

COLUMBUS BASE SUBMARINE VETERANS

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May 2012



The Green Board



ALL SEAS ARE NAVIGABLE



Franklin Heights High School NJROTC

Sunset Review
May 9, 2012

At left is Cadet Shane Culver receiving the John T. Leers Junior Cadet Achievement Award from Columbus Base member John T. Leers.



At right is Cadet Daniel Cooke receiving the Columbus Base Award for Military Excellence from Columbus Base Treasurer Dave Creekmore



Copies of the Certificates presented to the Cadets by the Columbus Base USSVI





Tolling of the Boats



USS Squalus (SS-192) Lost on 23 May 1939 with a loss of 26 men when it flooded and sank off Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The boat was salvaged and re-commissioned under a new name.



USS Largarito (SS-371) Lost with all hands (85 men) on 3 May 1945 in the Gulf of Siam during a Japanese surface attack.



USS Stickleback (SS-415) Rammed on exercises off Hawaii by USS Silverstein (DD-534) on 28 May 1958. all crew safely evacuated prior to sinking.



USS Scorpion (SSN-589) Lost with all hands (99 men) on 22 May 1968 possibly due to own torpedo detonation 400 miles southwest of the Azores in the Atlantic.

“Sailors rest your oars.”

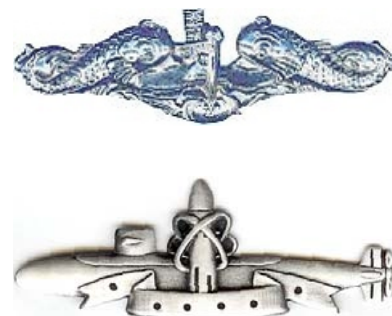


OUR CREED

“ 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.”

John T. Leers

YNCS(SS) U.S.N. (ret.)



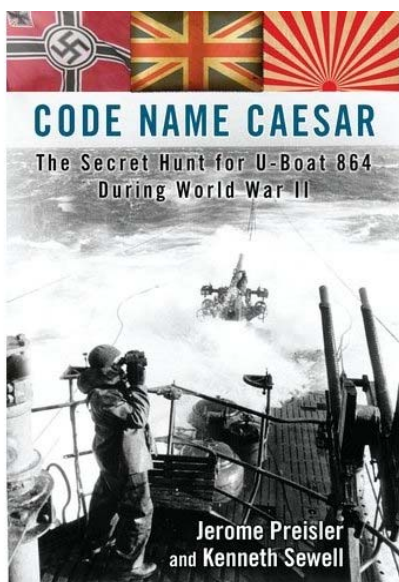
John T. Leers was born in New York City on April 4, 1927. He spent his childhood in the city and was educated in the New York City public school system. John was attending George Washington High School during most of World War II. Because of his strong desire to serve and defend his country, he volunteered for military service prior high school graduation. However, John understood the importance of education and earned his General Education Diploma after joining the Navy.

From 1945 to 1952, John served at various duty stations... both afloat and ashore. He volunteered for submarine duty in 1952. He graduated from Basic Enlisted Submarine School in 1953 and was assigned to his first submarine, USS Sea Owl (SS-405). John "qualified in submarines" aboard Sea Owl in 1954, earning the right to wear the submarine service "dolphins" insignia. From 1953 until his retirement in 1975, John served his country aboard various surface ships and submarines, and at various shore installations throughout the world... including service in Viet Nam as an advisor to the Vietnamese Political War College in 1969-1970.

John transferred to the Navy Reserve in 1974, and retired from the United States Navy in 1975 as a Senior Chief Yeoman (submarine qualified). His 30 year naval career included: service during World War II, Korea, and Viet Nam; service aboard 5 ships and submarines... light cruiser USS Huntington (CL-107), escort destroyer USS Joseph K. Taussig (DE-1030), diesel submarine USS Sea Owl (SS-405), and nuclear ballistic missile submarines USS Lafayette (SSBN-616) and USS Alexander Hamilton (SSBN-617); foreign service in Germany and Viet Nam; service at various stateside installations, including as a Navy recruiter in Columbus, Ohio.

Immediately following his retirement from the Navy, John became a Naval Science instructor in the Navy Junior ROTC program at Franklin Heights High School. He served in that capacity for 22 years, retiring from the school system in 1996. It's through his association with the FHHS NJROTC that the Columbus Base Award For Military Excellence" was created. And in an effort to honor John for his contributions to both FHHS NJROTC and Columbus Submarine Veterans, the John Leers Achievement Award was created.

John and his wife Lorraine have lived in the Columbus area since 1972, currently residing in Reynoldsburg. They have 1 son and 2 daughters. John is a life member of the United States Submarine Veterans, Inc... both the local Columbus Base (where he served as treasurer in 2006-2007), and the national organization (where he is a member of USSVI "Holland Club", recognizing John for being qualified in submarines for more than 50 years). John is also a member of the Fleet Reserve Association, and the Sea Owl Association (serving as the secretary/treasurer).



Ken Sewell's newest book can be pre ordered thru the base. Cost will be \$20 each, picked up at the base meetings. Shipping will be extra. Get your copy ordered now.

Pay at pickup. Contact Dave Creekmore 740-928-1780 or creek636@columbus.rr.com

Patrolling The Seas With Deepwater Robots

Bloomberg Businessweek, May 14

Underwater mines are lurking in critical waterways around the world. Low-tech but highly destructive, they can blow up ships, destroy oil and natural gas pipelines, and wipe out international telephone and Internet cables.

By U.S. Navy estimates, some 50 countries stock more than 250,000 maritime mines that could be dropped in the world's oceans. Naval analysts believe China has the most extensive and sophisticated inventory of mines. If Iran had shut down the Strait of Hormuz earlier this year, as it threatened, its strategy likely would have involved deploying its stockpile of mines.

The Navy currently relies on a small fleet of ships and divers dispatched from submarines to find mines and defuse them. Trained dolphins, equipped with cameras and sensors, also sniff them out. With the Pentagon facing \$1 trillion in budget cuts over the next decade, finding money for those missions "is going to be a huge challenge," says Captain Duane Ashton.

Instead, the Navy plans to rely on the Knifefish, an underwater drone that Ashton's Unmanned Maritime Systems Program Office is developing. The 19-foot-long Knifefish weighs 1,700 pounds and is powered by lithium-ion batteries. Shaped like a torpedo, it will roam the deep seas for 16 hours at a time—unpiloted. The Navy is spending \$170 million over the next five years to design and buy eight of the robots from General Dynamics (GD) and Bluefin Robotics. It expects to deploy the first Knifefish in 2016, acquiring 52 by 2034.

The drones are an upgrade from a small fleet of remote-controlled underwater vehicles the Navy has used since the 1990s to comb shallow harbors and clear debris for ships. These vehicles can make out suspect objects, but the Navy must send in divers to investigate further. The more powerful Knifefish sweeps for mines by sending out low-frequency sound signals; when they bounce off a man-made object, the drone develops an image that it takes back to analysts aboard the mother ship. Ashton says it "can tell a mine from a refrigerator littering the bottom of the sea."

The challenge for the Navy lies in programming the drones to operate without a pilot directing them via a cable, which would restrict their reach in deep water. "The ocean is so big that you can't just joy-stick" drones, says Tom Curtin, a former scientist at the U.S. Office of Naval Research. Sea floors aren't well mapped and change constantly due to shifting currents and weather. Unlike their aerial cousins, underwater drones can't connect to satellites or GPS to navigate.

Eventually officials hope to build underwater drones 10 times as large as the Knifefish that could blow up mines, says Thomas Swean, team lead for ocean engineering and marine systems at the Office of Naval Research. First the military has to develop better power sources so the bigger drones "can last three months instead of two days" without needing a recharge, Swean says.

"As much as people have been taken with unmanned aerial vehicles," says former Chief of Naval Operations Gary Roughead, "you haven't seen anything yet."

The bottom line: With defense cuts looming, the U.S. Navy plans to stock up on unmanned underwater drones to patrol the world's waterways for mines.

USNI Naval History article on USS Sculpin

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

By Admiral Charles R. Larson, U.S. Navy (Retired), with Captain Clinton Wright, U.S. Navy (Retired), and Paul Stillwell
One would expect that Cold War "special ops" involving U.S. nuclear-powered submarines are shrouded in secrecy.

Other American sub activities during that era, however, are also hidden, one for a very strange reason.

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

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

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

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, 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.

Continued page #10



COLUMBUS BASE MEETING MINUTES

May 5, 2012

Meeting was called to order by Base Commander Jim Tolson. COB Marv Pastor led the salute to the Flag. The invocation was conducted by the Chaplain Walt Fleak. Tolling of the Bell for lost boats of May was performed by Marv Pastor and Walt Fleak. There were 18 members and guests present. The BC welcomed everyone.

Secretary's Report – The April minutes were posted in the *Green Board*. There were no comments or corrections.

Treasurer's Report- Dave reported on the state of the treasury. The audit is in process.

Webmaster's Report- Cliff reported the sailing list is completed and updated as needed. You will need to be registered on the web site to gain access.

Chaplain's Report- Sick Bay report –Don Crinkey has had his next surgery. Bob Friar reported he is home and doing fine. He told Bob that he hopes we don't complain about the surgery ruining his good looks.

Membership- See New Business

Committee Reports-

Activity – Several base members traveled to the Air Force Museum and had an enjoyable trip.

Dave Creekmore will present NJROTC awards on May 9th at 1730 at FHHS Football Stadium. Members were encouraged to attend.

New Albany Parade May 19th – step off 1100. Email will be forthcoming for further details.

Placing of Flags at Resurrection Cemetery – May 26th.

Worthington Memorial Day Parade – May 28th – step off 1000.

Broad Street Bridge Memorial Day Ceremony will be attended by Jim Tolson and Tim Barker.

Columbus Base Picnic

Dave and Jan Creekmore's home

4030 Beaver Run Road

Hebron, Ohio 43025

(740) 928-1780

Contact Dave Creekmore (740) 973-2372 if attending. Base will be providing the meat. This will be a Hog Roast.

Unfinished Business –none

New Business-

Ken Sewell has a new Book – *Code Name Caesar* – the secret hunt for U864 during WWII. If you want a copy, place the order with Dave Creekmore (\$20). Ken reported on the movie he has been working on in California. He said they are looking to be presenting the movie (*Phantom*)(?) in some film festivals starting this summer. The movie world is sure different.

Phil Philipps discussed the Shrine program of selling ads in the baseball programs for the youth baseball leagues in Licking County. He made a motion to take out a half page ad for \$50 to highlight the Columbus Base of USSVI to recruit members. This would be for a one year trial to see how it goes for recruitment. The motion was seconded by Dave O'Carroll. A discussion followed with regards to recruiting new members. There was general agreement that we need to do more in the recruitment area. The question was called and the motion was passed by a voice vote of the majority of the members present. Phil said he would work with Dave and Jan Creekmore on the layout of the ad. Galin Brady said he would help.

For the Good of the Order –

Open discussion from the floor

Bob Friar presented a special award of a set of cast dolphins to Dave Creekmore for his work for the base.

If anyone has any questions as to downloading the *Green Board* contact the BC or Webmaster, Cliff Dodson.

50/50 – Marv Pastor won \$44.00. Walt Fleak won a sub t-shirt. Jim Tolson won a sub DVD. Cliff Dodson won a bag of cookies. Tim Barker won a sub t-shirt. Bill McCorkle won a bag of cookies. Bill Anderson won a bag of cookies. Dave O'Carroll won a sub t-shirt. BC reminded us to cleanup before we left Next officers meeting is tentative scheduled for June 16th at the AM-VETS Post on Westerville Road in Columbus.

Closing prayer was conducted by Walt Fleak.

Motion for adjournment was made by Walt Fleak and seconded by Tim Barker. Motion passed by voice vote of the majority of the members present.

Submitted by Bob McDaniel

Base Secretary

Buy More Subs, Destroyers, HASC Tells Navy

Defense.aol.com, April 25

WASHINGTON: The House Armed Services Committee will authorize -- though not require -- the Navy to buy 10 Virginia-class attack submarines and 10 Arleigh Burke-class Aegis destroyers over five years, instead of the nine of each type requested in the President's budget. While the Navy was open to buying 10 DDGs, the HASC language constitutes a rejection of the administration's plan, already unpopular on the Hill, to save money by delaying sub purchases.

The committee is also working on legislative language that would prohibit the fleet from having fewer than 12 ballistic-missile submarines in service, which would require the service either to keep its current Ohio-class SSBNs in service longer than planned or accelerate the development of an extremely expensive replacement, which the current budget proposal had delayed as an economy measure, much to key legislators' displeasure.

Unlike the mandate for at least 12 SSBNs, the language on the Virginia submarines and on the destroyers does not require the administration to do anything, only that it may: The draft bill (or mark) released today by the HASC seapower subcommittee simply says in each case that the " the Secretary of the Navy may enter into a multiyear contract... for the procurement of not more than 10" of each vessel. (The 10 destroyers would be bought over fiscal years 2013-2017; the attack submarines over 2014-2018).

Congress rarely grants the authority to enter into multi-year procurement contracts, which the Pentagon generally prefers to buying equipment year by year. (Pentagon policy is not even to enter into an MYP contract unless it can save ten percent or more on the procurement). On the destroyer program specifically, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Sean Stackley has publicly said that the service hopes an MYP would give it enough leverage in price negotiations with the shipyards to make a tenth DDG-51 affordable. But the Navy had not been talking about a tenth Virginia submarine. And no one knows where the money might come from.

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 IMC 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 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

Submitted by Cliff Dodson and Woody Cook



Upcoming Events

May 19, 2012	1100 Step off	New Albany Founder's Day Parade
May 26, 2012	1230	Placing of flags at Resurrection Cemetery
May 28, 2012	1000	Worthington Memorial Day Parade Broad Street Bridge Memorial Ceremony
June 2, 2012	1400	Base summer picnic. Hog roast at the Creekmore's All are welcome, bring the whole family.

Commander's Corner

By Jim Tolson



Had a great time spending the day at the National Museum of the Air Force April 28th and I think those attending did too. Many thanks to Cliff Dodson and Tim Barker for chauffeuring us to Dayton. It is always amazing to see the declassified hardware on display. The SR-71 Blackbird was a "rumor" during Viet Nam. It took photographs while flying Mach 3 at 70,000 feet. A satellite is also on display that took pictures on 60 miles of Kodak film and would then drop the film canister back to earth for retrieval. In each case, film development was too slow and couldn't compete with new satellites. The highlight of the day was dinner at the officer's club. I enjoyed being able to get to know those that went a little better. For example, did you know that Bob Frier is from San Francisco?

Congratulations to the 2012 Columbus Base NJROTC award recipients Daniel Cooke, Military Excellence and Shane Culver, John Leers Junior Cadet Achievement Award. Daniel is joining the Navy after graduation and Shane is active on drill teams and will be on the cadet staff next year.

Other activities in May include carrying the colors for the New Albany Founder's Day Parade May 19th, with an 1100 step off, placing of US Flags at Resurrection Cemetery May 26th, the Worthington Memorial Day Parade, May 28th with a 1000 step off. Be looking for comments on the June 2nd picnic at Jan and Dave Creekmore's home. The following Saturday, June 9th, is Adopt -A- Highway Clean up, so mark your calendar.

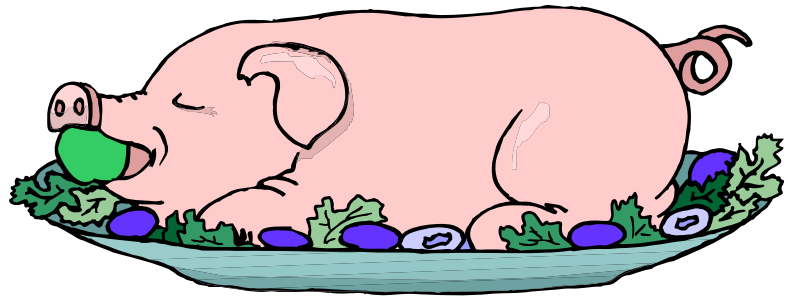
Our next Columbus Base meeting, June 2nd, is 2 PM at Dave & Jan Creekmore's home, 4030 Beaver Run Road, Hebron, OH 43025. This will be our picnic meeting. It is a hog roast and everyone can bring a side dish or dessert. The picnic will provide an opportunity to visit the Columbus Base Submarine Museum. Hope to see you there.

Today In Undersea Warfare History:

1942: USS Dolphin (was V-7) (SS-169) got underway on her 2nd war patrol. Searching west of Midway Island, she patrolled off the island itself during the pivotal Battle of Midway She took harbor at the atoll for repairs from 8 June to 11 June, and then she returned to her patrol.

1944: USS Growler (SS-215) left Majuro on her 9th war patrol to patrol in the Marianas-Luzon area. Rendezvousing with Bang and Seahorse to form a wolf pack, she closed several targets but achieving firing position only once, when she sank the cargo vessel Katori Maru

1945: USS Chub (SS-329) sailed for the Java Sea and her 2nd war patrol. During this patrol, she attacked two freighters, and sank the minesweeper W-34 which had come out hunting for her. The damage already done to Japanese shipping made targets few by this time.



2012 Base Picnic

June 2nd

Time 1400 / when ever.

Dinner at 1500.

Bring a covered dish or desert.

Bring chairs for your group.

Bring drinks if you wish something besides water or ice tea.

Bring an appetite.

A 1/2 hog will be slow cooked on the premises all day. Rain or shine, if needed we will set up in the work shop. A grill will be available if you wish to cook something else.

Live music provided by one of our own members.

Last named A to O bring a covered dish

P to Z bring dessert.

Please RSVP creek636@columbus.rr.com



June Birthdays

Greg Leonard	01
Al Albergottie	03
Gus Hoehl	05
Tom Baughman	13
Gary Pelini	14
Robert Clark	20
Frank Lloyd	23
John Pendleton	25



The Conn

Base commander

Jim Tolson

Vice Commander

Tim Barker

Treasurer

Dave Creekmore

Secretary

Bob McDaniel

Chaplain

Sharon Lloyd / Walt Fleak

COB

Marv Pastor

Membership Chairman

Jim Tolson

Storekeeper

Frank Lloyd

Web Master

Cliff Dodson

Editor

Jan Creekmore

Activates Chairmen

Remember to bring your donations of
coffee, tea, or hot cocoa to the
monthly meetings.

Your donations are very much appre-
ciated by the veterans at the Chalmers
P. Wylie Veterans Clinic.

Editor's Note

If you have comments or articles, please contact
the base newsletter editor.

Jan Creekmore at e-mail
creek636@columbus.rr.com