



ROCKIN' ON THE
FRONT PORCH

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Warrant Officer Tom O'Brien, pays honor to TM1 Gibbs and all submariners who have lost their lives in the service to their country. Bob Miller, D.W. Egleston, Tommy Richardson, Brian Steffen, and Allen Danielsen, all members of the Palmetto Submarine Veterans, Palmetto Base, show their respect.

Lexington man honored 70 years after giving his life

BY BILL WEST
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May 23, 1939, the USS SQUALUS (SS-192) had successfully completed 18 test dives off the coast of Portsmouth, NH. The Squalus, a newcomer to the ocean's depths, made one more dive. Torpedo Mate 1, Robert Franklin Gibbs from Lexington, and 58 other crewmembers saw no reason for alarm.

They were doing what submariners do; they were putting their blind faith, their trust in a man-made machine. Records would later describe the eventful, tragic moments that followed:

"Down, down; a graceful diving slant under control. But wait! Too many bubbles belch in a cloud around the after part of the boat. It wavers; its forward motion is lost, the angle changes but its progress downward accelerates as the stern falls. The heavy steel walls hide swift drama inside and, as in a picture on a silent film, the stricken submarine sinks noiselessly to the bottom coming to rest in a cloud of churning mud. Tragic bubbles still issue from the undersea giant whose 299-foot length is mocked by the infinite sea."

"The fallen craft with its cargo of trapped survivors seems to stir as clouds of mud rise from the outlets of the valves under the bow with the outward rush of water from the ballast tanks. The long gray ship shows no other sign and the struggle to increase buoyancy ceases as air spurts from the muddy valves. Another moment of thought; inside, probably a conference, and a small movement can be seen in the middle of the forward deck.

"Lazily at first, but gathering speed rapidly, there rises from a small hatch a bobbing float which struggles upward on the end of the small cable still attached to the boat. It breaks the surface and the foundered SQUALUS can do no more. To those at the bottom of the smoking beacon of the buoy released is in another world, a world of air and sunshine, calling for help."

Help would come the next day after the smoking beacon would attract, "as though in answer to the call of family, the sister-



PHOTOS BY BILL WEST | CHRONICLE

The White Knoll High School Junior ROTC, under the command of Capt. Joseph S. Thornbury, USN Retired presented the colors.

ship USS SCULPIN I and then the FALCON, whose crew and equipment and divers would help raise their stricken family to the surface again.

But, in addition to the injured vessel, 26 officers and men would have perished.

Thirty-five-year-old Torpedo Mate Robert Franklin Gibbs lost his life as he served his country, leaving behind family and friends.

Surviving relatives say that Gibbs was doing what he wanted to do. He was serv-

ing his country. It was his country that would soon be catapulted into "a war to end all wars".

As members of the Palmetto Submarine Veterans -Palmetto Base- gathered at the marked gravesite in the St. Stephens Lutheran Church Cemetery Sunday afternoon, they were doing what all submariners do, they were gathering to perpetuate the memory and honor those who have paid the ultimate price to keep this country free.



The bell was tolled, the brave men of the "Silent Service" honored Gibbs

as one of that rare breed of men who have been called to place their love and family and country as their overarching priority in life by putting mission first, then their shipmates, and finally themselves last.

Chaplain Mark Basnight closed the memorial service with a prayer that concluded:

"Bless those who serve beneath the deep, through lonely hours their vigil keep. May peace their mission be! Protect each one, we ask of Thee. Bless those at home who wait and pray, for their return by night and day.

Tommy Richardson, the public relations officer of the Palmetto Base, told the Chronicle "The dedication, deeds, and sacrifice of the submariners like Torpedo Mate Robert Franklin Gibbs should be a constant source of motivation toward greater accomplishments.

Lexington County Veteran's Day Parade (cont.)

Saturday, November 9, 2008 • Downtown Lexington

PHOTOS BY SALLY TAYLOR | CHRONICLE



White Knoll Marching Band makes their way down the parade route.



The American Legion Post #7 has a little fun with the crowd.



Mac Toole waves to the crowd as he makes his way down the parade route.