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DECEMBER, 2008

PALMETTO BASE SUBMARINE VETERANS

NEWSLETTER



OUR 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.



Base Commander – Ron Friend

Palmetto Base Members

Joe Gawronski – Vice Commander

DW Eggleston – Secretary

Tommy Richardson – Public Relations

Brian Steffen – Storekeeper

Russ “Pappy” Cline - Treasurer

Mark Basnight – Chaplain

Jim “Snake” Stark – Chief Of Boat

Jerry Stout – District 2 Commander

Milt Berkey

Tracy Charbonneau

Allen “Buzz” Danielsen

Joe Geiger

Glenn Harris

Mike House

John Krause

Ken Middleton

Tom O’Brien

Ted Schneeberg

LE Spradlin

Randy Browning

Judy Cline

Mae Friend

Kelly Grantham

Bill Hicks

Gil Kaelin

Dick Lane

Bob Miller

Rebecca Richardson

Leonard Snell

Jeffrey Wagner

James Charbonneau

William Cox

Julian Galloway

John Green

Stoney Hilton

Jim Kirby

Bill Lindler

John Morgan

Sam Sanders

John Solis

Treasury Summary Report

1/2/2008 Thru 11/18/2008

Balance - \$1217.61

Summary report not available

11-25-08



UNITED STATES SUBMARINE VETERANS INC.
Palmetto Base

Minutes – November 18, 2008

- Meeting called to order by Commander Ron Friend.
- Seventeen members and one guest were present (list attached).
- Minutes of the Oct. 21, 2008 were reviewed and approved.
- Treasury report summary not available. Total in treasury is \$1217.61.
- Tom O'Brien reported on the Gibbs memorial and the Veterans Day Parade. The memorial was well received by the family. The White Knoll JNROTC drill team did an excellent job.
- Bill West, reporter for the Lexington Chronicle gave outstanding coverage of the memorial. A full page in the Thur. Nov. 13 issue was very impressive.
- A motion was made, seconded and approved to recognize Bob Oswald (host for Palmetto outing) and Bill West (chronicle reporter) with a plaque and/or a framed certificate. (DW to investigate).
- It was suggested that Palmetto Sub Vets take part in the Lexington Christmas parade with the submarine float. Buzz, our official parade coordinator will find out the details and Tom O'Brien will investigate our possible participation with the White Knoll JNROTC.
- The Christmas party will be on our normal meeting night in December. There will be no official meeting in Dec. The party is scheduled for Dec. 16, 2008 at **Gilligans** in Lexington. Casual dress will be the dress code (no uniforms or sub vet vests). Details and directions will be forthcoming.
- The depth charge was won by Tom O'Brien who contributed \$85 to the base treasury.
- Next official meeting is scheduled for Tuesday January 20, 2009 at the CRAB SHACK. Time 1800 social, and 1900 business.

Respectfully submitted

DW Eggleston, Base Secretary

Members Present

Mark Basnight – Randy Browning – Russ Cline – Buzz Danielsen – DW Eggleston – Mae Friend – Ron Friend – Julian Galloway – Joe Gawronski – Joe Geiger – Suzan House – Michael House – Bob Miller - Mark Morgan – Tom O'Brien – Tommy Richardson – Jim Stark – Brian Steffen –

December Birthdays – Ted Schneeberg, Dec. 24

Lexington Christmas Parade

The Lexington Christmas Parade is December 7th, 3:30 pm. The parade will line up on Butler Street, which is that same street that the memorial service was held, except it will be at the Highway 378 end of the street. The parade will proceed down main street and turn left on North Lake Drive where it will disband. We need to be there at 2:30. There needs to be some Christmas theme, so if anyone has a stuffed Santa we could put it on top of the sail between the sail and the whip antenna. Please let me know by the 3rd who can participate.

GIBBS MEMORIAL

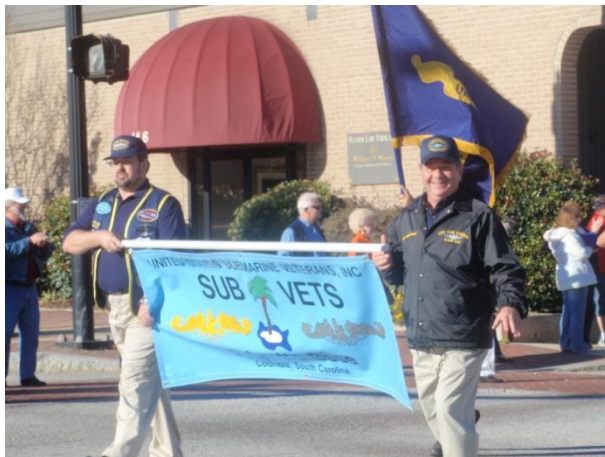
Memorial service and laying of the wreath for Robert Gibbs, lost on the Squalus (SS-192) on May 23, 1939 was attended by the family, Palmetto sub vets and the high school JNROTC color guard.





Lexington Veterans Day Parade

The Veterans Day Parade in Lexington on Sunday Nov. 9, 2008 had representation by the Palmetto Sub Vets with the shakedown cruise of our new float the USS Palmetto (SS-803).



Russian navy: Poison kills 20 in sub accident

**21 others reportedly injured
on nuclear-powered
submarine in Pacific**

MOSCOW - The fire safety system on a new Russian nuclear-powered submarine malfunctioned on a test run in the Sea of Japan, spewing chemicals that killed at least 20 people and injured 21 others, officials said Sunday.

It was Russia's worst naval accident since torpedo explosions sank another nuclear-powered submarine, the Kursk, in the Barents Sea in 2000, killing all 118 seamen aboard.

The victims died of poisoning from Freon gas that was released Saturday when the fire-extinguishing system accidentally turned on, said Sergei Markin, an official with Russia's top investigative agency. ***(DW note: Freon gas is not poison, it replaces oxygen suffocating people in an area of containment.)***

His agency has launched a probe into the accident, which Markin said will focus on what activated the firefighting system. He suggested there could be possible violations of operating rules, which points to human error.

The submarine itself was not damaged and traveled back to its base on Russia's Pacific coast under its own power Sunday, Russian navy spokesman Capt. Igor Dygalo said.

'Unsanctioned activation'

The nuclear reactor that powers the sub was operating normally and radiation levels in the sub were also normal, Dygalo said.

The submarine returned to Bolshoi Kamen, a military shipyard and a navy base near Vladivostok, state-run Rossiya television said.

Dygalo said the deaths and injuries were due to the "unsanctioned activation" of the firefighting system in the two sections of the submarine closest to the bow.

Seventeen civilians and three seamen died in the accident and 21 others were hospitalized after being evacuated to a destroyer that brought them to shore, Markin said in a statement, revising earlier casualty figures.

Dygalo said the submarine had 208 people aboard, including 81 servicemen, and was to be commissioned by the navy later this year.

Officials did not reveal the name of the submarine, but Russian news agencies quoted officials at the Amur Shipbuilding Factory saying the submarine was built there and is called the Nerpa.

Construction of the Nerpa, an Akula II class attack submarine, started in 1991 but was suspended for years because of a shortage of funding, they said. Testing on the submarine began last month and it submerged for the first time last week.

First Deputy Defense Minister Alexander Kolmakov and navy chief Adm. Vladimir Vysotsky were heading for the Pacific Coast in the wake of the accident, Dygalo said.

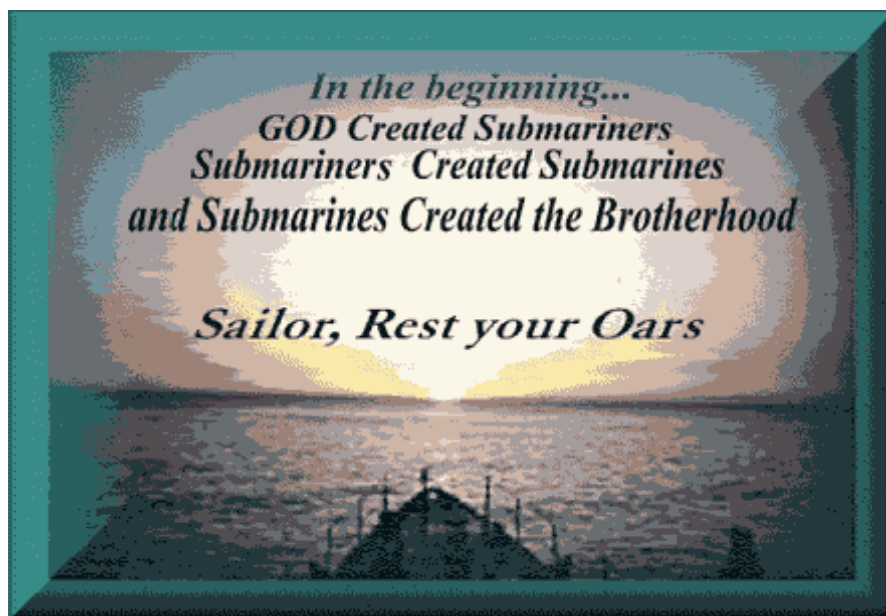
Saturday's accident came as the Kremlin is seeking to restore Russia's naval reach, part of a drive to show off the nuclear-armed country's clout amid strained ties with the West. A naval squadron is headed to Venezuela for joint exercises this month in a show of force near U.S. waters.

Despite a major boost in military spending during Vladimir Putin's eight years as president, Russia's military is still hampered by decrepit infrastructure, aging weapons and problems with corruption and incompetence.

The Kremlin said President Dmitry Medvedev was told about the accident immediately and ordered a thorough investigation.

Putin, now prime minister, was criticized for his slow response to the Kursk disaster.

In 2003, 11 people also died when a Russian submarine that was being taken out of service sank in the Barents Sea.



“A Silent Warrior’s Final Day” is a 2004 report that many of you have read but some have not. The Parche represented the extreme in gathering intelligence but this is not something that is un-familiar to most of us.

A Silent Warriors Final Day (October 2004)

On a dark and gloomy rain-filled day, a shroud of secrecy permeated the air on the Bremerton waterfront.

It was the perfect setting for the final day in the top-secret career of the Bangor based USS Parche, one of the world’s most prolific spy submarines.

By the time its life ended in a decommissioning ceremony at the Bremerton naval base, the Parche was the most highly decorated ship in navy history, even though most Americans have never heard of it.

Commissioned in 1974, the Parche spent 30 years and 19 deployments as America’s top espionage sub, reportedly tapping the undersea military communication lines of the Soviet Union during the cold war, plucking lost Soviet weaponry from the ocean floor and gathering intelligence on other enemies afterward.

The Parche (pronounced PAR-chee) was officially designated by the navy as a “research and development” submarine. It did plenty of that, testing new sonar and undersea warfare technologies.

Its highly classified missions, none of which have ever been officially confirmed, are the most intriguing aspect of its history. Many of those missions were deemed to be of “vital importance to US National security,” earning the submarine an unprecedented nine Presidential unit citations. The vast majority of ships never receive even one.

For being the most decorated ship ever, shouldn’t more people be made aware of what it accomplished?

“Those that need to know, know,” said a matter-of-fact Rear Admiral, Ben Wachendorf, who commanded the Parche from 1988 to 1993.

Wachendorf, was US defense attache’ in Moscow and traveled from Russia to be at the ceremony. “I wouldn’t have missed it for anything, “ It means a lot to be able to say goodbye to an old friend.”

In fact, all but one of the Parche’s nine former commanders were present at the Parche’s decommissioning. In addition, about 130 former crew members, most belonging to the USS Parche Association, were on hand to witness the sub’s inactivation.

Those who returned to see their sub one last time said it was not only the camaraderie of submarine life that made Parche special, but also the exotic and extremely challenging missions it completed, which often involved excruciating long periods submerged with dwindling food and supplies.

“ It’s the end of a life cycle,” said Manchester resident Will Longman, chairman of the Parche Association. “ It’s very meaningful, the camaraderie does not go away and the uniqueness of Parche imparts its own special camaraderie.”

The Parche also was the last of the navy’s 37 Sturgeon-class fast attack subs to be deactivated, though it barely resembled any of the other ships of that class. That’s because its hull was extended by 100 feet to accommodate extensive classified modifications in a four-year stay at Mare island naval shipyard near San Francisco in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

In 1994, the Parche and its crew of 190 moved from Mare Island to Bangor. It had already earned six Presidential unit citations by that time and earned another three after its transfer to Bangor, which included a ninth for its final deployment that ended in late September.

The Parche’s final resume also included 13 Navy Expeditionary Medals and 10 Navy unit commendations, all unprecedented numbers.

“ Parche has had a career unmatched in the annals of submarine history, “ said Rear Admiral Paul Sullivan, commander of the Pacific Fleet submarine force. “ Parche has gathered enough citations that are just truly remarkable . . . based on her superb performance in critical national tasking. She now ranks among the most legendary vessels to ever have sailed under our flag.” Sullivan compared the Parche’s storied past to other historic Navy vessels, such as USS Constitution, USS Monitor, USS Missouri and USS Nautilus. “ Now there is Parche.”

The ship figured prominently in “Blind Man’s Bluff”: The Untold Story of American Submarine Espionage,” a nonfiction book published in the 1990s, which described how it spent its cold war days spying on the Soviet Union.

It’s also been reported the sub, with a claw-like device, was able to pick up lost Soviet missiles or bombs from the sea floor. Later, it reportedly deployed unmanned drones to complete many of the espionage tactics.

Following the cold war, the Parche continued its highly classified missions, with many observers citing an even higher sense of secrecy. It’s said the Parche spent plenty of time in the Persian Gulf, gleaning intelligence on Iraq and Iran, and traveling through the Western Pacific keeping tabs on China and North Korea.

Capt. Richard Charles, the Parche’s first commander, traveled from Mobile Alabama,

for the ceremony. He took command while the sub was being built and went on its first deployment, a five month journey in the Mediterranean sea. After that, the sub transferred to the west coast and began its spy missions a few years later. “Those guys in the Pacific had all the fun,” Charles joked. “I just built it. It’s always sad to see a ship retire, but after a while, they are like you and me; they wear out.”

Ironically, the name of the Parche’s last at sea commander, Capt. Charles Richard, was a mirror image of the sub’s first. Richard was relieved in a change of command ceremony after leading the Parche on two post-September 11th deployments, including one that lasted 122 days in 2002.

“Being commander of this ship was an extraordinary experience and I was fortunate to be given this experience, I hope that each man who has served aboard this ship will look back and swell with pride knowing that he answered his country’s call.”

Following the ceremony, The Parche, probably one of the least known subs to the general public because of its highly classified missions, silently shifted over to Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. There it will be torn apart and recycled over the next few years.

United States Submarines lost in December

USS Capelin (SS-289)

[View Ship's Log for SS-289](#)

[View full profile of SS-289](#)

[View the memorial for SS-289](#)

Lost on:
12/2/1943

Lost on Dec 2, 1943 with the loss of 76 men. She was on her 1st war patrol, but her exact location and cause of loss remain a mystery. She may have been lost to mines or an operational casualty.



Class: **SS 285**

Commissioned: **6/4/1943**

Fate: **Lost in the Celebes Sea, on her 2nd patrol, with 78 men lost. Cause of loss unknown.**

Launched: **1/20/1943**

Builder: **Portsmouth Navy Yard**

Length: **312**, Beam: **27**

#Officers: **10**, #Enlisted: **71**

USS Sealion (SS-195)

[View Ship's Log for SS-195](#)

[View full profile of SS-195](#)

[View the memorial for SS-195](#)

Lost on:
12/10/1941

Lost on Dec 10, 1941 with the loss of 5 men. To prevent her from falling into enemy hands, she was scuttled in Manila Bay after incurring severe bomb damage during the initial Japanese attack.



Class: **SS 194**
Commissioned: **11/27/1939**
Fate:

Launched: **5/25/1939**
Builder: **Electric Boat Co (General Dynamics)**
Length: **311**, Beam: **27**
#Officers: **5**, #Enlisted: **50**

USS F-1 / Carp (SS-20)

[View Ship's Log for SS-20](#)

[View full profile of SS-20](#)

[View several memorials for SS-20](#)

Lost on:
12/17/1917

Lost on December 17, 1917 with the loss of 19 officers and men when it was sunk after collision with the USS F-3 (Pickerell) (SS-22) off San Clemente, CA.



Class: **SS F**

Commissioned: **6/19/1912**

Fate: **While maneuvering in exercises at sea, F-1 and F-3 collided, the former sinking in 10 seconds, her port side torn forward of the engine room. 19 of her men were lost, while 3 others were rescued by the submarines with whom she was operating.**

Launched: **3/12/1912**

Builder: **Union Iron Works**

Length: **143**, Beam: **15**

#Officers: **1**, #Enlisted: **21**

USS S-4 (SS-109)

[View Ship's Log for SS-109](#)

[View full profile of SS-109](#)

[View the memorial for SS-109](#)

Lost on:

12/17/1927

Lost on December 17, 1927 with the loss of 34 officers and men when it was sunk after being rammed by USCG Paulding. Salvaged in 1928 and re-commissioned.



Class: **SS S**

Commissioned: **11/19/1919**

Fate: **Struck from the Naval Register.**

Launched: **8/27/1919**

Builder: **Portsmouth Navy Yard**

Length: **231**, Beam: **22**

#Officers: **4**, #Enlisted: **34**