



UNITED STATES SUBMARINE VETERANS



“To Honor Those Who Serve, Past, Present & Future”

February 2023

Volume 24, Issue 02

**Lest We Forget —
“The USSVI Submariner’s Creed”**

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

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News Brief

- Next Meeting:** At 1100, third Saturday of each month at the Knollwood Sportsman’s Club. Mark your calendars for these upcoming dates:
 - February 18**
 - March 18**
 - April 15**
- Duty Cook Roster:**
 - February – CHRIS GAINES
 - MARCH – BRET ZACHER AND/OR CHRIS GAINES
 - APRIL – MAURICE YOUNG
- February Birthdays:** Leon Lemma 6th; Eric Hansknecht 11th; Larry Heckelsmiller 12th; Scott Jaklin 17th. Happy Birthday, Shipmates.

Crash Dive Meeting Minutes January 21, 2023

1) Call to Order 1117

2) Attendance –

- a) Clayton Hill
- b) Bret Zacher
- c) Herman Mueller
- d) Scott Jaklin
- e) Chris Gaines
- f) Frank Walter, Jr.
- g) Maurice Young
- h) Frank Voznak
- i) Ted Rotzell
- j) Manny Garmendez
- k) Jazz Nance

3) Reports:

a) Secretary's Report

- i) Spent time in Florida. Water in garage; wetted posters. Minor effect.
- ii) Annual reports in progress

a) Treasurer's Report: Total Assets \$14,177.19 [From Dec meeting]

- i) Funds in GLCU: Checking \$932.89, Savings \$2,050.00 (\$1,060.00 for Cobia)
- ii) Crash Dive Memorial: \$6,084.30; Cobia Drydock: \$5,010.00; Petty Cash: \$100
- iii) Updated numbers to follow, only 2 members late on dues
- iv) Only 1 check to be sent to national once dues are ready
- v) Cobia drydock pushed later than 2025 due to technical problems (and funding)
- vi) Maritime museum fundraising director replaced last year, new efforts to follow
- vii) Interest funds to be added to Memorial Funds come February

c) Committee Reports

- i) Newsletter – Chris Gaines
(1) See Website.
- ii) Membership – Chris Gaines
(a) Dues update; 8 members unaccounted for in Dec.
(1) Last 2 members dues to be collected soon
- iii) Community Outreach– Bret Zacher
- iv) Hospitality – Bret Zacher
- v) Webmaster – Frank Voznak, Jr.
(1) New bill coming due for email service; scrapping unnecessary services discussed
- vi) Storekeeper – Herman Mueller
(1) New calendars came in; samples viewed at meeting
(2) T-shirts/hats order info to be sent out via email
- vii) Eagle Scout – Ted Rotzell
(1) Courts of Honor still in hiatus from Covid/Flu/Holiday season.

4) Old (Unfinished) Business

- a) WWII Chicago Memorial: Paver Program
 - i) Publicity and order forms to follow
(1) Advertisement starts via email in Feb; Veteran's Day in Nov dedication date
- b) USSVI Web Database Updates
 - i) Blackbaud only for 2023 Tucson Convention
(1) Emails have been going out to all members on updates

c) Operation Handshake: contact with GLNS

i) Another visit to check out Port of Call (former O/C Club) to be scheduled

5) New Business

[TBD]

6) Good of the Order

a) Duty Cook

- i) February – Chris Gaines
- ii) March – Bret Zacher and/or Chris Gaines
- iii) April – Maurice Young

b) 786 Club

- i) Boat is at sea with Change of Command upon return
- ii) Deputy Commander of StratCom speaker coming March 1st at Union League

c) 2023-2024 Submarine Veterans Scholarship: expanded to vocational training, trade schools and apprenticeships. Applications open until 15 May 2023.

d) International Submarine Association: Thessaloniki, Greece, 22-26 May 2023

e) USSVI National Convention in Tucson: 28 Aug to 03 Sep 2023

f) Kane County Gun Show, Charles, IL on 12 Feb 23: Chris Gaines and Greg Miller to table at event

7) SOUND Klaxon

a) Next Meeting is 18 February 2023 @ KSC

8) Adjourn 1243

Lost Boats

USS Barbel	(SS-316)	2/4/45
USS Shark I	(SS-174)	2/11/42
USS Amberjack	(SS-219)	2/16/43
USS Grayback	(SS-208)	2/27/44
USS Trout	(SS-202)	2/29/44

Nukes, Nubs And Coners: The Unique Social Hierarchy Aboard A Nuclear Submarine

Getting assigned to your first sub doesn't make you a submariner and once you become one you'll find yourself in a social structure unlike any other.

by [Aaron Amick](#) | UPDATED Jun 16, 2020 2:54 PM



Living in a machine with over 100 sailors requires a person to be flexible socially and sometimes physically. I spent two decades on United States Navy submarines performing sonar duties among eccentric personalities in incredibly stressful situations. When sailors report to their first submarine, they are joining a work culture unlike any other. Surrounded by crew members busily moving about tight spaces and narrow walkways, announcements over the circuit boxes, roving watchstanders, equipment humming to

400hz fans, it can be anxiety-inducing to any sailor.

That is why every new crewmember starts as a NUB. But, if they work hard and learn the systems, they will earn their dolphins and become a member of another entirely unique subculture within the grander social hierarchy that exists within the confines of the submerged tube they call home for months on end.

Here's is what is expected of a new crew member and a bit about the various 'unique' groups of people aboard the submarine, one of which the NUB will find themselves an integral part of once they get minted a submariner.

The NUB

A new crewmember is a Non-Useful Body, or NUB. He or she uses our limited supply of space, water, food, and oxygen. They are not welcome, but BUPERS (Bureau of Personnel) keeps sending them. The NUB is easily identifiable as he will be the only crewman wearing a command ball cap with the ship's name and no Dolphins symbol on the front. They have their qualification card in their rear pocket at all times and had better have a small notebook in their hand for studying. They do not have movie privileges unless they are a "Hot Runner." Hot Runner refers to a torpedo self-starting despite the fact it hasn't been launched yet. Very dangerous, but Submariners like that kind of initiative in the NUB.



A sailor washes down the USS Washington (SSN-787), USN

Everyone, officer or enlisted, is a NUB when they report to their first submarine. They are treated with contempt. In the case of the officer, it's respectful contempt, sir. The NUB is expected to qualify in submarines within 12 months. This can be extended a few months if there are outside circumstances that delay qualification opportunities.

Qualification on a U.S. submarine is a formal process completed in phases. The first phase introduces all the major systems around the boat. This orientation phase is purposefully designed to ease the NUB through the culture shock of living inside a machine the Navy sends to submerge in the ocean for weeks on end. This introduces the NUB to their fellow crewman, one watch station at a time. This first impression will affect how difficult their qualification path is because the crew decides if you are to become a submariner or not. They must earn their confidence. They must prove that they can perform emergency actions without direction and with confidence during a 'casualty,' when something goes wrong.



A sailor mans the main console of the ship's Ballast Control Panel on board the nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine USS Pennsylvania (SSBN-735), USN

Phase two of submarine qualification is the most difficult. It requires detailed knowledge of every system on the boat, from the nuclear powerplant, to ventilation, to electrical and hydraulic systems, to simple atmosphere scrubbing and gravity drains. The Non-Useful Body must memorize every system, be able to draw it from memory on command, and know the initial actions they must perform if a causality occurs to that system. Even if it's not their assigned equipment, they must know how to prevent a failure from cascading into a major casualty that could be catastrophic for the boat.

Phase three of submarine qualification is the most physically demanding. This is the walkthrough phase. The NUB will walk through every level of every compartment one at a time with a qualified crewman. During this tour, they may be dressed in full protective gear like a Fire Fighting Equipment (FFE) asbestos bodysuit and wearing breathing protection. This physical discomfort compounded with an oral interview answering detailed system-specific operational questions simulates a small, but important amount of stress compared to what they would endure during a real casualty situation.



Sailors assigned to USS Indiana (SSN-789) eat dinner in the crew's mess while underway., USN

Phase four is 'The Board.' This is the end phase of the submarine qualification and is more difficult to schedule than it is to pass. The NUB must find at least three submarine qualified crewmen who have three to five hours of off-watch time at the same time to be part of an oral interview board. There must be at least one submarine qualified officer, one senior enlisted man, and one system expert on the Board.

It is customary for the qualifying crewman to bring a small snack to the Board. Usually, there is a bowl of Jolly Rancher hard candies, but I have seen a cook make a full dessert platter with pastries and a cake. The Board members can't ask hard questions when they are enjoying some sugary treats!



A sailor checks a radar display while another studies a chart inside the control room of the USS Florida (SSGN-728), USN

If a Board interview is failed, a crew member can reschedule a second board when they are ready. He or she is only restricted by the time constraints of the qualification schedule. If they fail a second board they may be removed from submarine service, but this is very rare. Good submariners can be built if given enough time by the crew to help them. I have seen both enlisted and officers wash out of the submarine qualification program and in each of those cases it was for the better. It very possibly saved their lives and ensured the safety of our ship.

The final phase is a one-on-one interview with the Executive Officer and the Commanding Officer. Every submarine qualified sailor is awarded their dolphins with the full confidence and trust of the submarine Captain. By this time, the crewman has earned the respect of their shipmates and demonstrated that they know the basics to keep the submarine in fighting shape, no matter the circumstances.



U.S. Navy Master Chief Jeffrey Bottoms, chief of the boat for the USS Rhode Island, far left; Navy Cmdr. Robert J. Clark, commanding officer for the Rhode Island, and Navy Lt. Cmdr. Paul Pampuro, far right, watch as Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class William Corring speaks at a ceremony in the Rhode Island crew's mess as the submarine patrols in the Atlantic Ocean, Aug. 16, 2010. Corring received his Dolphin pin during the ceremony., USN

After achieving the approval of the crew and getting one's dolphins, they get categorized into one of two groups—Nukes and Coners.

The Nuke

Crewmen who work in the engine room are called Nukes. They are made up of high school graduates who loved Star Trek so much they decided to role-play their science fiction fantasy in real life. Incredibly smart and able to digest volumes of information in a short time, these mystical figures often whisper of powerband constraints and millirems amongst themselves. They use math so much in their daily routine they ran out of numbers and added some Latin letters to their measurement logs. They are best avoided at mealtime and are given their own table in the crew's mess next to the Chief Petty Officers.

Nukes come in three varieties:

The Reactor Operator is likely the stereotypical 90-pound geek who maintains a World of Warcraft account despite being underway for 10 months of the year. He's wiry, lanky, and a little jittery from energy drinks. Despite his excitement, he is the smoothest Reactor Operator in the nuclear program and can catch a power spike like he's dimming the bedroom lights next to his waifu body pillow.



Nukes studying one of the boat's systems., USN

The Nuclear Electrician is the most chameleon-like and may be difficult to spot in a crew photo. He often has average height and build allowing him to blend in with the 'Coners' if left unchallenged. He gives himself away by always having a Sudoku puzzle book tucked inside his poopy suit and a faint odor of ozone follows him around.

The Nuclear Mechanic is the protector and enforcer of the engine room. These sailors are often very large compared to their fellow Nukes. They have oil-stained fingers and faded blue poopy suits that have seen more underway time than was intended. They eat at the Nuke table in the crew's mess with gusto, filling their frames with enough carbs to make it through the next six hours in the hot engine room.

Life in the engine room is routine at sea. No matter what the mission or our deployment location they serve one purpose: Push the Cone.

The Coner

Coners live in the Cone. That's any space forward of the engine room. They make up the rest of the crew. A grab bag of cultures and backgrounds, from small-town USA to big city living, the Cone represents a

microcosm of the United States' young men and women. This mix of people come together at the needs of the Navy and perform well despite their differences.



Submariners scan the horizon through periscopes aboard the fast attack submarine USS Santa Fe (SSN-763) searching for contacts during a transit of the Pacific Ocean., USN

The Radioman is the most elusive of the Coners. He spends his time locked in his 'Radio Shack' both off watch and on. This limited access space offers a small amount of privacy not seen anywhere else outside the Captain's stateroom. From this room, messages are dispatched around the boat. Radiomen are the gatekeepers of all message traffic from the most sensitive top-secret orders to routine personal messages. No matter what is happening or planned, the Radiomen know about it first.

The Quartermaster, or "QM," could be mistaken for a militant artist with his bandolier of colored pencils and erasers. He is the 'Keeper of the Chart.' Hunched over a plotting table for six hours at a time, he is constantly calculating and verifying the ship's position.

Off watch, they are preparing charts for the next day or next mission. A modern, Neo-QM has turned in his colored pencils for a tablet pc and paper charts for their digital

replacement, but their fixation for geolocating and browsing rules of the aquatic road remains a constant.



Plotting a course aboard Virginia class nuclear fast attack submarine USS Texas. , USN

Sonarman, sometimes referred to as "shower techs" or "sonar girls," are the most eccentric of the crew zoo. In a world where every evolution from flushing the toilet to firing up the kettle has a written procedure, the sonarman works in the most liberal and creative of environments.

Sonar is a talent-based skill that varies from sailor to sailor and some of the best are also some of the most unstable personalities to be awarded a secret clearance. They are most likely encountered in or near the shower as they have an affinity for bathing underway.

Missile Technicians, "MTs," are the stewards of 'Sherwood Forest.' Rising between levels in the missile compartment, 24 large orange trunks fill the nuclear ballistic submarine like an apocalyptic orchard. MTs rove around the ballistic missile tubes checking temperatures and pressures, ensuring their precious reentry vehicles and the nuclear warheads nested inside them are very comfortable.



The watertight hatch that separates the rest of the boat from 'Sherwood Forest.', USN

Auxiliarymen, or an "A-Ganger," is a hostile creature and the natural predator of the sonarman. A combination of 'Nuke Waste,' a sailor who failed nuclear power school, and a backyard diesel mechanic, the A-Ganger is the gruffest, foul-mouthed sailor onboard any United States Navy vessel. They are responsible for scrubbing the atmosphere clean, managing the waste tanks, and keeping the sweet Fairbanks Morse diesel engine running smoothly. They appear to be a less evolved Nuclear Mechanic whose smell is as rank as their language.

The Torpedoman can always be found in the torpedo room. Both on watch and off watch, the torpedo room is the crew's social center on an attack submarine. A master of small arms and heavy explosives, the Torpedoman is the weapons master of the crew. They are always cleaning rifles and polishing the torpedo tubes to a new level of brass brightness. They are often found in pairs due to their reader-worker routines, checklist and grease pencil in hand. If you find yourself in the torpedo room, look for the most heavily armed person there and that is your Torpedoman.



Torpedomen conduct maintenance on small arms in the torpedo room aboard the *Los Angeles* class attack submarine *USS Helena* (SSN-725). , *USN*

The Cooks, or Mess Specialists, are the most liked persons of the submarine crew. They dish out 1,000 calories of happiness every six hours, every day and keep the crew fueled.

While every crewman has their watch team and circle of friends, everyone knows the cooks. Clad in very distinctive white chefs outfits and paper hats, they manage to serve up chow with a smile and light banter to keep morale up.

Anyone who has spent time at sea respects the cook.



Cooking up some pancakes on a *Los Angeles* class fast attack submarine. , *USN*

Yeomen are crewmen with a very specific skill. They can type. Commonly found in the 'Yeomen Shack' hunched over a

keyboard like Schroeder on the piano or in the torpedo room yammering about how they don't have to stand watch because they work so much. The Yeoman is the Executive Officer's right hand and has a chest full of Navy Achievement Medals to prove it. He or she processes the paperwork bureaucracy that keeps the Navy afloat and flowing in the right direction.

Doc, the submarine's Corpsman, also known as the "Pecker Checker," keeps everyone healthy or at least can identify when someone is not. From dispensing the Navy's universal cure, Motrin, to the 'morale check' (a slap on the crotch), the Doc makes sure everyone has absorbed enough radiation for evolutionary mutation and is ready to stand watch.



Master Chief Hospital Corpsman David Peterson administers a flu vaccine to Machinist's Mate 1st Class Kyle Leoard aboard the *Los Angeles*-class fast attack submarine *USS Cheyenne* (SSN 773)., *USN*

This is the American Submarine crew. On their own, they may be goofy and socially awkward, but as a crew, this band of misfits becomes the best warfighters I have ever had the honor of serving with.

Life on board a submarine is rewarding because it is a demonstration of what a diverse group of people can achieve under incredibly difficult conditions.



The crew of the Los Angeles fast class attack submarine USS Louisville (SSN-724) circa 2004. , USN

Aaron Amick is a retired U.S. Navy submarine sonarman. He served in both Atlantic and Pacific Oceans on 688 Los Angeles class fast attack and Ohio class ballistic missile submarines. He has published two audiobooks on Cold War-era submarines, Akula SSN Project 971 Sub Brief and USS Nautilus SSN-571 Sub Brief. Now, Aaron manages a small [Patreon page](#) and contributes to The War Zone.

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Nuclear-trained sailors, considered the Navy's 'best and brightest,' face mental health challenges

A mental illness diagnosis could lead to expulsion for sailors who want to work the nuclear reactors powering subs and aircraft

carriers. They often mask their struggles instead of seeking help, current and former sailors said.

Feb. 11, 2023, 6:00 AM CST

By [Melissa Chan](#)

GOOSE CREEK, S.C. — Nuclear operators are considered the Navy's "best and brightest," with only the top-scoring applicants gaining acceptance into the prestigious training program. But a dozen current and former nuclear-trained sailors, as well as loved ones of such operators who have died by suicide, said the unique challenges and pressures of the job have led some to suffer from severe mental health issues beginning at the school and extending well beyond graduation.

About 3,000 people get selected annually for the rigorous, nearly two-year program at the Naval Nuclear Power Training Command, where people learn to operate the nuclear reactors that power submarines and aircraft carriers. To entice people to enter the demanding and highly specialized program, the South Carolina school boasts career advancement perks in the civilian and Naval world, and promises the biggest monetary bonuses the Navy offers.

Read the rest of the article here:

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/nuclear-trained-sailors-considered-navys-best-brightest-face-mental-he-rcna65393>

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