



# The MidWatch

July 2012  
Volume 18 - Issue 7

## The Monthly Newsletter, Perch Base, USSVI Phoenix, Arizona



[WWW.PERCH-BASE.ORG](http://WWW.PERCH-BASE.ORG)



### Featured Article

## The Sculpin's Lost Mission: A Nuclear Submarine in the Vietnam War

# USSVI CREED

Our organization's purpose is . . .

"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."



## 2012 Perch Base Foundation Supporters

These are the Base members and friends who donate monies or efforts to allow for Base operation while keeping our dues low and avoid raising money through member labor as most other organizations do.

**Remember, if you contribute by check, it must be made out to the "Perch Base Foundation."**

## These are the 2012 Foundation Donors



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RONALD J. ZOMOK



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## Sailing Orders



**THIS MONTH ONLY!**  
**Meeting on the 3rd Saturday**  
**of the month!**

Next regular meeting will be JULY 14 at  
 noon (social hour at 11 a.m.)  
 Dillon's Restaurant at Arrowhead  
 20585 N. 59th Avenue  
 Glendale, AZ 85308-6821

**JULY 21!**  
**"Steal" Gudgeon Base's Dolphins**  
**We're going to Prescott to attend**  
**the Gudgeon Base meeting (the 3rd**  
**Saturday of the month.)**  
**See the next page for details about this**  
**"Traveling Dolphins" program.**



## **Traveling Dolphins Program**

### **WD1 Traveling Dolphins**

#### **Gudgeon Base to launch Western District One's Traveling Dolphin program**



#### **How it works:**

- The originating Base holds the traveling dolphins until captured by another Base.
- Only bases within Western Region One can capture the WD1 Traveling Dolphins.
- There needs to be at least 3 members from the capturing Base attend the meeting of the Base holding the dolphins.
- One of the capturing Base members needs to be an elected officer.
- It is always polite to give advance notice to the holding Base of the pending visit (capture).
- At least one person from the capturing Base needs to tell a 'sea story' during the capture.
- If more than one Base attempts to capture the dolphins at the same meeting, the visiting Base with most members makes the capture.
- In case of a tie, a coin is tossed and the winning Base makes the capture.
- Capturing base installs a standardized brass plaque on the reverse side giving date of capture and Base from whom captured.

**Traveling Dolphin program courtesy of John Mansfield, Jr., District Commander, WD 4.**

As of July 2011 the following eight bases comprise WR District 1:

1. Barbel Base, Yuma, AZ
2. Bullhead Base, Albuquerque, NM
3. Gudgeon Base, Prescott, AZ
4. Perch Base, Phoenix, AZ
5. Tautog Base, Casa Grande, AZ
6. Tucson Base, Tucson, AZ
7. White Mountain Base, Snowflake, AZ
8. White Sands Base, WSMR, NM







## LEST WE FORGET THOSE STILL ON PATROL

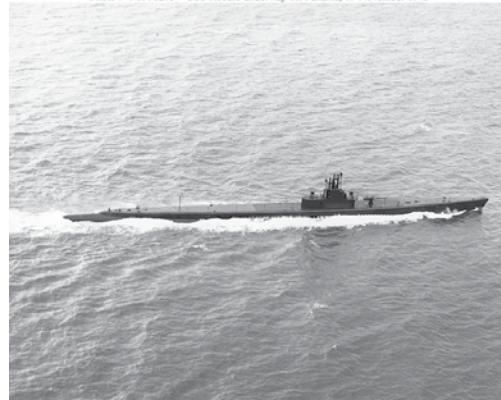
### JULY ETERNAL PATROLS



#### **USS S-28 (SS-133)**

- *Lost: 04 Jul 1944*
- *42 men on Eternal Patrol*
- *Sunk by unknown causes while training off Hawaii*

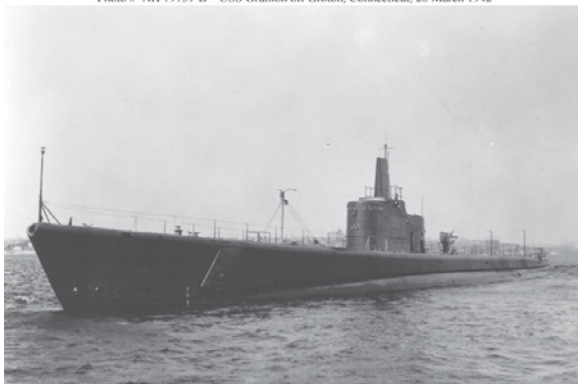
Photo # NH 98273 USS Robalo underway off Panama, 19 November 1943



#### **USS ROBALO (SS-273)**

- *Lost: 26 Jul 1944*
- *78 men on Eternal Patrol*
- *Possible Japanese Mine off Palawan*

Photo # NH 79757-B USS Grunion off Groton, Connecticut, 20 March 1942



#### **USS GRUNION (SS-216)**

- *Lost: 30 Jul 1942*
- *70 Men on Eternal Patrol*
- *Sunk by unknown causes off Kiska Island, Aleutians*

# PERCH BASE OFFICERS



**BASE COMMANDER**  
Jim Denzien  
(623) 547-7945  
[commander@perch-base.org](mailto:commander@perch-base.org)



**BASE VICE-COMMANDER**  
Howard Doyle  
(623) 935-3830  
[vice-commander@perch-base.org](mailto:vice-commander@perch-base.org)



**SECRETARY**  
John Schlag  
(623) 872-8224  
[secretary@perch-base.org](mailto:secretary@perch-base.org)



**TREASURER**  
Bob Warner  
(623) 825-7042  
[treasurer@perch-base.org](mailto:treasurer@perch-base.org)



**COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER**  
Chuck Emmett  
(623) 466-9569  
[communications@perch-base.org](mailto:communications@perch-base.org)



**MEMBERSHIP**  
Rick Simmons  
(623) 583-4235  
[membership@perch-base.org](mailto:membership@perch-base.org)



**CHIEF OF THE BOAT**  
Rich Kunze  
(623) 932-3068  
[cob@perch-base.org](mailto:cob@perch-base.org)



**EVENT COORDINATOR**  
Joe "Wanderer" Varese  
(623) 388-6749  
[events@perch-base.org](mailto:events@perch-base.org)



**CHAPLAIN**  
Walt Blomgren  
(602) 309-4407  
[chaplain@perch-base.org](mailto:chaplain@perch-base.org)



**STOREKEEPER**  
De Wayne Lober  
(602) 944-4200  
[storekeeper@perch-base.org](mailto:storekeeper@perch-base.org)



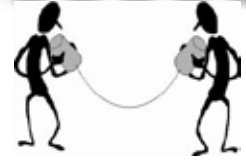
**HISTORIAN**  
Jim Newman  
(602) 840-7788  
[historian@perch-base.org](mailto:historian@perch-base.org)



**PAST-COMMANDER**  
Stan Reinhold  
[past-commander@perch-base.org](mailto:past-commander@perch-base.org)



## COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER'S REPORT



It's great this month that one of our shipmates stepped up and provided some input for our Shipmates-to-Shipmate section, specifically the "This Ain't No Sh\*t." As with everything that goes into the newsletter, I as Communications Officer do some editing and review just to get the material into reasonably good English. I never try to change the thoughts of the author or deviate from what they wanted to say.

In some cases, I do not edit or change in any way the material that is provided. This will be indicated under the heading for the article. Many times, I feel that it is best to leave the material directly as I receive it from the originator. As always, if you have any comments on this policy, or anything else in the newsletter, please don't hesitate to contact me at <mailto:communications@perch-base.org>.

But, by all means, keep up the good work in providing input especially for our Shipmates-to-Shipmate section. I will always try to include everything given to me in as quick of fashion as I possibly can.

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### SIX REASONS TO BELIEVE EVERYTHING HAS GONE TO HELL . . .

#### ONE

Recently, when I went to McDonald's I saw on the menu that you could have an order of 6, 9 or 12 Chicken McNuggets. I asked for a half dozen nuggets.

'We don't have half dozen nuggets,' said the teenager at the counter.

'You don't?' I replied.

'We only have six, nine, or twelve,' was the reply.

'So I can't order a half-dozen nuggets, but I can order six?'

'That's right.'

So I shook my head and ordered six McNuggets

*(Unbelievable but sadly true...)*

(must have been the same one I asked for sweetener and she said they didn't have any, only Splenda and sugar.)

#### TWO

I was checking out at the local Wal-Mart with just a few items and the lady behind me put her things on the belt close to mine. I picked up one of those 'dividers' that they keep by the cash register and placed it between our things so they wouldn't get mixed. After the girl had scanned all of my items, she picked up the 'divider', looking it all over for the bar code so she could scan it.

Not finding the bar code, she said to me, 'Do you know how much this is?'

I said to her 'I've changed my mind; I don't think I'll buy that today.'

She said 'OK,' and I paid her for the things and left.

She had no clue to what had just happened.

#### THREE

A woman at work was seen putting a credit card into her floppy drive and pulling it out very quickly.

When I inquired as to what she was doing, she said she was shopping on the Internet and they kept asking for a credit card number, so she was using the ATM 'thingy.' (*keep shuddering!!*)

#### **FOUR**

I recently saw a distraught young lady weeping beside her car. 'Do you need some help?' I asked. She replied, 'I knew I should have replaced the battery to this remote door un-locker. Now I can't get into my car. Do you think they (pointing to a distant convenience store) would have a battery to fit this?'

'Hmmm, I don't know. Do you have an alarm, too?' I asked.

'No, just this remote thingy,' she answered, handing it and the car keys to me.

As I took the key and manually unlocked the door, I replied, 'Why don't you drive over there and check about the batteries. It's a long walk....'

*PLEASE just lay down before you hurt yourself !!!*

#### **FIVE**

Several years ago, we had an Intern who was none too swift. One day she was typing and turned to a secretary and said, 'I'm almost out of typing paper. What do I do?' 'Just use paper from the photocopier', the secretary told her. With that, the intern took her last remaining blank piece of paper, put it on the photocopier and proceeded to make five 'blank' copies.

#### **SIX**

A mother calls 911 very worried asking the dispatcher if she needs to take her kid to the emergency room, the kid had eaten ants. The dispatcher tells her to give the kid some Benadryl and he should be fine, the mother says, 'I just gave him some ant killer.....'

Dispatcher: 'Rush him in to emergency!'







**From the Wardroom**  
**Base Commander's Message**

*Jim Denzien - Commander*  
*(Who writes and edits this section.)*

Shipmates:

Our "steal the dolphins" effort had to be delayed due to Gudgeon Base changing their meeting date. We definitely will be going there on July 21<sup>st</sup>. Good day for a field trip!

We had an excellent visit at Phoenix Children's Hospital on June 21<sup>st</sup> as a Kap(SS)4Kid(SS) event. We haven't been there in a while and it was good to renew our contact with them. They always appreciate our visits. Thanks to the shipmates who were there!

Before you read this, we will have been in the Frontier Days parade in Prescott along with Gudgeon and Tucson bases. Always a good time but hopefully a little cooler.

Our next meeting is on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July. Plan on being there!

Fraternally,



**Base Meeting Minutes**  
**June 2012 Meeting**

*John Schlag - Secretary*  
*(Who writes and edits this section.)*

The regular monthly meeting of the Arizona Submarine Veterans, Perch Base was convened at Dillon's Restaurant at Arrowhead, in Glendale, AZ at 12:00 hours, 16 June, 2012. The meeting was called to order by Jim Denzien, Base Commander.

The "Call to Order" was followed by a prayer of invocation by Walt Blomgren, Base Chaplain, the Pledge of Allegiance and the Reciting of our Purpose. The tolling ceremony was conducted for all boats lost in the month of June, a moment of silence was observed for our shipmates on eternal patrol, "Sailor's rest your oars".

Jim started the meeting by introducing new members and the guests present.

Jeff Nelson – Not new but first time attending a meeting in 5 years.

Frank Myers – District 11, Commander, for the American Legion. Frank invited Perch Base to attend a Picnic with the American Legion to be held on the first Saturday of November which is Nov. 3rd this year.

According to the Sailing List there were 27 members and guest present. The complete sailing list included:

- |               |               |                |                  |
|---------------|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| Jim Denzien   | Howard Doyle  | Bob Warner     | Chuck Emmett     |
| Richard Kunze | Rick Simmons  | DeWayne Lober  | Walt Blomgren    |
| Joe Varese    | John Schlag   | Tim Moore      | Richard Bernier  |
| Dan Moss      | Davy Jones    | Tom Clonts     | Douglas M LaRock |
| Ted Hunt      | Don DeMarte   | Kelly Grissoum | Herb Coulter     |
| Jeff Nelson   | George Crider | Frank Myers    | Steven Stanger   |
| Jared Fuller  | Jerry Pittman | Heather Diaz   |                  |

The minutes from the May, 2012 regular meeting needed to be approved as published in the "MidWatch". A motion was made and seconded. The motion was carried by unanimous voice vote.

Bob Warner read the treasurer's report for May, 2012. 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 on the Board of Directors meeting held last Wednesday June 6<sup>th</sup>. Jim discussed the items covered at the BOD Meeting. We talked about some of our upcoming events.

We discussed the Traveling Dolphins program instituted by Gudgeon Base in Prescott. We'll make a field trip to Prescott to capture the Dolphins. July 21<sup>st</sup> Base Members are invited to attend.

We also discussed the upcoming Kaps(SS)4Kids(SS) event.

We discussed the Awards Dinner for next year – Chuck Emmett and Rick Simmons will be in charge of that again for 2013.

We discussed the events around Veterans Day this year – Phoenix Parade, Gilbert, Higgleigh High School and the Anthem / Black Canyon City parades, Steve Stanger confirmed the date to be on Nov. 10<sup>th</sup> and said they would also have a car show at the same time.

The Naval Order presentation attended by some base members 4 months ago was discussed and we have been asked to provide a presentation on submarine history on Tuesday the 25<sup>th</sup> of September at Macayo's on Central Avenue in Phoenix.

Jim asked that any suggestions for the Awards Dinner be given to Chuck or Rick.

Jim and Howard Doyle attended the Unified Arizona Veterans Meeting – Most of that which was discussed was about Memorial Day weekend both at the National Cemetery and the event at the Surprise Stadium.

### **Base Officers and Board of Directors Reports**

**Vice Commander** – Howard Doyle stated that the float was going to Prescott for the annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade which will be on Saturday the 30<sup>th</sup> of June. Chuck will put out a Flash Traffic with details.

**Membership Chairman** – Rick Simmons again encouraged everyone to access the National Website, get a password and update their profile.

**Secretary** – John Schlag had nothing to add.

**Communications Officer** – Chuck Emmett had some paper copies of the base newsletter available. He reminded everyone that if they wanted to submit anything to the newsletter that he was open to everything. Chuck pointed out the Cap he was wearing with the small Perch Base patch. He was looking for comments to establish a new distinctive Base Cap. Send comments to Chuck at <mailto:communications@perch-base.org>.

**Event Coordinator** – Joe Varese stated that Howard had covered everything for him. Jim commented that Joe had recently been in the hospital for knee surgery and we were happy to have him back.

**Chaplain** – Walt Blomgren – had no one new on the Binnacle List. Both Stan Reinhold and Davy Jones are doing well. Dan Moss had given him a CD on Eternal Patrol. He was going to check it and see if it could be used in the ceremony at the Cemetery.

**Chief of the Boat** – Richard Kunze reminded everyone that in the Prescott we don't walk we ride.

**Treasurer** – Bob Warner had nothing to add.

**Kap(SS)4Kid(SS) Coordinator** – Tim Moore discussed and described the Kap(SS)4Kid(SS) program which is a national program. We will visit Children's Hospital this coming Thursday the 21<sup>st</sup> of June at 2:00 PM. It is located at 51<sup>st</sup> and Thomas Rd on the South West side.

**Base Storekeeper** – DeWayne Lober had shirts and submarine dolphin flags.

**Save our Sail Co-Chair** - Dan Moss had nothing new, Jim discussed progress thus far, recent submittals and fund raising.

Walt asked about the gun barrels being brought to Phoenix. They are located at a storage yard located at 35<sup>th</sup> Ave and Buckeye Rd. The Secretary of State arranged for them to be stored in the yard. It is a 14" from the Arizona and a 16" from the Missouri. The latter is the one that is pictured during the Japanese Surrender in Tokyo Bay in 1945. It is the middle barrel from the 2<sup>nd</sup> turret on Missouri.

## **Old Business**

Upcoming Events:

- Kap(SS)4Kid(SS) June 21st.
- Prescott Frontier Days Parade June 30th

## **New Business**

The National Convention will be in Norfolk Virginia. It will be from Sunday the 2<sup>nd</sup> thru Sunday the 9<sup>th</sup> of September. Several members have said they may go.

We will go and capture the dolphins from Gudgeon July 21<sup>st</sup> in Prescott.

National Elections – On Line voting started June 12<sup>th</sup> – We need to login and vote.

## **Good of the Order**

Jim showed the scale models of an Mk 48 torpedo and the Tomahawk cruise missile with data sheets which were made for use at static display's that were made by Dan Moss.

Brad Veep – Who is a dual member of Perch and Gudgeon, recently, had a mini stroke while visiting in Oregon.

Brian Thomasin – Past Base Commander of Perch is now a member of Gudgeon Base.

Don DeMarte – The Naval Operational Support Facility is now located at Luke and he was invited to and attended the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Midway on June the 7<sup>th</sup> and no other Submarine Veterans were present.

## **50/50 Drawing**

The 50/50 drawing \$110 / \$55 was won by Bob Warner.

## **Benediction**

The benediction was offered by Walt Blomgren.

## **Adjournment**

All 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 was adjourned at 13:07.

John Schlag

Secretary, Perch Base USSVI

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## ***Did you know these facts?***

- The first German serviceman killed in the war was killed by the Japanese (China, 1937), the first American serviceman killed was by the Russians (Finland 1940.) The highest ranking American killed was Lt. Gen. Lesley McNair, killed by the US Army Air Corps. So much for allies.
- The youngest US serviceman was 12 year old Calvin Graham, USN. He was wounded and given a Dishonorable Discharge for lying about his age. (His benefits were later restored by act of Congress.)
- At the time of Pearl Harbor the top US Navy command was called CINCUS (pronounced "sink us"), the shoulder patch of the US Army's 45th. Infantry division was the Swastika, and Hitler's private train was named "Amerika". All three were soon changed for PR purposes.
- More US servicemen died in the Air Corps than the Marine Corps. While completing the required 30 missions your chance of being killed was 71%.
- Generally speaking there was no such thing as an average fighter pilot. You were either an ace or a target. For instance, Japanese ace Hiroyoshi Nishizawa shot down over 80 planes. He died while a passenger on a cargo plane.

# July Base Birthdays



DOUGLAS R. EWEN	1-JUL
WAYNE A. BRAASTAD	7-JUL
BERNARD JURACKA	7-JUL
RICHARD MILLER	8-JUL
JIM FOOTE	12-JUL
KURT ESELGROTH	12-JUL
NICHOLAS POVIO JR.	16-JUL
RICHARD P. WEBER	16-JUL
DAVID FLEDDERJOHN	16-JUL
RICHARD BERNIER	21-JUL
BRADLEY L. BUTLER	25-JUL
CARL SCOTT	26-JUL
FORREST J. WATSON	27-JUL
HOWARD S. GOLDMAN	30-JUL
JACK MESSERSMITH	31-JUL



**Need a Ride to a Base Meeting or Other Function?**

Contact Base vice-Commander, [Howard Doyle \(602\) 228-2445](tel:6022282445) or any other Base Officer. All officers are listed near the front of every copy of the MidWatch.



## THE WOMEN OF PERCH BASE

At their October 2009 meeting, Perch Base SubVettes voted to disband. Low Participation and finances made this a logical action. Since then, interested and willing women have been incorporated in Perch Base as Volunteers. They, and other Perch Base Volunteers function as defined in our Policies and Procedures.



# First Woman-Submariner Earns Her Dolphins



*Material included from an article by Kristina Wong in the Washington Times of Friday, June 22, 2012*

On Friday, June 22, 2012, a Navy lieutenant from Wisconsin became the first woman to earn her dolphins by serving on a Bangor-based SSGN submarine.

"I was honored to be given the opportunity to serve aboard a submarine, so receiving my dolphins is like icing on the cake for me," Lt. Britta Christianson, 30, a supply corps officer said in a statement.

Lt. Christianson was awarded her dolphins during a ceremony June 22, 2012 at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Washington, where she was stationed on the USS Ohio (SSGN-726). She spent more than a year in training, which included a six-month deployment on the sub.

Christianson is one of 24 women who were selected to take part in the Navy's first class of submarine officer training, after the Navy reversed its ban on women on submarines in 2010. The 24 women were deployed to four submarines last fall - six women to each submarine, three on each of the submarine's two crews.

Lt. Christianson was one of seven supply officers in the program.

"She was required to demonstrate knowledge in basic submarine operations, engineering fundamentals, perform damage control functions and qualify as a diving officer of the watch," said Lt. Ed Early, spokesman for Submarine Group 9, the unit to which Lt. Christianson was assigned.

## CHAPLAIN'S COLUMN



### SHIPMATES RUNNING ON LESS THAN A FULL BATTERY CHARGE

The chaplain is pleased to report that there have been no members departing on eternal patrol nor do we have anyone on the binnacle list for the past month.

**Shipmates, if you have not already done so, print out the page immediately after this one and place it with your final instruction papers (i.e., will, power of attorney, living will, living trust, etc.) for your next of kin. Don't let them languish as to your Final Patrol desires.**

**\*\* IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS \*\***

**Please PRINT THIS PAGE and attach this note to your will or final instructions.**

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 USSVI chapter, **Perch Base, Phoenix AZ** Chaplain at [chaplain@perch-base.org](mailto:chaplain@perch-base.org) or 602-309-4407 with this information as well.

This information can also be E-Mailed to the National Office at [USSVI@telebyte.net](mailto:USSVI@telebyte.net).

**Other Important Information:**

Veterans Death and Burial Benefits

[http://www1.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits\\_book/benefits\\_chap07.asp](http://www1.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book/benefits_chap07.asp)

Navy Burial at Sea Information

<http://usmilitary.about.com/cs/generalinfo/a/seaburial.htm>

**Please PRINT THIS PAGE and attach this note to your will or final instructions.**

**\*\* IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS \*\***



**National Chaplain**

**Carl Schmidt**

23 Rockwood Road

Cabot, AR 72023

501-843-7855

[bonnynclvde@classicnet.net](mailto:bonnynclvde@classicnet.net)



**Dear Perch Base**

**The National Chaplain, National Officers and our USSVI members send our condolences to the family of shipmate Fred D. Sanders EN 2 (SS) who went on Eternal Patrol on June 2, 2012. He will be missed by all his shipmates.**

**Our friend and shipmate has now embarked on his Eternal Patrol, shipping out to to join our honored United States Submarine brothers and protected in the loving arms of his God. On behalf of his Submarine Veterans shipmates, know that we mourn his passing and wish peace and the sweetness of fond memories of better times to all his family and friends.**

**There is a port of no return, where ships  
May ride at anchor for a little space  
And then, some starless night the cable slips,  
Leaving an eddy at the mooring space...  
Gulls veer no longer.**

**Rest your oar shipmate Sanders, We have the watch.**

**Fraternally,**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carl Schmidt".

**Carl Schmidt**

**National Chaplain USSVI**

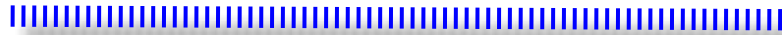


# **“SAVE-OUR-SAIL” Update on Perch Base’s Effort to Make the USS Phoenix (SS-702) Sail and Rudder a City Monument**

**Questions on Save-Our-Sail or to find out how you can help, contact one of our Project Co-Managers by clicking on their name:  
Dan Moss  
Layne Moss**



*(Nothing has been reported by the Project Co-Managers)*



## **Shipmates, for Your “Out of This World” Support at Base Functions, We Salute You**

**This is a list of our latest Base events and the shipmates who participated. Thank you, shipmates. We need your support.**



### **Kap(s) - 4 Kid(s) Phoenix Children’s Hospital Phoenix, AZ June 21, 2012**

**Jim Denzien  
Richard Kunze  
Don DeMarte  
DeWayne Lober  
Steven Stanger  
Tim Moore**

From left to right: DeWayne Lober, Tim Moore, Richard Kunze, Agustine (kneeling and one of the few children visited,) Steve Stanger and Jim Denzien.



# Eternal Patrol July 30, 1942

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 Grunion (SS-216) July 30, 1942 70 men lost



USS Grunion (SS-216) was a Gato-class submarine that was sunk at Kiska, Alaska, during World War II. She was the only ship of the United States Navy to be named for the grunion, a small fish of the silversides family, indigenous to the western American coast.

Her keel was laid down by the Electric Boat Company in Groton, Connecticut on 1 March 1941. She was launched on 22 December 1941, (sponsored by Mrs. Stanford C. Hooper, wife of Rear Admiral Hooper), and commissioned on 11 April 1942 with Lieutenant Commander (Lt. Cmdr.) Mannert L. Abele, USNA class of 1926 in command.

After shakedown out of New London, Grunion sailed for the Pacific on 24 May. A week later, as she transited the Caribbean Sea for Panama, she rescued 16 survivors of USAT Jack, which had been torpedoed by the German U-boat U-558,[5] and she conducted a fruitless search for 13 other survivors presumed in the vicinity. Arriving at Coco Solo on 3 June, Grunion deposited her shipload of survivors and continued to Pearl Harbor, arriving 20 June.

Departing Hawaii on 30 June after ten days of intensive training, Grunion touched Midway Island before heading toward the Aleutian Islands for her first war patrol. Her first report, made as she patrolled north of Kiska Island, stated she had been attacked by a Japanese destroyer and had fired at her with inconclusive results. She operated off Kiska throughout July and sank two enemy patrol boats while in search for enemy shipping. On 30 July the submarine reported intensive antisubmarine activity, and she was ordered back to Dutch Harbor.

Grunion was never heard from nor seen again. Air searches off Kiska were fruitless; and on 5 October Grunion was reported overdue from patrol and assumed lost with all hands.

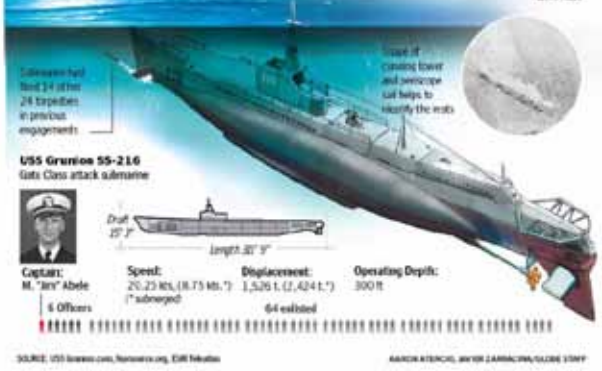
### GATO-CLASS DIESEL-ELECTRIC SUBMARINE

Displacement: 1,549 tons (surf) 2,463 tons (sub)  
 Length: 311 ft 9 in; Beam: 27 ft 3 in; Draft: 17 ft 0 in]  
 4 × Fairbanks-Morse Model 38D8-1/8 9-cylinder diesel engines driving electrical generators; 2 × 126-cell Sargo batteries]  
 4 × high-speed GE electric motors with reduction gears two propellers]  
 5,400 shp (surf); 2,740 shp (sub)  
 Speed: 21 kn (surf); 9 kn (sub)  
 Range: 11,000 nmi surfaced at 10 kn  
 Endurance: 48 hours at 2 kn sub, 75 days on patrol  
 Test depth: 300 ft  
 Complement: 6 officers, 54 enlisted  
 Armament: 10 × 21-inch torpedo tubes (six forward, four aft), 24 torpedoes  
 1 × 4-inch/ 50 caliber deck gun  
 Bofors 40 mm and Oerlikon 20 mm cannon

### USS Grunion last voyage

An expedition organized by descendants of the crew could have found the wreckage of the sunken submarine, north of the Kiska Island in Alaska.

Descendants believe that Grunion sank in action attacking the Japanese transport Kamo Maru. The site of the wreckage would be consistent with this hypothesis.



Her name was stricken from the Naval Vessel Register on 2 November 1942. Captured Japanese records show no antisubmarine attacks in the Kiska area, and the fate of Grunion remained a mystery for 65 years until discovery in the Bering Sea in August 2007 of a wreck believed to be the boat. In October 2008, the U.S. Navy verified that the wreck is the Grunion.[6] The reason for her sinking is still not known, though there are two possible explanations.

Grunion received one battle star for World War II service.

## **The search for the Grunion**

### **USS Grunion wreckage as found in 2008**

In 1998 Lieut. Col. Richard Lane purchased for \$1 a wiring diagram from a Japanese cargo ship, the Kano Maru, which had been involved in World War II activities. Later, in an attempt to authenticate the document, Lane posted it on a Japanese naval historical website, asking if anyone could help. He received a reply from a Japanese naval historian, Yutaka Iwasaki, who not only authenticated the document, but suggested that he knew what happened to the Grunion. Lane contacted ComSubPac, and their public affairs officer, Darrel Ames, placed that information on ComSubPac's Grunion website.

When the Grunion disappeared in 1942, the captain, Lt Cmdr Abele, left behind three sons: Bruce, Brad, and John. For almost 65 years they searched for information about the loss of their father's submarine.[7]

A few years after Lane's research, when the Abeles discovered that information, they were able to contact Yutaka Iwasaki, who provided them with a translated article by the military commander of the Kano Maru. He described a confrontation with a submarine near Kiska Island in the Aleutians which took place at the time the Grunion was reported missing.

A few years after the Yutaka discovery, John Abele, who was cofounder of Boston Scientific, had an opportunity to meet Robert Ballard. Dr. Ballard provided the Abeles with an introduction to the process of finding a wrecked submarine; John Abele then decided to fund an expedition in an attempt to find the Grunion.

In 2006, Williamson Associates, using side-scan sonar, located a promising target that was almost exactly at the location indicated by the commander of the Kano Maru, one which had many other characteristics of a wrecked submarine.

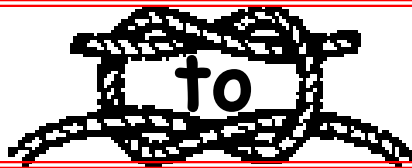
In 2007, using a ROV, DSSI/Oceaneering returned to the site, and took video recordings of the imploded remains of a submarine, one which had markings in English, and propeller guards and limber holes identical to those on the Grunion. In 2008, the U.S. Navy acknowledged that the find was, in fact, the Grunion.

Although there is no absolute certainty the evidence strongly suggests that the Grunion was lost as a result of horrific torpedo performance in the confrontation with the Kano Maru. One torpedo ran low, but despite the magnetic pistol it did not explode; two others bounced off the Kano Maru without exploding. The last one circled back, hitting the periscope supports on the submerged submarine without exploding.

That event, coupled with a jammed rear dive plane, triggered a sequence of events that led to loss of depth control. At about 1000 feet the sub would have imploded, then hit the bottom, breaking off about 50 feet of the bow. It then slid 2/3 mile down the side of an extinct volcano, finally coming to rest on a notch on the underwater mountain.



# Shipmate



# Shipmate

## Now, This Ain't No Sh\*t . . .

We're still looking for stories! All of us have heard the one about the difference between a fairy tale and a sea story. The fairy tale starts, "Once upon a time," and a sea story starts, "Now this ain't no sh\*t!"

Well, that's what we are looking for; sea stories. And they only need to be as true as a sea story ALWAYS is!

So send something in. Here are the rules (or not, whatever):

1. We can use your name or not: your choice just let me know.
2. Grammar and spelling DO NOT COUNT. I will edit and change just enough to make it somewhat readable!
3. Remember, this is from "boat" sailors to "boat" sailors. BUT, since this publication may fall into skimmer hands (or worse, decent civilians!) I may have to substitute punctuation marks in place of letters in certain words, as in the title.
4. There is absolutely no limit on how many you can send in. I will publish AT LEAST one each month as we get them.

So send them to:

Chuck Emmett

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

or

7011 West Risner Road

Glendale, AZ 85308.



SHIPMATE TO SHIPMATE  
STORIES THAT ARE  
"ABSOLUTLY, POSITIVELY, THE TRUTH!"

This was an actual funny occurrence that happened when my boat, a boomer, was going into port after a 70-day under water patrol. I was a Senior Chief Sonar Technician in charge of the Weapons department and assigned Chief of the Topside crew for the maneuvering watch for coming and going to sea. It was time for the topside maneuvering watch crew to go topside and get the cleats turned over, the capstan forward rigged and ready to receive lines from the tender, where we were going to tie up.

I was going up through the after hatch with my safety equipment to attach to a safety track which ran along on the deck. This track held the harness to keep us from falling overboard. We were still beyond the breakwater and the ship was rolling a little with incoming waves. As I attached my equipment, I noticed a lot of young barnacles attached to the deck.

The small shells were in their infancy, about an inch long and as big around as a pencil. There were thousands of them, everywhere you looked. The deck was so covered that you could not take a step without crushing them. They would pop and squirt juice when you stepped on them.

The first Lieutenant was next up to the deck. He looked around at the barnacles and shook his head and said, "Chief what is all this on the deck?"

I looked at him and said, "Sir, are you serious? You've never seen these things before?"

He just looked around and said "No, what are these things".

I thought to myself, I'm going to have some fun. This was the Lieutenant's first job on a nuclear sub. So I asked him, "Do you remember that night, two weeks ago when you were the Officer of the Deck and I was the Sonar Technician of the Watch and I had reported a noise level in the ocean? You had asked me to identify it if I could."

Well, after short time, my answer had been that it was biological in nature. A little while longer and I added that I thought it was whales because they were making all kinds of noises — very unusual noise, with lots of grunts and groans. I remember telling the Lieutenant that they sounded like they were mating. Running around doing what

whales do. It sounded like there were hundreds around the ship. Noises from all directions, I had reported. Now, back on deck as we were tying up, I looked at him and said "Sir, I now know what kind of whales they were?" He said, "Okay Chief, what kind of whale?" I grinned and said, "Sperm whales".

That afternoon, after we secured, the Captain came looking for me. The skipper said I was not to mess with the first Lieutenant! He also said to quit pulling things on his Officers!

I never ever told the Lieutenant the truth about the barnacles. And he never asked.

George Crider



## ***Did you know these facts (continued)?***

- It was a common practice on fighter planes to load every fifth round with a tracer round to aid in aiming. This was a mistake. Tracers had different ballistics so (at long range) if your tracers were hitting the target 80% of your rounds were missing. Worse yet tracers instantly told your enemy he was under fire and from which direction. Worst of all was the practice of loading a string of tracers at the end of the belt to tell you that you were out of ammo. This was definitely not something you wanted to tell the enemy. Units that stopped using tracers saw their success rate nearly double and their loss rate go down.
- When allied armies reached the Rhine the first thing men did was pee in it. This was pretty universal from the lowest private to Winston Churchill (who made a big show of it) and Gen. Patton (who had himself photographed in the act).
- German Me-264 bombers were capable of bombing New York City but it wasn't worth the effort.
- German submarine U-120 was sunk by a malfunctioning toilet.
- Among the first "Germans" captured at Normandy were several Koreans. They had been forced to fight for the Japanese Army until they were captured by the Russians and forced to fight for the Russian Army until they were captured by the Germans and forced to fight for the German Army until they were captured by the US Army.
- Following a massive naval bombardment 35,000 US and Canadian troops stormed ashore at Kiska. 21 troops were killed in the firefight. It would have been worse if there had been any Japanese on the island.
- While the Hiroshima atomic bomb was being built in New Mexico all applicants for menial jobs at the plant did not get a job if they could read. This was because the US authorities didn't want staff reading secret papers.
- When the battleship USS Arizona was destroyed by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor 23 sets of brothers were killed.
- Mohamed Ali, who once ruled Egypt, had two infantry regiments in his army that consisted solely of one eyed soldiers.
- To conserve metal during World War II the movie Oscars were made out of wood.
- When World War II began the neutral Republic of Ireland banned all war footage from their newsreels.
- During World War II the Germans considered the classic film "Casablanca" starring Humphrey Bogart, to be a propaganda film and refused it's showing in German cinemas. Even after the war the film was censored in Germany in which all references to Nazis had been removed.



# 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. We also felt 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.

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 Pursuit Begins

We took up a patrol station off Hainan on 10 April. After referring to a book with images of the different types of

trawlers and what we could expect, we picked up our quarry on 12 April. The wardroom was divided on whether she was a good prospect. However, the ship resembled photographs of other known suspects, and her projected track was taking her toward the west coast of the Philippines, which did not make sense for a fisherman. So we took off in trail. Not long thereafter, the trawler turned to the south, and that was the clincher for us. She had an extremely distinctive shaft rub and propeller sound, which our sonar-men could easily discriminate from background noise. We relied completely on passive sonar to avoid being detected.

The active sonar in the Skipjack-class submarines wouldn't have been reliable because of the reverberations in shallow water. 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 planesmen on station. Our chief petty officer diving officers controlled the ship's depth by supervising the planesmen. 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 trailing 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.

## **Lost and Found**

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, and 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.

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?

### **How Invisible?**

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 in to 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.

### **Where'd She Go?**

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.

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 that 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.

### **High-Seas Drama**

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. 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.

### **Hidden Valor**

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 members were 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.

### **Cold War Records**

This article is the result of merging my notes and recollections with those of Clint Wright, who stood a good many watches as Sculpin's officer of the deck during the pursuit of the trawler. Clint also gained access to the unclassified versions of the submarine's deck logs. Other OODs during the operation included Lieutenants Dick Snaider, Jim Gabala, Alan Beam, and Charlie Krupnick. Getting our joint account through security review was an interesting challenge. Clint's original motive was to publish an article, because he wanted the Sculpin Sailors to get credit for what they did. My motive was to try and get it cleared for my oral history, so at least part of our special operations could be made public to my family and to other interested people. We jointly pursued this effort, dealing with the director of Naval Intelligence and several people who used to work for me. The first thing we discovered was that there were absolutely no records of the Sculpin's operations. They had all been destroyed.

This highlights weaknesses in the Naval Intelligence Command's record keeping. As far as we can determine, the Navy had its standard Cold War intelligence gathering, what we called "special operations," which were classified and compartmentalized. Those reports appear to have been preserved. But because the Sculpin's Vietnam operation was not in that category-it was a more conventional, although extremely unusual, operation and didn't have the protection of that system-the reports were purged at some point when the government discarded old records. There is just no official record of this operation.

In putting this story together and sending it forward for clearance by the Navy Department, I think we did a double service. We not only got it cleared so those who served in the Sculpin during this time can receive credit, but we made this operation public and prevented it from being lost forever. At some point, an old Sculpin Sailor would have wanted to talk about it, and there would have been no way to find the records.

So I'm very pleased that we were able to do that for our fine crew. **-Admiral Charles R. Larson**

**Return To:**

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

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

**Next Meeting**  
**Saturday, July 14, 2012**  
12 noon, 11 a.m. (no host bar)  
Dillon's at Arrowhead  
59th Ave just north of Loop 101

