine, *Argonaut* made the first wartime approach on enemy naval forces.

The “invasion force” turned out to be two Japanese destroyers whose mission was shore bombardment on Midway. The ships may have detected *Argonaut*, and one passed close by the submarine. They completed the bombardment then retired before *Argonaut* could make a second approach.

One week later, *Argonaut* made contact with three or four Japanese destroyers. Barchet wisely decided not to attack. On 22 January 1942, she returned to Pearl Harbor and, after a brief stop, proceeded to Mare Island Naval Shipyard for major overhaul. While there, her diesels were replaced with Winton 12-258Ss and her mine laying gear was removed. She was also fitted with a Torpedo Data Computer (lack of which likely inhibited her ability to score with torpedoes), new electronics, and two external torpedo tubes for storage. On return to Pearl Harbor, she was “hastily converted” to a troop transport submarine.

Argonaut returned to action in the South Pacific in August. Admiral Chester W. Nimitz assigned *Argonaut* and *Nautilus* to transport and land Marine Raiders on Makin Island in the Gilbert Islands for the Makin Raid. This move was designed to relieve pressure on American forces that had just landed on Guadalcanal. On 8 August, the two submarines embarked 120 troops of Companies A and B, 2d Raider Battalion, and got underway for Makin. Conditions during the transit were unpleasant, and most of the marines became seasick. The convoy arrived off Makin on 16 August, and at 0330 the next day, the marines began landing. Their rubber rafts were swamped by the sea and most of the outboard motors drowned. The Japanese, either forewarned or extraordinarily alert, were ready for the Americans’ arrival. Snipers were hidden in the trees, and the landing beaches were in front of the Japanese forces instead of behind them as planned. However, by midnight of 18 August, the Japanese garrison of about 85 men was wiped out; radio stations, fuel, and other supplies and installations were destroyed, and all but 30 of the troops had



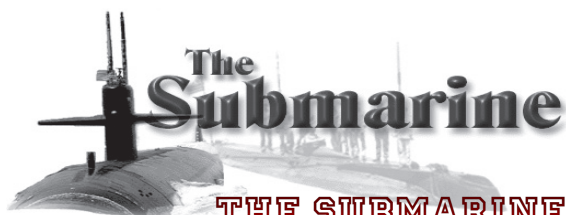
been recovered. {21 KIA + 9 captured/executed}

Sinking

Argonaut arrived back in Pearl Harbor on 26 August. Her hull classification symbol was changed from SM-1 to **APS-1** (transport submarine) on 22 September. She was never formally designated **SS-166**, but that hull number was reserved for her. Her base of operations was transferred to Brisbane, Queensland, later in the year. In December, she departed Brisbane under Lieutenant Commander John R. Pierce to patrol the hazardous area between New Britain and Bougainville Island, south of Bismarck Archipelago. On 2 January 1943, *Argonaut* sank the Japanese gunboat "Ebon Maru" in the Bismarck sea. On 10 January 1943, *Argonaut* spotted a convoy of five freighters and their escorts - *Maikaze*, *Isokaze*, and *Hamakaze* - returning to Rabaul from Lae. By chance, an army aircraft, which was out of bombs, was flying overhead and witnessed *Argonaut's* attack. A crewman onboard the plane saw one destroyer hit by a torpedo, and the destroyers promptly counterattacking. *Argonaut's* bow suddenly broke the water at an unusual angle. It was apparent that a depth charge had severely damaged the submarine. The destroyers continued circling *Argonaut*, pumping shells into her; she slipped below the waves and was never heard from again. 105 officers and men went down with her, the worst loss of life for a wartime submarine. Her name was stricken from the Naval Vessel Register on 26 February 1943.

Japanese reports made available at the end of the war recorded a depth charge attack followed by gunfire, at which time they "destroyed the top of the sub".

On the basis of the report given by the Army flier who witnessed the attack in which *Argonaut* perished, she was credited with damaging a Japanese destroyer on her last patrol. (Postwar, the JANAC accounting gave her none.) Since histories of none of the three escorting destroyers report damage on 10 January; the destroyer "hit" may have been a premature explosion.



World War I - Submarines Become a Fighting Tool

THE SUBMARINE IN HISTORY

1914

The skipper of a British destroyer found himself sitting above a U-boat he could see, but not touch. "What we need," a staff officer mused, "is some sort of bomb to drop in the water." Thus began development of the depth charge, which claimed its first victim in March 1916. However, overall, these depth charges were not very effective unless exploding quite close to the U-boat; say, about the length of your living room. The main benefit was psychological.

1915

The British blockade began to have a telling effect, and Germany vowed to mount a counter-blockade, using submarines. However, the German Navy had to wrestle with a serious ethical and legal dilemma. Under international law, a warship could stop and search a merchantman; if found to be carrying contraband cargo for an enemy, the ship could be captured and a "prize crew" set aboard to sail her to an



In this post-war photo, a French boat is on the left. Next, a German late-model coastal boat UB-133, and an early model UB-24.

appropriate harbor. Under some circumstances, the ship could be sunk, provided that the crew had been allowed to take to the lifeboats first.

A submarine did not carry enough sailors to make up prize crews, so the only option was to sink the merchant ship. For this purpose, submarines were equipped with deck guns. However, if the submarine came to the surface to give fair warning, she herself became vulnerable to attack (by ramming, by concealed guns, by warships rushing to the rescue).

German policy went through several cycles: play by the rules for a time, but in February, in retaliation for the indiscriminate damage of the blockade, she opted for “unrestricted submarine warfare.” The legal requirement for “fair notice” was met, at least in theory, by setting specifically-designated war zones, within which all vessels were subject to attack without warning.

With only 35 active U-boats, Germany began sinking British merchant ships faster than they could be built, and got very serious about submarines. Several accelerated construction programs were launched; one was for smaller, less capable boats which were nonetheless well-suited to operations close to home. These were dubbed the UB-Class.

In May, U-20 sank the civilian passenger liner “Lusitania,” killing 1,198 men, women and children. Germany did not want to provoke the United States, and under pressure of international public opinion, backed off – for a while. In February 1916, unrestricted operations were resumed, but were cancelled in April after a controversial attack on a civilian ferry boat. Nonetheless, the U-boats were by then taking out about 300,000 tons of shipping a month.

The British discovered that torpedoes were routinely running under their targets; they finally realized that the explosive warhead weighed forty pounds more than the peacetime practice head upon which torpedo depth settings had been based. They were not the only nation – and this was not the only war – in which serious problems with the design and operation of torpedoes would impede progress. See below.

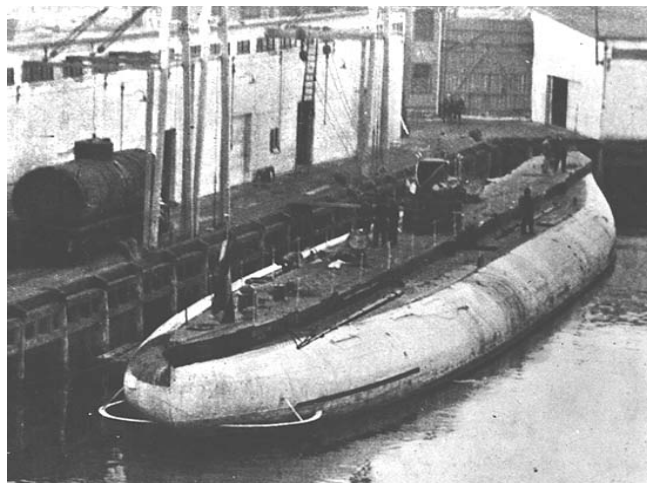
1916

Germany created the ultimate World War I U-boat: a true long-range submarine cruiser. Boats of the UA class were 230 feet long, about 1500 tons with a speed of 15.3 knots on the surface, and a range of 12,630 miles at 8 knots.

Armament: Twin 150 mm (5.9 inch) deck guns, 1,000 rounds of ammunition, nineteen torpedoes, manned by a crew of 56 with room for twenty more.

Forty-seven UA boats were ordered, but only nine made it into service before the November 1918 armistice.

One of the first of the UA-class was built as a blockade-breaking civilian cargo submarine operated by the North German Lloyd Line. “Deutschland” had a cargo capacity of 700 tons (small if compared with surface ships, but equal to that of seven 1990-era C-5A airplanes). She engaged in high-value trans-Atlantic commerce, submerging to avoid British patrols; on her first trip, she carried dyestuff and gemstones to America, nickel, tin and rubber (much of it stored outside the pressure hull) back to Germany.



The cargo-carrying submarine “Deutschland” at New London, CT, in November, 1916, on one of her two “civilian” visits to the United States; three months later she had been converted and sent to war as U-153.

Toward the end of the year, the situation in Germany was getting desperate. The typical daily food ration was “five slices of bread, half a small cutlet, half a tumbler of milk, two thimblefuls of fat, a few potatoes, and an egg cup of sugar.”

“If we were to starve like rats in a trap,” wrote one German citizen, “then surely it was our sacred right to cut off the enemy’s supplies as well.”

1917

In February, the German government announced total unrestricted submarine warfare. A note to the U. S. govern-

ment affirmed that “England is using her naval power for a criminal attempt to force Germany into submission by starvation,” and warned that Germany was now compelled to use “all the weapons which are at its disposal.” The German government knew that this would most likely bring America into the war, but predicted that Britain would be forced to the peace table before American forces could have much effect.

Also in February, in one of those strange parallels in which history occasionally delights, another Housatonic was sunk by an enemy submarine – in this case, an American merchantman; the attacker survived.

Great Britain had the world’s largest merchant fleet, almost half of the world total, but British shipbuilding capacity was only about 650,000 tons a year. By March, U-boats were sinking almost 600,000 tons a month and Great Britain was down to a six-week food supply.

The U. S. entered the war in April.

There was one time-honored method for protecting merchant ships from enemy attack: convoy, dating back almost to the dawn of ocean commerce. However, the British Navy resisted: there were too many ships coming and going, 2500 a week, and port facilities were already strained; bringing in the glut of a convoy would create chaos. The convoy would become a huge target for the U-boats. Convoy might be all right for military auxiliaries such as troopships, but merchant crews did not have the skills necessary to keep in convoy formation, and many did not speak English. Most merchant ships were fast enough to outrun a U-boat. Besides, and perhaps most significant, warships should be out looking for the enemy, not herding bunch of merchantmen. The Navy was trained for offense, not defense. To be aggressive, not passive.

The counter arguments: most of the traffic was made up of small coasters and ferries; there were only about 140 trans-ocean ships arriving each week, spread across a number of ports. A U-boat could only make one attack before the escorts would force it to break off and hide – the larger the convoy, the more ships home free. A merchant might outrun one U-boat – right into the arms of another. Crews could be trained. The goal was to curtail sinkings, not make naval officers feel good.

By late spring, the situation was grave enough that the Navy finally agreed to a trial of convoy. And never looked back. Of 83,959 ships in convoys from then to the end of the war, only 257 were sunk by U-boats. During the same period, 2,616 independent sailers were sunk. The main benefit of convoy: it forced the U-boats to attack, submerged, which meant that they already had to be in attack position if a convoy happened to sail past.

Convoys with air patrol were the safest of all – because the submariners knew that, even if they carried out an attack, the aircraft could determine their approximate location by tracing back down the visible torpedo track. However, the



Most navies adopted an alpha-numeric system for identifying submarines, referring to the class and the series within the class: A-1, L-5, and so forth. The U. S. Navy added names to some (but not all); in the 1920s, the scheme had reached S-51 (the 162nd U. S. submarine). Thenceforth, a different system was followed: U. S. submarines carried a hull number and name (usually that of some sea creature), i.e. SS-163, “Barracuda.” The British system: A.5, E.6. Germany did not differentiate class, only type: all hull numbers began with U-, with type distinctions such as UA, UB, UC. Shown here, U.S. Navy L-class boats, stationed in English waters in 1917. The prominent “AL” identifier was to avoid confusion with boats of the British

carrying capacity of most aircraft of the day was too limited for heavy weapons. Many could not even carry a radio set.

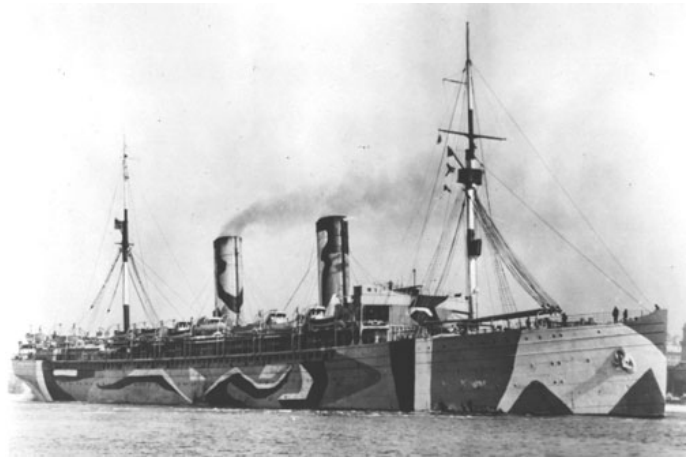
Six UA boats were deployed to the East Coast of the United States, where they laid mines and sank 174 ships – mostly smaller vessels without radios which could neither be warned or give warning. The UA- boats proved that a submarine could operate 3000 miles from home base, but did not have any impact on the movement of troops and supplies to Europe.

Twelve American submarines took up station off Ireland and in the Azores. They had nil effect on the war, but learned

a lot about wartime operations. (The primary wartime contribution of the U. S. Navy was anti-submarine patrol – providing 80 percent of all trans-Atlantic convoy escorts.) One clear lesson: the dive time of the American boats was too slow; for the L-class, it averaged 2 minutes 23 seconds. A small UB could be fully under in 27 seconds.

“Pattern” camouflage was designed to confuse a U-boat’s visual fire-control systems – making it difficult to judge range, size, speed, and course. This practice continued into World War II, when more sophisticated systems were introduced.

Submarines themselves employed more natural schemes of camouflage, typically to blend in with operating conditions: white for arctic waters, different shades of gray for different parts of the world. Eventually, all navies adopted some version of the U. S. Navy’s “haze gray” for surface ships, black for submarines.



The American troopship Louisville in full-dress. For the record, not one soldier was killed by U-boat while being transported – always in convoy – either across the Atlantic or across the English Channel.

One vulnerability constantly exploited by the Allies and not fully appreciated by the Germans: radio intercepts. The Germans knew their transmissions could be overheard and U-boat locations pin-pointed by direction finders, but didn’t seem to care: they assumed the U-boats would be long gone before any attackers could arrive on the scene. They didn’t realize that by knowing where the U-boats were operating, the Allies often could re-route convoys out of harm’s way.

Great Britain introduced the steam-powered K-CLASS. These huge boats – at 338 feet and 1883 tons, three times the size of any other in the fleet – were built in response to intelligence reports that Germany was building a 22-knot submarine. The reports were in error.

So were the K-boats. They took eleven minutes to dive; temperatures in the boiler room then reached 160 degrees F, and in the engine room, 90 degrees F, although, since the engines were not running, no one needed to be in those spaces while submerged. Naval planners were not concerned about the excessive dive time – they assumed that the submarine crews would see the masts of approaching ships well before the enemy could spot them.

Naval planners seem not to have noticed the introduction of the airplane and airship to the equation.

1918

The development of submarine-locating devices began early in the war with hydrophones (a directional microphone in the water) to listen for the sounds of propellers, and, too late to be of much use in this war, an echo-ranging system (the British dubbed it ASDIC – which apparently stands for nothing in particular – but now known universally as SONAR, which stands for “Sound Navigation and Ranging.”) By sending out an audible “ping” and measuring the echo return, an operator can determine the range and bearing of a submarine.

By summer, much of Germany was in rebellion, and the government began to move toward armistice. In October, the surface navy refused to go to sea for one last suicidal battle. The U-boat navy remained loyal; U-135 was even on alert to attack a renegade German battleship. Last kill: UB-50 sank the British battleship Britannia two days before the November 11 armistice.

SCORECARD: Germany started the war with 26 operational boats and added 390. At war’s end, 171 new boats were in the water and another 148 were under construction. Wartime losses: 173. Mines took out at least 48; depth charges claimed 30; gunfire, 20; ramming 19; submarines 17; accident, 19; unknown, 19; aircraft 1.

In the meantime, U-boats had sunk more than 4,000 ships, more than 11 million tons – fully one-fourth of the world’s total supply. In essence, unrestricted submarine warfare almost won the war for Germany. But Germany lost the war – because of unrestricted submarine warfare.

A paradox? No, a matter of timing. If the U. S. had not entered the war in 1917, Germany likely would have been able

to force a peace agreement. But the U-boat operations directly and specifically brought America into the conflict.

Virulent wartime propaganda to the contrary, there was only one verified U-boat atrocity during the war: the sinking of the hospital ship *Llandovery Castle* by U-86 and the skipper's attempt to hide the evidence by machine-gunning the survivors in the water. He missed a few. Post-war, he fled the country to avoid a 1921 war crimes trial; two of his officers were tried and convicted as accessories. They did not remain too long in jail, somehow managing to "escape" their German guards within a few months.

UC-97 became perhaps the only German submarine to be sunk within the continental United States. One of five U-boats turned over to the U. S. Navy for post-war study, she toured the Great Lakes as part of a Victory Bond drive, and was sunk (on purpose) in Lake Michigan a few miles east of Chicago.

Post-war, the U. S. Navy began applying lessons-learned – from operations and from a study of the captured U-boats – toward new submarine designs. Whereas the operating areas for the European powers were primarily close to home, the primary operating area for the U. S. Navy was the Pacific Ocean. Thus, the Navy needed a boat with good sea-keeping qualities, exceptional range, high reliability, and a reasonable level of habitability.

(The story continues next month)

Weird but True!

- Saturday mail delivery in Canada was eliminated by Canada Post on February 1, 1969!
- In Tokyo, a bicycle is faster than a car for most trips of less than 50 minutes!
- There are 18 different animal shapes in the *Animal Crackers* cookie zoo!
- Should there be a crash, Prince Charles and Prince William never travel on the same airplane as a precaution!
- Your body is creating and killing 15 million red blood cells per second!
- The king of hearts is the only king without a moustache on a standard playing card!
- There are no clocks in Las Vegas gambling casinos!
- There is one slot machine in Las Vegas for every eight inhabitants!
- The *Mona Lisa* has no eyebrows. It was the fashion in Renaissance Florence to shave them off!
- Every day 20 banks are robbed. The average take is \$2,500!
- The most popular first name in the world is *Muhammad*!
- Tablecloths were originally meant to be served as towels with which dinner guests could wipe their hands and faces after eating!
- Tourists visiting Iceland should know that tipping at a restaurant is considered an insult!
- One car out of every 230 made was stolen last year!
- The names of Popeye's four nephews are *Pipeye*, *Peepeye*, *Pupeye*, and *Poopeye*!

Return To:

U. S. Submarine Veterans, Perch Base
7011 West Risner Road
Glendale, AZ 85308
E-Mail: communications@perch-base.org

<http://www.perch-base.org>



NEXT MEETING

12 noon, Saturday, January, 9, 2010
American Legion Post #105
3534 W. Calavar Rd., Phoenix, 85053
(1/2 block northwest, 35th Ave. & Thunderbird)