

# Steel Valley Dolphins

September 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: – Noon Crain Room, 3009 Wilmington Rd., New Castle, Pa 16105

## USS Requin Base Officers

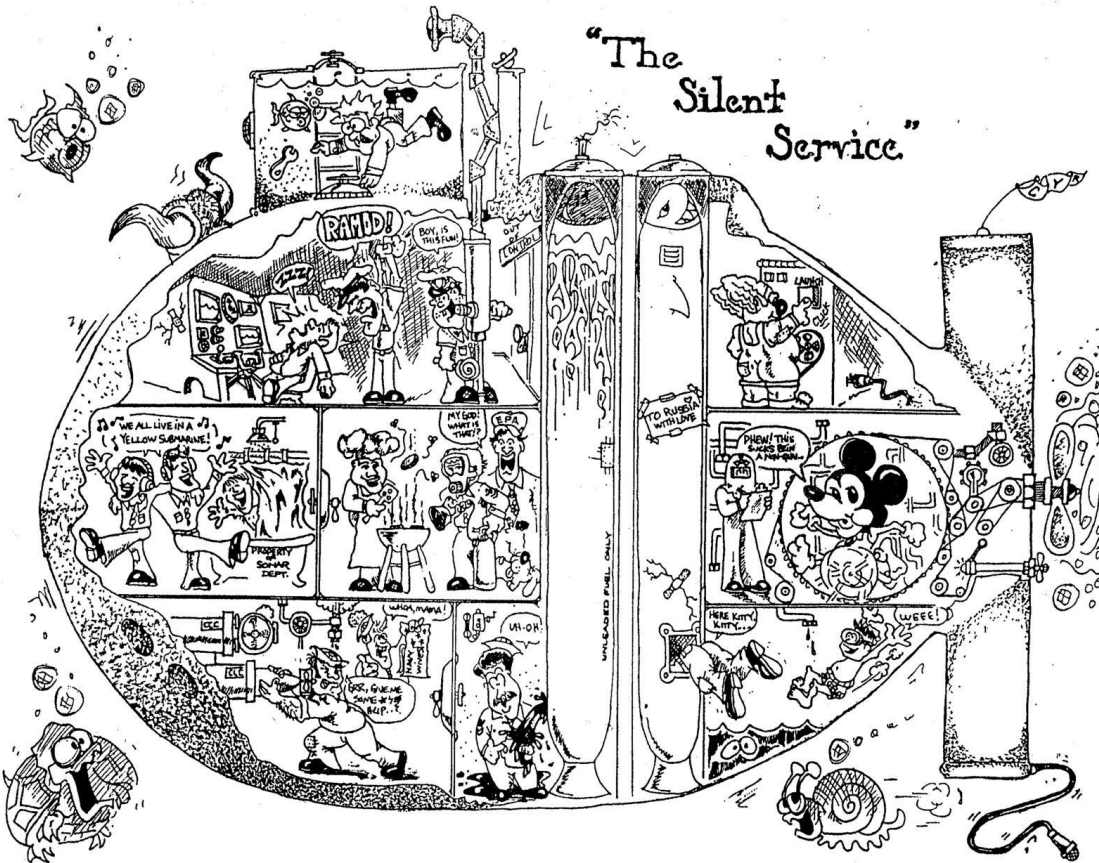
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----- Pride Runs Deep -----



## Binnacle List

Rick Elster,  
Diana Gervais (Underkoffler),  
John Lukasik  
Chip & Sharon P



## **COMMANDERS COLUMN:**

### **Meeting with Jason**

We had a great gathering on August 20<sup>th</sup>, of base members and the Skipper of the Pittsburgh, Jason Deichler. The shipmates that were present were Huey, Underkoffler, Stigers, Sills, Campisi, Elster and Hamill.

During this time with Jason, everyone purchased de-commissioning coins and ordered 16 more that went like hot cakes! Jason was in town for meetings around the area and found time to share his company. He has invited anyone from the base who wants to go to the Pittsburgh's decommissioning ceremony at the Naval Underseas Museum Keyport, Wash, on January 17<sup>th</sup>. We are making arrangements to go out to Wash on or about the 16<sup>th</sup> and return on 20<sup>th</sup>.

### **REQUIN BASE 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

My hat is off to the committee who put an outstanding celebration together for us to celebrate our base 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. I can't say enough about the committee, and crew of the Requin. We had three Requin Submarine Sailors in attendance. Stew from around Penn State, Lawton Gains from Maine and Dennis Cantwell from Florida. The committee consisted of Chairman Dick Geyer and first mate Beverly, Booky and Patsy, Lou Hamill, Bob & Jude Myers, Carl Stigers, J.B. Messer, Marian Miller, Tino Bolcato and Sally Smith. ----KUDOS to all – It was wonderful! Our comedy acts, Joe Kashnow and Brad Lowery are veterans. Our own disk jockey is Lou Hamill and Rick Elster gave the history of the USS Requin.

### **Visiting the COD**



The USS Ronquil had a re-union in Cleveland and extended an invitation to the Requin and we tied it in with a visit to the COD. Some of us went down a day early and visited the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. The shipmates in attendance were Huey & Edie, Dick & Betty Simpson Jack & Jenny Sutherin, Gerry & Linda Gaylor, Joe Campisi, Lou Hamill, Frank Nicotra, Vince Metz, George Brown.

We met the President of the USS Cod Submarine Memorial, Paul Farace. He gave us a standing invitation to come back and visit the COD. Sometime next year, we will join the Submarine Sailors of the COD for a joint meeting and lunch.

**RE-ENLISTMENT on the Requin:**



While we were in Cleveland, Rick Elster represented the base on board the Requin for the ceremony for Martines, who has shipped over. Thanks Rick.

**THRESHER MEMORIAL SERVICE AT ARLINGTON:**



We just came back from attending the service in Arlington, on September 26. Those in attendance were Huey, Joe Campisi, Frank & Rose Nicotra, Marian Miller

& friend, Carl Stigers, Mark & Adriana Hoag and daughter, Chuck Loskosh & It was a great experience to be a part of. I also had the opportunity to visit my brother's grave site which was touching & meaningful for me.



The service was very emotional for all. The invocation was conducted by CDR Ronald Nordan, with Rear Admiral J. Clarke Orzalli introducing the speakers. Admiral Richardson, USN (Ret) gave the remarks and the Keynote Speaker was U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen.

Our hats off to the Thresher committee for a job well done.....

**Birthdays**

**Anniversaries**

**Members**

**First Mates**

Biel, James 10-26-67	Bates, Tammy 10/24	Boutelle, Larry & Barb 10/22
Bookmiller, Eric 10/04/54	Beauregard, Norea 10/21	Burdine, Tom & Sheila 10/24

Bruce, John 10/04/50	Dolgos, Kathleen 10/15	Elster, Rick & judy 10/03
Ewald, John 10/03/57	Gary, Kelao 10/25	Gaylor, Gerry & Linda 10/08
Deichler, Jason 10/31/77	Likasik, Ginny 10/30	Gibson, Chris & Peggy 10/28
Garlock, Robert 10/12/29	Mears, Michelle 10 25	Gresh, Gary & Debby 10/17
Humes, Carl 10/02/65	MacPherson Debby 10/06	Greenwald, E & Danielle 10/17
Loskosh, Chuck 10/29/46	Schmidt, Kathy 10/19	Johnston, Jim & Janice 10/24
McGinty, Steve 10/30/69	Thompson, Lisa 10/19	McGee, Allen & Karen 10/21
McKenzie, Paul 10/06/46	Johnston, Ruth 10/06	Mears, Jim & Michelle, 10/25
Perlowitz, Ed 10/31/63		Thompson, Jim & Lisa 10/01
Porter, Clyde 10/02/54		Weible, Tom & Jennefer 10/26
Stigers, Carl 10/11/57		Dietrich, Huey & Edie 10/15

## **MEETING & EVENTS**

Oct 11 – Navy Ball – Soldiers & Sailors – contact Rick Elster

Oct 12 – Requin base meeting

    Noon – Crain Room, 3009 Wilmington Rd., New Castle, Pa 16105

Nov 9 – Veterans Day Parade – Pittsburgh, Pa

Nov 16 – American Legion, Baden Pa.

Dec 1 – X-mas Luncheon – German Club

Dec 7 – Pearl Harbor Day.

## Requin Base Meeting Minutes

August 10, 2019

Freeport, PA

**Base Commander Huey Dietrich** called the meeting to order.

**Attendees:** Tina Balcato, Eric Bookmiller, Lee & Patsy Bookwalter, Clair & Nancy Bouts, Joe Campisi, Huey & Edie Dietrich, Sandy Ellis, Rino Farina, Gerry & Linda Gaylor, Dick & Beverly Geyer, Lou Hamil, James Kontier, Chuck & Nancy Lockoch, Bat Masterson, James Messer, Vince Metz, Marian & John Miller, Frank Nicotra, Mike Pellegrino, Jeff & Eileen Simon, Carl Stigers, Chad Underkoffler, Mike & Tina Wyckoff

**Base Commander Huey Dietrich:** Quotes of the day: "Submariners are a bunch of intelligent misfits that somehow seem to get along, understand each other and work well together"

**Requin History:** August 24, 1944 keel laid at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. August 14, 1945 two weeks after her arrival and three days before starting her first war patrol, WWII ended and the Requin was recalled and ordered back to the Atlantic. August 1, 1952 Requin was back in European waters, during September she visited the United Kingdom, then in October the submarine transited the Straits Of Gibraltar for regular 6th Fleet duty. August 15, 1959 upon her conversion to fleet snorkel configuration, the Requin was given hull classification SS 481 and rejoined Subron 6 in Norfolk VA for operations as a normal attack submarine, a role she retained until her decommissioning. August 7, 1990 Requin left International Ship Repair in Tampa FL under tow to Baton Rouge LA. August 11, 1990 Requin was lifted onto barges and began her ride up the Mississippi River and Ohio River to Pittsburgh PA.

**Base Commander Huey Dietrich:** Let us at this time, with a moment of silent prayer, remember our Shipmates who made the supreme sacrifice that we may gather here in Peace. We dedicate this meeting to our Shipmates on Eternal Patrol, to perpetuate their memories in our lives and to honor our Shipmates on active duty in the service of the first line of defense of our Nation.

### Boats Lost:

USS BULLHEAD (SS 332)	August 6, 1945
USS FLIER (SS 250)	August 13, 1944
USS S 39 (SS 144)	August 16, 1942
USS HARDER (SS 257)	August 24, 1944
USS COCHINO (SS 345)	August 26, 1949
USS POMPANO (SS 181)	August 29, 1943

We also wish to remember our shipmates of the Requin Base: Robert Campbell, Frank Gogul, John Irons, Louis Kleinlein, Sam McGrew, Neal Sever, and Edward Yoder. Let us also remember the brave submariners who died performing their duties aboard submarines, some individually and some in groups, but where the submarine itself was not lost.

**Chaplain Carl Stigers** gave the Invocation.

**Base Secretary Jeff Simon** led the Base in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Members introduced themselves and the boats they qualified on.

**Base Secretary Jeff Simon** reported that Minutes of the previous meeting were published in the SVD and on the Requin Base website. With no objections, the minutes will stand as published.

**Treasurer Lee Bookwalter** gave an accounting of base assets, expenditures, and deposits. With no objections, the report was approved

### Other Reports:

Binnacle List: Rick Elster, Diana Gervais (Underkoffler), John Lukasik, Chip & Sharon Porter

Eternal Patrol: None

Membership stands at 185. Requin is now the 6<sup>th</sup> largest submarine veteran's base in the USSVI and the largest inland veteran's base.

**Storekeeper Frank Nicotra** reported on available small stores

**Shipmate Vince Metz** nothing to announce

### Social Events

August 14, Veterans Breakfast Club, 8800 Peebles Rd, Allison Park PA

September 7, Base Birthday Ball, Springdale, PA

September 14, Base meeting Baden, PA

September 20, Ronquil/Cod meeting in Cleveland OH

September 26, USS Thresher Commemorative Monument in Arlington VA

October 11, Navy Ball, Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall

October 12, Base meeting will be at 1200 hours in New Castle PA at the Crain Room

November 9, Base meeting will be in Baden PA at the American Legion

November 11, Veterans Day Parade

December 1, Christmas luncheon at the German Club



December 7, possible Pearl Harbor Day remembrance

**Old Business:**

Base participation in the retirement ceremony held for Chief Martin Able on July 26<sup>th</sup> was discussed.

**New Business:**

Arrangements being made to have Ms. Christina Lonigro, an expert on VA and Medicare benefits, as a guest speaker.

Heinz History Center is hosting the Vietnam War 1945-1975 exhibition through September 22<sup>nd</sup>. All veterans receive half off regular admission.

**For The Good Of The Order:**

Decommissioning activities for the USS Pittsburgh were discussed.

**Chaplain Carl Stigers** gave the Benediction and blessing of today's meal.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned.

**Next meeting:** Baden PA at 1230 hours on September 14, 2019

Poopie Suits & Cowboy Boots

Poopie Suits Archives: By request, we are reposting a popular essay entitled "How to Spot a Brother of the Pin". Many sub vets have told us that when they read this, they had the reaction, "Hey, they're talking about me!" If so, then the essay achieved its goal. Enjoy, and please share with your friends. This essay is included in the Third Edition of "Poopie Suits and Cowboy Boots", available by clicking on "Shop Now" or going to blurb.com to order for only \$15.

HOW TO SPOT A BROTHER OF THE PHIN

By Charles G. Hood, MD

Since the middle of 2017, when Frank and I began our research and writing on Poopie Suits and Cowboy Boots, I've given book presentations at the regular meetings of nearly a dozen USSVI bases (with more planned), and I've had several opportunities to eat and chat casually with a wide range of these men, from those in their 30s who have only recently gotten out of the Navy to several of the living legends of the World War II fleet boat generation. During these get-togethers, I've had a rare opportunity to glimpse their culture from the inside. Through our well-followed Facebook page on submarine history and by email, I've corresponded at length with dozens of sailors who have shared their submarine stories, photos, and expertise. Many of these men have volunteered significant chunks of time to help correct the technical details and refine our narrative about the exploits of the Silent Service during the Cold War years. While these men are different in countless ways—age, ethnic background, political and religious persuasions, for starters—their years serving aboard submarines shaped their lives profoundly in both obvious and subtle ways. As an outside observer of this fascinating group, I have noticed several common attributes among them that form the basis of this essay. I'd like to share a few of these thoughts as a tribute.

Submariners are a proud and elite group. What makes these guys tick? Short answer: The irrefutable sense that their service aboard submarines was critically important in the safety and security of our country. At the core of their self-identities is pure patriotism; not the attention-seeking kind associated with bumper stickers and flag lapels and other fanfare, but a quiet and more informed version. These are the men who decided that it was worth it to put their personal lives aside—for a few years, or even an entire career—to answer the call to volunteer for the corps that defends our nation's defensive interests at sea. About those precious personal freedoms that the vast majority of us just accept as inherent rights...the reason we civilians can take them for granted is because these guys didn't. While they were putting their families and personal ambitions on hold, they served for long stretches in cramped and unforgiving surroundings. The missions they accomplished remained largely secretive and therefore unheralded. They accepted the underappreciated anonymity of working in the shadows, even though it deprived the rest of us the privilege of knowing as much as we should about their important contributions to national security.

Submariners like to kid. The jokes can come fast and furious, often right after the initial firm handshake, and if you're not prepared for them, your first impression might be that these guys are out to harass you. The truth is, they do enjoy yanking your chain. The practice evolved as a sort of warped survival skill, honed after many months at sea, to boost morale and preserve some degree of sanity during those times of great pressure and uncertainty. But even today, the humor serves a very important purpose. By disarming you with a quip or mild insult, they are checking you out. Can you take a joke, or do you wither under the heat? In the end, they won't waste time with someone who doesn't pass muster. So I take it as a good sign that, during my talks to the USSVI audiences, several of the guys will continue to blurt out jokes or witty remarks. Submariners appreciate individuals with thick skins. They're not so keen on those who pack up and run at the first perceived slight or ridicule. And they really can't stand the related notion of political correctness.

Submariners revere the American flag, and what it really stands for. When our national anthem is played at a sporting contest, we civilians may only see the familiar stars and stripes before us, For these men, though, the song hearkens them back to their years aboard the submarines, recalling the solemn ritual of raising and lowering of the ensign at Morning and Evening Colors. As the song rolls on, they think about the close calls that they had during their Navy days, and how fortunate they are to be standing there saluting the flag at that moment— posture erect, hand over heart-- and intensely appreciating the moment, while silently thanking those who were lost at sea while heeding the call. Understandably, then, they don't appreciate attempts to politicize this sacred tradition.

Submariners are comfortable in their own shoes. Pretense is not in their repertoire. They call things as they see them, but they don't need to always hear the sound of their own voices to be content. It's not that they don't like to talk, but at gathering with their civilian friends and family, they are masters at deflecting the topic of conversation away from their years in the Silent Service. But—put

two of these sub vets together in the same room—especially if cold beer is involved—and you may never hear the end of their lively discussions about the “old days”.

Submariners do not suffer fools gladly. These are guys who were held to extraordinary standards of competency while serving aboard our nation’s subs. They practically invented the mantra, “zero mistakes”. So don’t try to B.S. them. They’ll see through the artifice in a skinny minute. They appreciate straight shooters. And they themselves are the prototypical straight shooters.

Submariners don’t like to guess. For every question or problem, there’s a right answer, and if you work alongside one of them, they would rather keep striving until the proper answer is found. This sense of precision, inculcated by submarine service, also applies to timeliness. Don’t be late for things. These guys expect punctuality and live by the rule, “If you’re five minutes early, you’re late.” Their very DNA seems intertwined with the science of unflinching exactitude. But I get it. When the fate of you and your crewmates on the same submarine hinged daily on flawless execution of your assigned duties, well, that mindset had a knack of following you into your post-military life. So forgive these men if they seem befuddled when the rest of the human race doesn’t seem equally disciplined. It’s a shame that the same sense of personal responsibility and accountability isn’t also a given in the civilian world. Sloppy work and tardiness are major annoyances for these men.

Submariners are a little wary of strangers. I think this has to do with the oath to secrecy that they all had to sign upon penalty of imprisonment. Since they are forbidden from talking about a substantial part of their personal histories, they can seem a little suspicious of those who may try to draw them out in conversation or otherwise attempt to ingratiate themselves. That makes sense to me. Trust is a precious commodity to them, and it is not earned without some time and effort. Once that hurdle is crossed, though, they will bend over backwards to help you. In offering their help to me countless times over the course of the last 12 months, they have exemplified the giving spirit in so many ways. You get the feeling after working with so many of them that they would give you the shirt off their back if you needed it.

Submariners are very frugal individuals. While generous with their time and talents, they are careful about how their hard-earned dollars are spent, and they won’t open up their wallets to just any cause. This reputation for penny pinching makes sense; they didn’t exactly earn a fortune while serving aboard submarines, and the strong disincentives about unnecessary waste that governed ship duty simply reinforced the notion of “waste not, want not”. Still, despite their understandably thrifty tendencies, they make tremendous contributions to their local towns and cities through endowed scholarships, fund-raising for worthy causes, and various community awareness projects. I have seen how the USSVI gives them the vehicle to make these things happen and to continue to make a difference with their neighbors.

Submariners like to speak in code. Listening to them converse among themselves is both an intriguing and baffling activity. Their language is steeped in the acronym-laden phrases of Navy-speak, so unless you have a willing translator, you may not have the faintest idea of what they are talking about with such enthusiasm. (Coming from the world of medicine, I thought our jargon was bad! Not even close.) With some practice, though, the code may be cracked. For example, here is an excerpt from a message I received yesterday from a veteran submariner: “...HGR was our senior EDO, and he was OINC of a SRF at one time.” I actually understood him!

Submariners are sentimental about their old boats. They swap stories with their fellow veterans about their former rides with great affection. They like to wear vests adorned with badges that tell the story of their military service. They pay homage at every USSVI event to those boats on eternal patrol, and they hold the fleet boat generation of WWII in particularly high esteem because of the tremendous loss of life sustained by submariners during that global conflict against tyranny and evil. They thoroughly enjoy one another’s company, knowing that each of them is indelibly linked for life by that youthful decision to volunteer for submarine service. Finally, while they may recall those years at sea as some of the most difficult of their lives, practically every one of them would do it again in a heartbeat if asked.

I salute these men—the “Brothers of the Phin” as they call themselves—proud members of a storied military fraternity. You’d be hard-pressed to find a finer group of men anywhere. They truly represent the best of us all.