

Steel Valley Dolphins

February 2020



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

USSVI Creed:

"To perpetuate the memory of our ship-mates 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 -----

Saturday, March 7- doors open 11:30 -Meeting at 12:30 Lunch 1:30
Location: VFW Post 191, 539 West Pike St., Canonsburg, Pa 15317

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

Commanders Column:

Our February meeting was a huge success! There were over 50 members and guests in attendance. Our guest speaker, Christina Lonigro gave a very informative talk about VA benefits and Medicare. The members present appreciated her helpful information and had many questions for her.

ST. PATRICKS PARADE - CANCELLED

The Board of Directors took a look at all the negative issues concerning the parade and they have decided not to participate this year. First of all – Commander Deichler informed the base that he won't be able to come to Pittsburgh for the parade. In addition, the parade committee told me, although that we are in the parade but they did not confirm it with the paper work. Then the German Club has other activities planned on that day at the club. So, with all the confusion, we thought it best to cancel this year.

VETERANS APPRECIATION DINNER

We have been invited, by Mayor Pete from Leetsdale, Pa., to participate in the Veterans Appreciation Dinner, being held at the VFW in Leetsdale, Pa. The invitation was sent out to the membership on Feb 18. On the 24 of Feb, the Mayor will be notified as to the number of sub-vets and guests that will be attending. As of today, Feb 23, we have fifteen members and guests that will be going. The dinner will be held on Saturday, March 28 at 18:00. If anyone else wants to attend, please let me know and I will check to see if there is space available. They have space for 100 veterans and guests. Vets free/guests \$10.00

New Members

Kenneth Crosby qualified in 1973 on the USS Henry Bates SSN680 as a MM2(SS). Ken left the navy in 1976 as a MM1(SS). Ken lives North Apollo, Pa with his first mate Roxane. Please e-mail Ken and welcome him aboard
ken69crosby@gmail.com

Brian Powers qualified in 1979 on the USS James Monroe SSBN 622(B) as a EM3(SS). Brian left the navy in 1985 as a EM1(SS). Brian lives in Nanty Glo, Pa with his first mate Kaitlin. Please e-mail Brian and welcome him aboard

bbrian9@comcast.net

Ronnie Richard Horton qualified in 1972 on the USS James Madison SSBN627 as a LTJG. Ron left the navy in 1984 as a LCDR. Ron lives in Export, Pa with his first mate Patricia. Please e-mail Ron and welcome him aboard

r.r.Horton@comcast.net

Willard Ashmore qualified in 1975 on the USS Gato SSN615 as a MM2(SS). Willard left the navy in 1978 as a MM2(SS). Willard lives in Valencia Pa with his first mate Margaret. Please e-mail Willard and welcome him aboard washmore52@live.com

Aubrey Smith qualified in 1966 on the USS Kamhamaha SSBN 642 as a ICSN(SS). Aubrey left the navy in 1992. He later joined the army and was discharged as a S/SGT. He served with Rick Elster and he joined us at the USS PITTSBURGH de-activation ceremony. He has been a member of the Seattle base since 2000.

Aubrey lives in Kent, Washington with his first mate Vicky. Please e-mail Aubrey and welcome him aboard crashaka@aol.com

Stephen Cuddy qualified in 2014 on the USS San Francisco SSN711 as an EM(SS). Steve left the navy in 2017 as a EM3(SS). Steve lives in Coraopolis, Pa with his first mate Jennifer. Please e-mail Steve and welcome him aboard.

stephen.cuddy@gmail.com

ASSOCIATE MEMBER

Evelyn Kudlac is a proud supporter of the Requin Base. She is the hostess at the American Legion in Baden. She lives in Baden, Pa At the next Base meeting, say hello to her and welcome her aboard.

This brings the base membership to 195. There is one more application in the mail. We are the largest (in-land) base and sixth over-all in USSVI. Our goal each year is to welcome 10 new members to the base, to cover eternal patrols and ones that leave. Last year we set a record of 21 new members in any one year and lost only three by leaving and six on Eternal Patrol. We are one third of the way there and three away from our yearly goal of 10.

KUDOS to all the shipmates that are always working to find new members!!

BIRTHDAYS**ANNIVERSARIES****MEMBERS****SPOUCE**

Allen, Mike 3-14-49	Amenti, Ashley 3-10	Beauregard, Rich/Noreen 3/5
Burelson, Steve 3-26-67	Bayne, Mary 3-15	McCullough, Dick/Sheila 3/1
Bushko, Greg 3-18-54	Bistyga Claudia 3-12	Nixon, Charles/Sherry 3/20
Elster, Richard 3-05-41	Bonnett Dorothy 3-19	Wendell, James/Valerie 3/15
Farino, Reno 3-04-44	Dietrich, Edie 3-30	
Franz, Henry 3-21-31	Gains, Christina 3-10	
Greenwald, Eric 3-10-74	Hall, Jacqueline 3-20	
Hoag, Mark 3-08-69	Howton, Diana 3-19	
Huntsman, Larry 3-15-67	Koppenhaver, Patricia 3-1	
Johnston, James 3-22-44	Lawrence, Jordon 3-31	
Kontier, James 3-02-40	Lewis, Karen 3-17	
Pellegrino, Mike 3-04-52	Lyons, Karen 3-21	
Poole, Greg 3-01-72	Swords, Kimberly 3-25	
Sampson, Robert 3/26/43	Tripp, Lois 3/02	
Thompson, Jeff 3/18/71		
Tripp, Mike 3/22/46		
Voskuhl, Fred 3/18/23		
Weible, Tom 3/24/64		
Wykoff, Mike 3/24/54		

Please let me know if there are any additions and or corrections. If you do not receive our monthly news-letter inform me ASAP.

NEXT BASE MEETING:

When: Saturday, March 7- doors open 11:30 -Meeting at 12:30 Lunch 1:30

Location: VFW Post 191, 539 West Pike St., Canonsburg, Pa 15317

Directions: From interstate 79 take the Houston exit (exit 43). Go towards Houston- about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to the first traffic light, which is Pike Street. Make a right on to Pike Street and travel for about 1 mile. You will see the VFW Post 191 on the right.

I have received communications from Soldiers & Sailors hall concerning programs or joint initiatives we both can pursue – discussion will be at the base meeting.

Requin Base Meeting Minutes

February 8, 2020

Baden, PA

Base Commander Huey Dietrich called the meeting to order.

Attendees: Mike Allen, Willard Ashmore, Eric Bookmiller, Lee & Patsy Bookwalter, Clair & Nancy Bouts, George Brown, Ron & Nita Campbell, Joe Campisi, Huey & Edie Dietrich, Sandy Ellis, Rick & Judy Elster, Rick Flaugh, Dick & Beverly Geyer, Bob & Lynn Gourley, Lou Hamill, Mark Hoag, Kyle Lacey, Bill & Sandy Lindsey, Chuck & Nancy Loskoch, Bat Masterson, Shawn McGinty, JB & Sandra Messer, Vince Metz, Bob & Jude Meyers, Frank Nicotra, Brian Peltier, Chuck Shrump, Harry Sills, Jeff Simon, Carl Stigers, Jack & Genny Sutherin, John Swords, Chad Underkoffler, Mike & Tina Wyckoff

Base Commander Huey Dietrich: Quote of the day: "The reason worry kills more people than work is that more people worry than work."

Requin History: February 1, 1969, Requin was towed to Florida where she served as a Naval Reserve training ship. February 21, 1990 Senator John Hines introduced Senate Bill S2151 which allowed Requin to be transferred as an exhibit at the Carnegie Science Center in Pittsburgh PA.

Base First Vice-Commander Carl Stigers: 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 BARBEL (SS 316)	February 4, 1945
USS SHARK (SS 174)	February 11, 1942
USS AMBERJACK (SS 219)	February 16, 1943
USS GRAYBACK (SS 208)	February 27, 1944
USS TROUT (SS 202)	February 28, 1944

We also honor our departed shipmate of the Requin Base lost in February, Richard Claypoole, Chuck Dreer, John Mills, Devern Pyatt, James Ross, and Robert Vaughn. Finally let us remember all the brave submariners who died performing their duties aboard submarines, some individually and some in groups, but where the submarine itself was not lost.

Members introduced themselves and the boats they qualified on.

Requin Base Officers were sworn in.

Base Secretary Jeff Simon reported that Minutes of the previous meeting were published on the Requin Base website. With no objections, the minutes were approved as published.

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

Other Reports:

Binnacle List: Jack Sutherin, Luke Walker, Mary Ann Knotier, Eileen Simon, James Kontier, Chad Underkoffler, Mike Pellegrino
Eternal Patrol: Charles Hilgendorf 1/31/2020 (Requin Base Sailor)

Membership stands at 192.

Storekeeper Frank Nicotra reported on available small stores.

Guest Speaker Christina Lonigro discussed VA and Medicare benefits

Memorial And Ceremonies

Members are encouraged to see the Calendar on the Requin Base Website for upcoming activities, events, birthdays and anniversaries.

Old Business:

None

New Business:

Motion to purchase new signs for the Nautilus float .

For The Good Of The Order:

Shipmate Rick Elster discussed the importance of keeping your ID cards current in order to gain access to military bases.

Report of activities during USS Pittsburgh Deactivation trip was given. Pictures will be posted on the base website.

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

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned.

Next meeting: VFW Post 191, 539 West Pike St. Canonsburg, PA 15317 at 1230 hours on March 7, 2020

As part of the chronicling of the activities related to the Inactivation of the USS Pittsburgh, I reached out to the major participants of the event. This is the last installment and contains remarks made by the guest speaker RDML Doug Perry, Commander Submarine Group Nine. The Admiral was kind to have the reception in his personal quarters the night before and displayed amazing grace and hospitality to all of us who traveled so far to see the event in person. Bob MacPherson CWO(SS)
These are his remarks (unedited).

**Thank you very much Doug for your great thoughts and for all you did for the boat.
I will let your words tell your personal connection with this fighting ship:**

Major Commanders, Commanding Officers, present and former crew members, honored guests, friends, family, and all yinzers, Steelers, Pirates, Pittsburghers and anyone else with a heart of steel, I welcome you all to the inactivation ceremony of SSN 720, USS Pittsburgh.

It is a pleasure for me to be here today, not only as Commander of Submarine Group 9, but as a past crew member of USS Pittsburgh. It is a special day for me. I'm incredibly honored to be here as a guest and also have the opportunity to talk about a boat that has had such an immense impact on me, personally and professionally.

I want to offer a special welcome to Dr. Carol Sawyer, who has served as USS Pittsburgh's sponsor throughout Pittsburgh service life. We appreciate all you have done throughout the years as an advocate for, and the number one fan of, USS Pittsburgh. USS Pittsburgh is special in many ways, which I will get into shortly, but it is your sponsorship that has been an outstanding and ever present through line throughout the ship's history. Pittsburgh crew, past and present, our Navy and our nation cannot thank you enough.

I also want to welcome a few other luminaries who have made the trek up to the Pacific Northwest today, CWO2 Bob MacPherson, President of the Pittsburgh Navy League, and, Mr. Huey Dietrich, Commanding Officer of the Pittsburgh SUBVETs, USS Requin chapter. Thank you all for making the trip up to the Pacific Northwest to celebrate this day with us.

Finally, I want to thank a couple of folks who made a big difference to the current and last crew of USS Pittsburgh. First I want to thank, Mrs. Michelle Waters, USS Pittsburgh command ombudsmen. Michelle, your impact on this crew has been immense and they could not have executed the cross-country interfleet transfer of more than 75 families without your help. Thank you for your contribution and support of this crew.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to welcome and thank Michelle Deichler, the wife and mother to Jason's four wonderful children, Hannah, James, Matthew and Ian. Your support of Jason during his command tour has been a key to his success. Command is hard, but being separated from your family for the majority of a command tour is even harder. Jason could not be effective without you. Please know that, as current geo-bachelor, I truly understand and appreciate all the balls you've had to keep in the air and hoops you've had to jump through to ensure Jason can execute the mission of our nation. Thank you, and thank you for being here.

Ok, I do have some prepared remarks that I plan to get to, but I wanted to get the unpleasantness out of the way now. Many may not be aware of this, but when it was commissioned, USS Pittsburgh was constructed with the prototype propulsor system that would go on to be installed on the USS Seawolf-class of fast-attack submarines. There is a lot that is interesting about the system. Not least is that due to the construction and engineering of that system, the boat, when operating at speed, would maintain about a 5 degree list. I'm a cyclist, in my spare time, and to this day, when I'm headed down a good decline and the wind is whipping past, I have to really fight the urge to lean. Thanks Pittsburgh.

But, that isn't why I bring up the propulsor. As I said earlier, I was a former crew member of USS Pittsburgh, in fact, USS Pittsburgh was my first boat. Today we are lucky to have with us, in the audience, my first CO, Steve Wolfe. Now Steve will remember that we had an unfortunate incident with that propulsor system. I remember it well, we had been heading back to port after a transit back from a deployment in the Atlantic. Well, as we got back to port, we made truly unsettling discovery. The propulsor, which was, to say the least, not cheap, had not made the full transit with the boat. I remember this well, because it was my unfortunate duty to inform Steve that our propulsor was not installed where we'd left it. To say he was not pleased would be an understatement. Now we were able to install the back up for the propulsor and we all went about our business, but, unfortunately, Steve, I once again, have to be the barer of bad news. I have the regrettable duty of informing you that the bill has come due. We are going to need recover the cash cost, and the juice has been running. I have a dd200 –present form with receipt attached, long cvs style receipt – lost property investigation form and an itemized receipt. My team is going to work with you to execute a very reasonable payment plan, and we also plan to pass the hat at the conclusion of today's ceremony. Earmuffs, JAGs. Steve, believe me, I had nothing but good things to say on your behalf, but the JO mafia, even after some of us have made flag, have to stick together. On a more serious note, Steve it is a pleasure to have you here to be a part of this ceremony. Your impact on my career cannot be overstated, and it is great to have you here to be a part of this day.

And, today is indeed a special day. Today we come together to say goodbye to USS Pittsburgh. Now at these inactivation ceremonies you often hear statements about how the ship is ultimately just a hunk of steel, that it is the crew that gives a submarine its character. I don't disagree with that sentiment, but you know with Pittsburgh, the submarine and the namesake, a hunk of steel just means more. The crews that have been a part of it know. When you think of USS Pittsburgh, where it has been, the history it has been a part of, there is a quality to this boat that has reverberated through all the crews that have served aboard and through our submarine force as a whole. For me, today is like the retirement of a valued Sailor who has served the country with honor for 35 years. Pittsburgh had and has imparted that kind of impact on those of us who have served aboard. Pittsburgh Sailors are tough, they are resourceful, they know how to have a good time and when there was a job that needed doing, you can bet that Pittsburgh and her crew were going to show up and make sure it got done. We are all, all better Sailors for having been a part of her history. That history began all the way back in November of 1985. Pittsburgh was commissioned at a special time in our history, and, to me, a really amazing aspect of Pittsburgh service-life is how you can kind of chart our national history, where we were at with strategy and our concerns with USS Pittsburgh. When she was commissioned, our country was still in the middle of the great, Cold War, which defined the second half of the 20th century. It was a period of great power competition, and Pittsburgh was no small part of our country emerging victorious from that conflict. I can't give a lot of details during this period, but I can tell you that USS Pittsburgh completed numerous North Atlantic and Mediterranean deployments that directly contributed to our national security.

Now cut to a few years later in 1991, we are at a period of time that some, admittedly over-optimistic, historians had called the end of history. The Soviet Union was dissolving, the Berlin Wall had begun falling. While the free world rightfully celebrated, this was a period of real uncertainty for our military and our submarine force. What was our role? How do we continue to provide value in this new unipolar world? Well, the world and reality have a way of reasserting themselves, and in this instance, it was in the form the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. How would our submarine force remain relevant? USS Pittsburgh provided a kinetic answer to that question. During Operation Desert Storm, USS Pittsburgh became, along with USS Louisville, one of the first U.S. Submarines to fire tomahawk missiles in anger. This did two things: It contributed significantly to the liberation of Kuwait and the defeat of Saddam Hussein's forces, and it provided concrete proof of the utility and flexibility of submarine launched tomahawk missiles. This operation proved the concept that strikes against land-based targets from submarines could provide a ready, reliable and undetectable capability to our civilian and military war planners. Pittsburgh answered the question of post-cold war relevance with that launch and would continue to provide unmatched, worldwide, strategic and tactical capability throughout the decade.

And unfortunately, I can't tell you the details of all the ways USS Pittsburgh provided value and continued to prove the worth of the submarine force during that initial post-cold war era, and, to be honest, I think that is fitting. Pittsburgh's impact can't be boiled down to one operation or one mission set, because part of what has made Pittsburgh so special is the breadth of operations Pittsburgh has taken part in. Crew members who served during this period, myself included, truly experienced the worldwide impact of our submarine force and USS Pittsburgh. She completed deployments in the Mediterranean, North Atlantic, eastern Pacific, and Arabian Gulf. She visited places like Holy Loch, Tromsø, Lisbon, Brest, and Rotterdam. She joined the order of the ditch, the order of the shellback, and the order of the Spanish Main. She transited the Panama Canal. She sailed as part of Carrier Battle Groups and as an independent deployer. She conducted operations and exercises all around the globe in concert with our allies and to the detriment of our foes. She was where things were happening, when they mattered.

As time passed, our country and our world adjusted to a new status quo, of a one superpower world. As we now know, new threats were preparing to emerge. With 9/11 our country again found ourselves in conflict, albeit with a different kind of enemy. As our country went to war, our leaders again found themselves calling on Pittsburgh, just as they had the decade before. Pittsburgh was again tasked to strike Saddam Hussein's forces, this time as a part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Like always, when needed, Pittsburgh answered the call, and those calls haven't stopped in the years since. Pittsburgh was there. She was there to conduct special operations missions, she was there to conduct theater anti-submarine warfare, she was there and prepared to strike when called upon. She was there throughout the years and continued to contribute to our security and to the missions of our force.

Even as she transited to Bremerton for her final voyage with Jason and his crew, Pittsburgh couldn't rest on her laurels. In the Pittsburgh way, she had to continue to push the envelope, conducting her first Arctic transit during her 34th year of service. Jason, I'm both proud and excited for what you and your crew have accomplished. It is an honor to be the last crew of a ship with the kind of legacy Pittsburgh has, and you have all honored that legacy. Thinking about the legacy of Pittsburgh was really the final piece of the puzzle for putting together my remarks here today.

In my preparations for this event, I had put out a call for sea stories and memories from former COs. As I was looking over the contributions I received, something CAPT James Colston, who commanded the boat from 2015 to 2018, wrote really summed up a lot about the spirit of USS Pittsburgh. He said that Pittsburgh's spirit and reputation has always been that of boat that, "gets things done." That spoke to me when I was thinking about Pittsburgh because it gets at the heart of what makes Pittsburgh special. It isn't a flowery phrase, or one that speaks to glory or some high-minded, abstract ideal. You could speak those words about Pittsburgh and you wouldn't be wrong, but when you boil it all down, Pittsburgh is a boat that got things done. That fits. That's Pittsburgh, bring your lunch pail and your hard hat, and don't quit until you conquer whatever mission is in front of you.

This is a bittersweet day for a ship that got things done, but it has also brought things full-circle. As we prepare to inactivate USS Pittsburgh, just as it was when she was commissioned, we have returned to a period of great power competition. China and Russia are again seeking to assert themselves in the maritime domain and around the world, and, as a Navy and Submarine Force, we are tasked with ensuring our country remains positioned to match and counter their influence. Our new CNO, ADM Gilday, recently put out his fragmentary order updating the Navy's Design for Maintaining Maritime Superiority. In that document, he said it was our duty as a service to enhance and exploit our core warfighting advantages, and it is no accident that maintaining mastery of the undersea domain was at the top of those core warfighting advantages. Pittsburgh was and, as long as she has former crew members in the fleet, is a major part of the legacy that has built this truly asymmetric advantage in the undersea domain.

Pittsburgh was there and she got it done. Jason as you and your crew go about your work putting USS Pittsburgh to rest, take that legacy forward. Take that spirit and that heart of steel out into the rest of our Submarine Force and our Navy. We need it now more than ever. That is Pittsburgh's final mission, and I look forward to seeing how you all continue to get it done.

Jason, thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to speak at this fantastic event on a truly special day. Thank you all for coming and thank you USS Pittsburgh



This is a picture the military has never let anyone see until now.

This is a picture behind the scenes at Dover Air Force Base where the bodies of fallen soldiers are prepared for burial.

And that includes being properly dressed, all the way down to the smallest detail.

In this picture Staff Sgt. Miguel Deynes is making sure the uniform is just right for an army pilot recently killed in Afghanistan.

There is a very specific process once a fallen soldier is returned home.

The bodies are flown back to the U.S. on a cargo jet.

A team of service members wearing white gloves carries the coffins, covered with flags, to a white van that takes them to the Armed Forces Medical Examiner.

The remains are washed, the hands are scrubbed clean, and the hair is shampooed. If necessary bones are wired together and damaged tissue is reconstructed with flesh-toned wax.

Sometimes they will use photos, sometimes just intuition to recreate the wrinkles in faces, and the lines around the mouth or the corner of the eyes. "It has to look normal, like someone who is sleeping." Once the body is ready then the uniform is prepared.

That includes putting medals in the proper order on the ribbon rack above the jacket's breast pocket.

During the height of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan 10 to 20 bodies were arriving every day.

The embalmers often worked all night to get the bodies home on time. That can take an emotional toll so the mortuary has a large gym so workers can blow off steam.

Many say they are haunted by how young the fallen soldiers are, and by how many of them leave behind small children.

That's why Sgt. Deynes says they are advised not to do research into the backgrounds of the soldiers. "If I knew the story of every individual who went through here, I would probably be in a padded cell." The dress uniform being prepared in this particular case will be in a closed casket.

Even so, it will be perfectly tailored, starched and pressed. Everything will be checked down to the last detail.

