

Steel Valley Dolphins

March 2019



The official newsletter of the
USS Requin Base of the USSVI
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

USSVI Creed:

"To perpetuate the memory of our shipmates who gave their lives in the pursuit of 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."



Meetings held on the second Saturday of the month normally in Baden at the American Legion Post and quarterly meetings held around our membership area.

- **Make a difference, get to a meeting!**

----- Pride Runs Deep -----

Next Meeting ; Saturday April 13th at the American Legion in Baden PA

2017 USS Requin Base Officers

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----- Pride Runs Deep -----



Binnacle List

Aaron Ellis
Alan Lukasik
Edie Dietrich



Pa State Representative

<https://www.dmva.pa.gov/veteransaffairs/Pages/default.aspx>





HUBERT C. "HUEY" DIETRICH
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www.requinbase.org

www.ussvi.org

March 10, 2019

Dear Sir/Madam:

The United States Submarine Veterans of the "USS REQUIN BASE" in Pittsburgh, Pa, is having our annual Booster Drive for 2019! There are five different booster plateaus to fit your donation budget – Silver-(\$25.00), Gold-(\$50.00), Platinum (75.00), Diamond-(\$100.00) and Nuclear (over \$100.00).

We are made up of submariners from (21) states, with the core of our base, from the Tri-State area. We participate in community events and parades, with our float "THE NAUTLAS". Our base activities include the "KAP(SS) 4 KID(SS)" program. We give honorary submarine hats and certificates to boys and girls who have cancer or other medically challenging situations. We also are involved with the boy scouts, who attain the rank of EAGLE SCOUT. We present the scout, at his court of honor, a patch, certificate and a REQUIN BASE CHALLENGE COIN, honoring him in his accomplishment.

Every year on the Sunday before Memorial Day, the Requin Base conducts a memorial service on board the USS Requin, which is docked at the Carnegie Science. The Marine Detachment of the Three River Leather-Necks and the VFW Post 9199 supply the color and honor guards. We play on having a young lady sing the star spangle banner, along with other individuals and military groups. With the help of our shipmates and supporters, we will be able to continue our programs and hopefully add more. Please consider **BECOMING** a Booster for 2019

PRIDE RUNS DEEP


Huey Dietrich – Commander

213 Andrew Drive
Glenshaw, Pa 15116



COMMANDERS COLUMN:

KUDOS to Shipmate Eric Bookmiller and his first mate Margie, along with shipmate Chad Underkoffler for hosting our March traveling meeting at the American Legion in Houston, Pa. The grub was outstanding and the Legion’s personnel were very kind and gracious to us. The guest speaker, Larry Maggi, did an outstanding job and showed us lots of much respect.

Sandra Carmen was in attendance with her first mate Robert. She is the sister of Dennis Knapp, who was on the USS SCORPION when it was lost at sea. She is honoring the base by joining as an associate member.

Also in attendance was a new member, Emmitt Lowery! He is a 92 year old WW11 veteran and drove himself to the meeting from McKeesport, Pa. In addition to Emmitt, we also had shipmate Jeff Iliff. I believe this was his first meeting and he informed us that he had eight (8) kids. He looks like he just got out of high school. KUDOS to Jeff on having a GREAT family. The members present asked for base applications for other submariners that they work with.

BIRTHDAYS

MEMBER

FIRST MATE

BOOKWALTER, Lee 4/20/53
 CAMPBELL, Ron 4/19/46
 CROCKER, Justin 4/01/75
 GAYLOR, Gerry 4/15/30
 GUNTANG, Ric 4/04/41
 HOLZWARTH, Scott 4/25/56
 IRELAND, Gary 4/19/52
 LARSON, Merlin 4/14/44
 LAWRENCE, Jared 4/03/87
 List, Jimmy Craig 4/11/50
 MACK, John 4/07/52
 SIMPSON, Richard 4/10/45

DUNLOP, Sandy 4/09
 GEYER, Beverly 4/08
 GORON, Patricia 4/02
 HAMIL, Liz 4/25
 IDEN, Helga 4/10
 IRELAND, Susan 4/23
 KUHN Jacquelyn 4/12
 SHRUMP, Debby 4/28
 SUTHERIN, Ginny 4/28
 ZDARKO, Barbara 4/18

ANNIVERSARIES

ALLEN, Mike & Linda 4/01
 BRUCE, Jon & Connie 4/22
 CLARK, Bob & Nancy 4/04
 DOLGOS, George & Kathleen 4/04
 GOLDMAN, Bob & Amy 4/29
 KUHN, Blain & Jacquelyn 4/13
 SEWELL, Josua & Cassandra 4/14
 WEISMANTLE, Bob & Trudy 4/20

BAYNE, Greg & Mary 4/01
 COCHENOUR, Davie & Carol 4/08
 DAVIS, Bob & Betsy 4/06
 GASPAROVIC Mike & Kela 4/24
 Iliff, Jeff & Heidi 4/03
 NICOTRA, Frank & Rose 4/07
 SHRUMP, Charles & Debby 4/27

NEW MEMBERS

EMMETT LOWRY qualified on the USS STERLET SS392 in 1945/1946 as a F1(SS). He left the navy in 1948 as an EN3(SS). Emmett lives in McKeesport with his first mate Barbara. Emmett is a ww11 submariner. Please e-mail Emmett and welcome him aboard workbyemmett@gmail.com.

SANDRA CARMAN, sister of Dennis Knapp, lost submariner of the USS SCORPION. Sandra lives in Claysville, Pa. Earlier this year, the Requin Base honored Dennis at the Veterans Day parade in Houston, and presented Sandra with a flag that sailed on board the USS NAUTILUS – USS REQUIN -Dennis high school and the Washington County Courthouse. She is joining the base as an associate member. Welcome aboard Sandra. She brings our base membership to 180 with a goal of 200 for for 2019.

We will be losing two shipmates later this year, but only in body not in spirit. Greg Baine moved to Tennessee for his employment. He is one of the unlucky ones who lost his job at the Chevy plant in Lordstown, Ohio. I assisted him on finding the USSVI base close to him, and he vowed to remain a member of the Requin Base. Also, Shipmate Ric Guntang, is moving to Winchester, Va to be closer to his grand kids. He will be leaving April 1. I wish it was only an April's Fool's joke but it's true about him leaving. He also will maintain his membership with the Requin base and promises to come back for some meetings while he visits his remaining family in Pittsburgh.

LIST OF APPROVED PARADES FOR 2019 – Carnegie, Sewickley, Coraopolis & Cannosburg.

HOLLOND CLUB – 2019

Our next meeting, Saturday, April 13, at the American Legion in Baden, Pa., we will honor our eight newest Hollond Club Members – Mike Allen, Jim Bense, George Brown, Jim List, John Lukasik, Paul McKenzie, Terry Swinney and Art Kalimon.

In addition to our guest speaker at our last meeting, we had three guests in attendance. Commander of the American Legion Randy Stenger, Sherry Harvison, Post Adjutant and Ken Ward, the post Trustee. They were all so great and appreciated being invited by Eric. They asked to be able to return to any of our future meetings. They have an open invitation. In addition, the American Legion Post is a member of our Booster Club. They are the second leading contributor of any veteran organization towards the Requin Base, over the course of the last three years. KUDOS – American Legion Post 902

REQUIN BASE BIRTHDAY PARTY

The committee has been working hard and meeting regular. Dick Geyer-Chairman, jude Myers, Secretary, Carl Stigers BOD, Lou Hamill, J.B. Messer, Bob Meyers, Sally Smith, Tino Bolcato, Marian Miller, Lee Bookwalter, Treasurer, Patsy Bookwalter and Beverly Geyer. Date scheduled

is Sept 07 at the Springdale Veterans Association. More information will be shared at each base meeting and monthly SVD.

KUDOS to shipmate Michael Cherock! He has won the VETREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR AWARD. They will be doing a commercial with Michael and want to do some video on the Requin! Mike owns his own business on the North Side of Pittsburgh and lives in Sewickley, Pa.

USSVI 55TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

HOSTED BY USSVI (SUBVETS) GROTON BASE

May 2 to 4

A few shipmates are planning a trip up to Groton. If you are interested, please contact Chad Underkoffler -candj981@verizon.net - ASAP to contact.

Message from Ray-Ray, Son of Richard Beauregard. He is currently out on patrol.

Hey Dad, sorry its been a while since I've written. There hasn't been much of a point since we have not sent or received for a long time. But I've really been missing you all, I wish I could talk to you more. Congrats on getting QA WCS QUALIFIED THOUGH! That's awesome! I've been working on my QA craftsman quals, my senior wants it done before the end of deployment, I'm a little over half way done, just trucking along with the quals. I finished up below decks and got qualified lookout – really enjoyed standing lookout. The first time I stood lookout I didn't have any cold weather gear on and it was freezing, plus, we kept taking waves. I was frozen to the bone and shaking like a wet dog. So when we were in port last, I bough this crazy thick cold-weather jacket with a bunch of NASA patches and a fur hood, ski gloves, and 2 ski hoods. Haha, I looked like I was ready for a trek across Antarctica? Unfortunately I only got to use it once, but it was worth it! I So warm! Now I just use it to keep warm when I'm hanging out in cable handling or CSES. By the sounds of it, you guys could use a jacket like that up there. I can't believe how cold and windy its been in CT, It seems like you guys lose power a lot too. Didn't you buy a generator awhile ago? Good job losing all that weight. I've only lost like 10 lbs, but I've been doing a lot of weight lifting too. So there's a little fat muscle trade-off in that math. I was telling Arnie that it sounds like everyone is really trying to get fit this year. I'm eager to see what we will all look like by the time I get back. Its really good to hear that you and mom are doing so well. Keep me posted on what kind of SUV mom ends up getting. Recommend like a Santa Fe or a crossover though, something small, idk how well mom will handle a full size. I miss you all a lot and think of you all the time. Thank you for writing, it may take awhile to reach me, but its so nice to hear from your guys.

Anyway, I love and miss you! Remember to write if you get word and hang by your thumbs!

Love, Ray-Ray - (editor shorted this message – ran out of space)

SSIA Update 06 ► H.R.553/S.622 | Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act

Sen. Doug Jones (D-AL) introduced legislation 29 FEB to end the deduction of Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities from Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) paid to survivors of fallen servicemembers, also known as the “widows tax.” MOAA has long supported repeal of the widows tax, backing similar legislation from House Rep. Joe Wilson (R-SC) and others. The change would mean that in cases where military service led to the death of a servicemember, DIC would be paid in addition to the SBP annuity.

About 67,000 military survivors would benefit from this legislation, with the current offset costing them about \$12,000 annually. “The SBP-DIC offset remains grossly unfair to the members of the military community who deserve our support the most,” said Lt. Gen. Dana T. Atkins, USAF (Ret), President and CEO of MOAA. “We thank Sen. Jones for his leadership on this issue, and we encourage their fellow legislators to join the fight. “The need to solve this inequity is uniformly agreed-upon throughout Congress, but they haven't found the political will to resolve it,” Atkins said. “The 116th Congress has an opportunity to be known for getting this done.”

Jones' new legislation -- S. 622, the Military Widows Tax Elimination Act - already has 31 Senate cosponsors from both sides of the aisle as of March 5, including 28 original cosponsors. Wilson and Rep. John Yarmuth (D-KY) introduced a similar bill, H.R. 553, in the House earlier this year. In April, as part of its annual Storming the Hill event, MOAA plans to bring in chapter leaders from across the country to meet with lawmakers to find a permanent end to the widows tax. While previous efforts to eliminate the widows tax have generated support from lawmakers, most civilian constituents remain unaware of the financial penalty. MOAA encourages its members to share this information with civilians in their communities, both geographical and online.

Act now to send your House and Senate elected officials an editable MOAA-suggested message urging them to end the widows tax. To so go to <http://takeaction.moaa.org/app/write-a-letter?6&engagementId=495393>. [Source: The MOAA Newsletter | March 7, 2019 ++]

Vet Missing Alert System ► S.699 | The Green Alert Act of 2019

Two senators introduced legislation 9 MAR that would create a Green Alert public notification system to find veterans when they go missing. Sens. Maggie Hassan (D-NH) and Joni Ernst (R-IA) sponsored The Green Alert Act of 2019. They said the system would be similar to the Amber Alert system for missing children or the Silver Alert system to locate senior citizens, especially ones with Alzheimer's disease or dementia. Many veterans go missing because of stress and trauma associated with their military service, said Ernst, who is an Iraq War veteran who served for more than 20 years in the Army Reserve and Army National Guard. “As a combat veteran, I understand how important it is for our veterans to have access to the support and care they have earned,” she said in a statement.

Last year, Wisconsin became the first state to implement a public notification system for missing veterans. The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported the system was created after Air Force veteran Corey Adams, a Milwaukee resident diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, went missing and was found dead 18 days later. His family struggled to get police to search for him. Retired Army Brig. Gen. Donald Bolduc, the former commander of Special Operations Command-Africa, has led efforts to take the Green Alert system nationwide. He resides in New Hampshire and inspired Hassan to take up the issue. “For a variety of reasons, far too many veterans go missing for long stretches of time before someone finds them,” Bolduc said. He believes the system would help “better locate veterans and give them the appropriate care they need when they disappear.”

The Green Alert Act would create a commission comprising representatives from the departments of Justice, Transportation, Veterans Affairs and Health and Human Services, as well as state and local officials. The commission would be tasked with developing best practices and technical assistance to help states develop the system. [Source:

Military Opioid Use ► Preventing Painkiller Abuse

Virginia doctors using a statewide drug-monitoring program now can see whether their patients have gotten prescriptions — including for opioids, benzodiazepines and stimulants — filled at military hospitals and clinics. Though the prescription-painkiller-abuse epidemic has raged for years, the Department of Defense just launched its own system in December for controlled substances and how they're given to military patients. The program tracks quantities and strengths of medications. With the Virginia and military systems connected, officials said, doctors and pharmacists have a more complete picture of patients' prescription histories. Having such information could prevent the overprescribing of addictive drugs and dangerous drug combinations, they say. Police and medical licensing boards also can use the data to support investigations into doctor shopping and other criminal activity.

Though several other states and Puerto Rico have followed suit, Virginia was the first to go “live” with its connection to the military's electronic database, said Diane Powers, a spokeswoman for the Virginia Department of Health Professions. The state was eager to lead the pack, officials said, because it has the third-largest military population. David Bobb, chief of the Defense Health Agency's pharmacy operations, said the department has been wanting to help states in their fight against the opioid crisis for a while, but there were challenges. Each state has its own regulations for its prescription-monitoring program, and some have had to take a closer look at their policies to make sure sharing the information is legal. The department also has had security concerns. “We didn't want to share it in such a way that an enemy could get tipped off that ... maybe there's going to be a movement of personnel or something like that. It took a while to come up with a solution,” Bobb said, “and that's why I think ... we were a little bit behind times in making this operation.”

Prior to launching the military's electronic database, department officials kept an eye on their own prescribers and pharmacists internally. They could monitor when patients received controlled substances at military treatment facilities and through its mail-

order program. But they didn't know if a patient went to a retail pharmacy and paid cash. Connecting with state programs gives the department that capability. Ralph Orr, director of Virginia's program, said in a news release that the additional information will "help save more lives." The state's database connects with 32 jurisdictions, including Washington, D.C. In

Vet Suicide Update 24 ► White House Finalizes Plan To Stem Veteran Suicides

The White House is creating a new high-level task force on preventing veterans suicide which will include new community outreach grants aimed at former service members and expanded projects across a host of government agencies to coordinate research and prevention efforts. President Donald Trump signed a new executive order on the initiative — dubbed the **President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide**, or PREVENTS — on 5 MAR at the White House. It's the latest in a series of steps by his administration to address the problem, which claims an estimated 20 veterans lives every day. Last year, the president signed a separate executive order providing more counseling and mental health care for recently separated service members, who face a significantly higher risk of suicide than other military groups.

According to senior administration officials, the new order will give agency officials a year to develop plans for a more aggressive approach to suicide prevention, with a goal of more state and local community engagement. The task force will look to develop a new grant system for mental health support and outreach similar to the Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing program, which provides funding directly to local charities and city programs to help individualize assistance plans for veterans. Those HUD-VASH vouchers have been in use for a decade and are widely credited with helping draw down the number of homeless veterans by half. Officials hope to replicate that model for suicide prevention, relying on local expertise and federal funding to reach more veterans.

Veterans Affairs officials estimate that of the 20 veterans a day who take their own lives, about 70 percent have little or no contact with the federal veteran system. That makes targeted community outreach to populations outside those systems critical to addressing the suicide problem. The White House has not put a price tag on the new grants yet, but is expected to work with Congress in coming months to set parameters and draft legislation on the idea. Meanwhile, the new task force will be charged with better coordinating existing research on suicide within federal systems. Already, the departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security have a host of information on traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder and mental health issues that could be indicators of suicidal thoughts.

Officials hope to use the Department of Energy's expansive data collection and research systems to better analyze that existing data, providing new potential avenues for prevention efforts. The research work will also include pushing the Centers for Disease Control to provide more up-to-date information on veterans suicide research. Currently, the latest available data on the problem typically trails at least two years behind current efforts. Senior administration officials are hoping to cut that wait down to no more than six months. Suicide prevention has been a major focus of both Congress and the executive branch in recent years, but the rate of suicide has largely remained flat. White House officials are hoping the new task force will restart a national conversation on the issue, and bring in private-sector partners to help find new solutions.

Officials from the House Veterans' Affairs Committee are scheduled to hold a roundtable with administration experts on the issue in early March. Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee ranking member Jon Tester (D-MT) introduced new legislation on the issue last week. In December, the Veterans Health Administration announced a new pilot program with the advocacy group The Independence Fund to reunite combat troops for group therapy sessions, in the hopes of using those common bonds to provide better mental health resources. Sarah Verardo, chief executive officer of the group, called the new White House initiative an important step forward in helping veterans. "We owe it to them to ensure they are not forgotten upon their return home," she said. "They may have returned from the battlefield, but their war is not over. For many, their true battle begins when their purpose in the military ends."

Veterans facing any type of mental or emotional distress can contact the Veteran Crisis Line at any time by dialing 1-800-273-8255 and selecting option 1 for a VA staffer. Veterans, troops or their families members can also text 838255 or visit www.VeteransCrisisLine.net for assistance. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | March 4, 2019 ++]

Prescription Drug Costs Update 25 ► Will Washington Finally Do Something

If people in this polarized nation can agree on one thing, it is that prescription drug prices are too high, and that the federal government should do something about it. But it seems unlikely that Congress or the administration will do enough this year to satisfy an enraged public. In the end, if Washington doesn't overcome industry resistance to reform — in particular, letting the government negotiate the price of drugs purchased by Medicare — whatever actions it takes will be seen as too little, too late by American voters in 2020.

The reasons why incumbents can be expected to pay a price at the polls are no surprise. A new survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation finds that one in four people taking prescription drugs say they have difficulty affording their medication. What is more, 79 percent see the current costs of drugs as unreasonable. Another poll released last fall by NORC at the University of Chicago and my organization (the non-profit and non-partisan West Health Institute), found that 78 percent of the public name high health-care costs as its highest priority. Fewer than 25 percent of voters approve of the ways the Trump administration and Congress are handling the high cost of prescription drugs.

But so far, this firestorm of public indignation has not been enough to rally Congress to swift and decisive action. A hearing last week in which the Senate Finance Committee heard testimony from seven pharmaceutical industry CEOs and leaders came off with a few whimpers, but not a bang. There was none of the confrontational cross-examination seen in the famous congressional grilling of tobacco executives at a hearing a quarter century ago. Last week's hearing was a case in which the watchdog didn't bark. There

are some proposals from the administration and before Congress that stand a reasonable chance of passage in this session. The Trump administration has several proposals that ostensibly would offer lower out-of-pocket costs for American consumers, which include changes to Medicare Part D and Part B.

The CREATES Act, sponsored by an array of Republicans and Democrats, would create a speedier and stronger legal process for generic manufacturers to challenge branded drugmakers that withhold drug samples in order to obstruct generic competition. These proposals benefit from the fact that they are not the most vociferously opposed by Big Pharma. They are like chicken soup to treat a cold: they certainly won't hurt and they might even help. But these solutions are by no means the strongest medicine available.

Democrats running or eyeing a run for the White House are offering ideas that are far less accommodating of Big Pharma. They are unlikely, however, to become law without a Democratic Congress and administration in power. For example, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) is proposing that drug prices in the United States be tied to an index of drug prices in foreign countries, where drugs are sold at lower costs. Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) has proposed a bill that would effectively create a government-run pharmaceutical manufacturer to mass-produce generic drugs and bring down prices. Sens. Jeff Merkley (D-OR) Kamala Harris (D-CA) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) introduced the CURE High Drug Prices Act, which would allow the federal government to block price increases on certain drugs.

There is a litany of other bills. Among them are a bill that would allow the importation of drugs from Canada, another that would force price transparency on drug middlemen, and another that would force drugmakers to justify dramatic price increases. Then there is the elephant in the room. President Trump repeatedly promised in 2016 to rein in runaway drug costs by letting Medicare negotiate prices with pharmaceutical companies. Allowing Medicare to seek lower prices is a no-brainer. As the single largest payer for health care in the United States, Medicare is the gateway to a vast marketplace of nearly 60 million people who happen to be the highest consumers of pharmaceuticals. But with the pharmaceutical industry's main trade group spending more than \$50 million in the past two years alone on lobbying, its passage into law this year seems highly unlikely.

There is, however, one key finding in the Kaiser Family Foundation survey that should weigh heavily on every member of Congress and the administration. Ninety percent of Democrats, 87 percent of Independents and 80 percent of Republicans want to allow the government to negotiate lower prices for Medicare drugs. Big American drug companies have not been using profits from high prices to ramp up investment in drug development. According to William Lazonick, pharmaceutical companies in the S&P 500 distributed over 100 percent of their combined profits to shareholders in buybacks and dividends — 12 percent more than they spent on research and development. "With most of their compensation coming from exercising stock options and stock awards, senior executives benefit immensely," the two scholars recently wrote in *The New York Times*. "In 2017, 28 drug executives in the top 500 (S&P 500 companies) averaged more than \$41 million in total compensation, with 83 percent in stock compensation."

In 2020, if politicians insist on giving priority to the greed of the drug industry over the pleading of voters, they could pay an enormous price at the polls. To fix the \$3.5 trillion-dollar quandary that is what America spends on health care — with its spiraling costs, opaque pricing and lack of accessibility to services for millions — we need vision, leadership and bold action from a Washington willing to take on special interests. Right now, that is sorely lacking. [Source: *The Hill* | Shelley Lyford | March 12, 2019 ++]







Photo courtesy of mister mac "Bob Macpherson" from the Lean Submariner