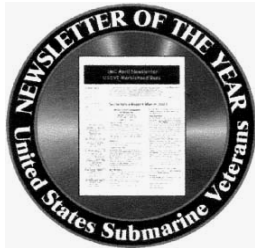


American Submariners Inc.
4370 Twain Ave.
San Diego, CA 92120-3404



The Silent Sentinel
MAY 2014



Our Creed and Purpose

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.

In addition to perpetuating the memory of departed shipmates, we shall provide a way for all Submariners to gather for the mutual benefit and enjoyment. Our common heritage as Submariners shall be Strengthened by camaraderie. We support a strong U.S. Submarine Force.

The organization will engage in various projects and deeds that will bring about the perpetual remembrance of those shipmates who have given the supreme sacrifice. The organization will also endeavor to educate all third parties it comes in contact with about the services our submarine brothers performed and how their sacrifices made possible the freedom and lifestyle we enjoy today.

**MEMORIAL DAY (MAY 26)
SERVICES WILL BE HELD AT
THE RONCADOR ON SUBBASE.
ATTENDEES SHOULD ARRIVE
NO LATER THAN 0930. SEE
YOU THERE!**

U.S. Submarine Veterans San Diego Base

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The Silent Sentinel via Email

To all of my Shipmates and families who currently receive our Great newsletter via the mail who would like it sent via email or continue to receive it via mail, please fill out the form and mail it to the base or myself. We are trying to cut the cost of the newsletter down from \$3700 to about \$1900 a year. By receiving the Silent Sentinel via email will cut down the printing and mailing cost. The other plus to receiving it via email is you can save it on your computer and not have the paper lying around the house.

A subscription to the Silent Sentinel newsletter will be available to surviving family members via internet email, at no charge, upon notification of the Membership Chairman. If a printed hard-copy is preferred, via US Post Office delivery, an annual donation of \$5.00 will be requested to cover costs.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____

EMAIL: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

Would like the SILENT SENTINEL emailed: YES _____ NO _____

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USSVI Base Commander
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DUE TO LOGISTICS CONSTRAINTS, ALL INPUTS FOR THE SILENT SENTINEL MUST BE IN MY HAND NO LATER THAN **ONE WEEK** AFTER THE MONTHLY MEETING. IF I DO NOT RECEIVE IT BY THIS TIME, THE ITEM WILL NOT GET IN. NO EXCEPTIONS! MIKE

MAY Meeting

Our monthly meeting is held on the second Tuesday of the month at VFW Post 3787, 4370 Twain Ave., San Diego. Our next meeting will be on 13 May 2014. The post is located one-half block West of Mission Gorge Road, just north of I-8. The meeting begins at 7 p.m. The E-Board meets one hour earlier at 6 p.m.

*Check us out on the World Wide Web
www.ussvisandiego.org*

BINNACLE LIST

George Koury, Al Strunk, Frank Walker, and Tommy Cox

Submarine Losses in April Originally Compiled by C J Glassford



S – 49 Battery Explosion, on 20 Apr 1926, at Submarine Base, New London, Connecticut : “ 4 MEN LOST “

PICKEREL (SS 177) - 74 Men on Board :
Sunk, on 3 Apr 1943, by Japanese Minelayer and Auxiliary Sub Chaser, Off Northern Honshu, Japan :
“ ALL HANDS LOST “

GRENADIER (SS 210) - 80 Men on Board :
Scuttled, on 22 Apr 1943, after Japanese Seaplane Attacks Damaged the Boat the previous day, off Penang, Malasia :
“ 4 MEN LOST - 76 MEN SURVIVED POW CAMP “

GUDGEON (SS 211) - 78 Men on Board :
Probably Sunk, on 18 Apr 1944, By Japanese Naval Aircraft, Southwest of Iwo Jima :
“ ALL HANDS LOST “

SNOOK (SS 279) - 84 Men on Board:
Probably Sunk, on 9 April 1945, by a combination of Japanese Naval Aircraft, Escort Vessel, Coast Defense Vessels, and/or Japanese Submarine, In the Nansei Soto Area:
“ ALL HANDS LOST “

THRESHER (SSN 593) - 129 Men on Board:
Sunk, on 10 April 1963, after a possible Pipeing Failure during
Deep Submergence Tests, Off the New England Coast
“ ALL HANDS LOST “

BONEFISH (SS 582) - 77 Men on Board:
Battery Fire and Explosion. on 24 April 1988, While operating off the Florida Coast :
“ 3 MEN LOST “

A cartoon illustration of a man with a beard and a dark jacket, blowing into a trumpet. A speech bubble above him says "GEDOM! FESB!". The illustration is enclosed in a rectangular frame.

**LAFAYETTE'S
GOLDEN
FLAPPER**

Thanks Carl!

Minutes for Submarine Veterans San Diego Base 8 April 2014

1900 - Meeting of the Submarine Veterans Inc., San Diego Base was called to order by Base Commander Bob Bissonnette.

Conducted Opening Exercises:

Reading of Our Creed.

Pledge of Allegiance lead by Base Senior Vice Commander Bill Earl.

Acting Chaplain Russ Mohedano lead us in prayer.

Conducted Tolling of the Boats for April.

Observed a moment of Silent Prayer for our lost shipmates.

Recognized past E-Board members and Officers.

Secretary Ferguson announced 34 members and 2 guests (Juanita Williams, Charles R. Davis, Twin Oaks Base) present.

The minutes of 11 March 2014 meeting were approved.

Call for Committee reports:

Acting Chaplain Mohedano announced Al Strunk, Frank Walker, Tommy Cox, and George Koury were on the binnacle list. ENCS William J. Stevens, RMCM Eddie Vargas and Captain Shepard "Shep" Jenks were on Eternal Patrol.

Parade Committee: Joel Eikam reminded the members of the Linda Vista parade Saturday April 26.

Membership Committee: Ray Ferbrache announced 293 members paid up. The member who gave Ray cash at least a month ago for Life Membership has still not identified himself.

Scholarship Report: Paul Hitchcock and his committee will review the two applications received and David Ball volunteered to serve on the selection committee.

Storekeeper: Phil Richeson has new patches and vinyl bumper stickers.

Breakfast: Fred Fomby announced 62 attendees paid and total proceeds were \$174. We usually have about 100 attend. Next breakfast 29 June 0800-1200 with Warren Branges taking over as Chairman. Many volunteers are needed.

Float Committee: David Kauppinen informed the members that the modifications to the float have been completed. The float will be taken to the National Convention in San Francisco and he is looking at costs for a new, larger, Base banner.

1925 Base Commander called for a break

1939 Base Commander called the meeting back to order.

Base Commander Bob Bissonnette shared information from his participation 23 Feb-29 March at the Navy Ice Camp Nautilus 2014 in Alaska.

Unfinished Business:

The West Region Caucus in Laughlin, NV will be April 27 to May 1 at the Aquarius Resort.

The Old Timers Luncheon on Sub Base on 8 May at 1030.

The Submarine Ball will be 10 May at 1830. Warren Branges has tickets for \$65 each.

Memorial Day services at the Sub Base 26 May at 1000.

2014 National Convention in San Francisco 1-7 September. Fliers are in the back of the room.

New Business: None

Good of the Order:

David Ball discussed the building dedication for Medal of Honor winner Thomas Eadie on May 9th at the Sub Base.

Rocky Rockers encouraged attendees at the Easter Sunday breakfast being held by the Doug Smay Base at the American Legion Hall, 47 5th Ave, Chula Vista. \$7.50 steak and eggs. He also has Submarine Cook Books for sale at \$20.

Warren Branges discussed the recent Riverside Memorail dedication, the 52 Flag Memorial at Liberty Station project to replace the engraving and that the Flags need to be put up this Friday at 0730. Stated that SubVest was a proper uniform for Submarine Ball attendees. One of the new float flags has been received.

Ray Ferbrache discussed the Riverside Memorial dedication.

David Ball read a card from Yvonne and Joseph Marin, cousins of Charlie, regarding the \$335 donated to the Charlie Marin Memorial Scholarship Fund and stated that they would make a donation each year to the fund in Charlie's memory.

Fred Fomby reminded us the the USS Barbel lost 2 men.

Base Commander Bissonnette adjourned the meeting at 2020.

Jack Ferguson, Secretary

Sailing List for 8 April 2014

Fred Fomby	Benny Williams	Jack Ferguson
Jack Addington	Bob Bissonnette	Bill Earl
David Ball	J. J. Lynch	Bob Farrell
Russ Mohedano	Tom Polen	Ed Farley
David Kauppinen	Rocky Rockers	W. J. (Joe) Sasser
Nihil D. Smith	Phillip Richeson	Phillip J. L. Richeson
Richard Smith	Chris Stafford	Mert Weltzen
Paul Hitchcock	Jim Harer	Manny Burciaga
William Johnston	Jack Kane	Seymour Phillips
Peter Lary	Ray Ferbrache	Warren Branges
Dennis Mortensen	Bob Welch	Glenn Gerbrand
Larry Dore		

Current News

“Plataginet, I will; and like thee, Nero,
Play on the lute, beholding the towns burn” (*Henry VI*, Shakespeare)

Life on a Navy Sub Relies On Rules: Some Dead Serious, Others Completely Ridiculous

Julian E. Barnes, Wall Street Journal, May 2

Aboard the USS New Mexico, Rules Are Essential for Months at Sea; ‘Odd Couple’ Matches, Kesha on Fridays

ABOARD THE USS NEW MEXICO – There are subcultures. And there are cultures aboard a sub.

Silently cruising the ocean depths while safely operating a 130-man tin can powered by a mini nuclear-power plant doesn't leave much room for error. That is why sub culture is built around rules, some dead serious, others completely ridiculous and some that are both.

There are rules to run the systems that provide the submarine's oxygen, water and power. And there are rules that keep the crew, whose bunks allow just 14 inches of headroom, somewhat sane.

One of the most important rules has every new junior officer teamed with a slightly more experienced officer who watches over the rookie, mentors him and corrects his mistakes. It can be a fractious relationship.

Under the hard stare of Lt. j.g. Josh Bergeron, the mentor, Lt. j.g. Tommy Plummer makes a habit of fumbling the basics, such as how to operate a radio, which on a sub is notoriously difficult.

Lt. Bergeron watched as Lt. Plummer tried to make sense of a garbled incoming radio message. As Lt. Plummer struggled, Lt. Bergeron demanded he make his report, both men recall.

"I am making it," Lt. Plummer said. "Making it up."

For whatever reason, be it an effective training tool or an affection for Neil Simon plays, officers aboard the USS New Mexico love "Odd Couple" matches. Among the crew, Lt. Bergeron is known for his no-nonsense demeanor. Lt. Plummer, the senior officers note, often acts as if he were at submarine summer camp.

"Tommy is a bit of a free spirit and Lt. Bergeron is the exact opposite," said Lt. Randy Riewerts, the New Mexico's navigator. "So who did we pair together as officer and his protégé to stand watch?"

The New Mexico is a nuclear-powered Virginia-class attack sub, the newest, most high-tech boats in the Navy submarine fleet. It spent March cruising under the Arctic ice cap. Inside, the commanding officer observed countless watch cycles featuring Lt. Bergeron fuming over Lt. Plummer's performance.

"I actually get a lot of joy watching Josh's face tense up as he stands behind Tommy," said Cmdr. Todd Moore, the New Mexico's skipper.

Of the many important rules on the sub, there is one in particular that no junior officer is ever allowed to forget.

"It is not OK to be new," said Cmdr. Moore, looking at Lt. Plummer. "It sums up the whole experience."

Added Lt. Plummer: "Being new comes at great expense to your sleep and your happiness."

Which is to say, on a sub, inexperience is never an excuse. Weapons, engine and life-support systems might be difficult to master but, all the same, they must be learned and understood.

The pressure can get to any young officer. When making a report, the first thing a sailor must say is who replaced him at the watch station. Early in the deployment to the Arctic, Lt. Plummer came off his watch, started his report and began stammering.

"He forgot who he was relieved by," Lt. Bergeron recalled.

"I was properly relieved," Lt. Plummer answered. "I swear I didn't just leave. That didn't happen, did it?"

For Lt. Plummer's first month aboard the New Mexico he was an ensign, the lowest ranking officer in the U.S. Navy. Ensigns aren't expected to know much about how the submarine operates. Their errors are forgiven and quickly forgotten.

As the senior ensign aboard the boat – in fact, the only ensign on the boat – Lt. Plummer had a far more pleasant task, which was to write funny rules to entertain the crew.

Once he was promoted to Lieutenant Junior Grade, the next step up, expectations and responsibility rose dramatically. Also, the job of writing entertaining rules passed to his replacement, Ensign Michael Hughes.

The idea of a mischievous ensign long ago seeped into popular culture – think Ensign Pulver from the movie "Mr. Roberts," but the position of the most junior officer on a sub is unique, even within the Navy.

Ensign Hughes's rules hang on the wall of the wardroom, where officers eat and hold meetings.

There are rules about what pop music to play on a Friday: Kesha. Rules about what to do if, in violation of submarine etiquette, an order is given during dinner: Repeat the order followed by "hashtag optional." ("To get the joke," Lt. Plummer explains, "you need to understand there is no such thing as an optional order.")

The proper response to an officer who declines to eat the meal as served? Ask: "Are you a communist?"

Lt. Plummer says the rules get more amusing the longer the crew remains submerged. “We are crammed down here so long anything seems funny.” The typical sub deployment is six months. This one lasted from the end of February to the middle of April.

Making funny rules at the expense of senior officers may not be the safest path to an illustrious naval career. That is why Ensign Hughes’s most successful rules are at the expense of Lt. Plummer. One rule allows Lt. Bergeron to beat Lt. Plummer at will with “a stick no wider than the width of his thumb.” Being constantly goaded about errors can, occasionally, push the second-most junior officer over the edge. That is what happened to Lt. Plummer during one of the training runs the *New Mexico* made before heading to the Arctic.

Among the more serious – but usually not catastrophic – errors a submariner can make is to inadvertently surface the submarine while it is prowling undersea, a mishap called “broaching” the boat.

Lt. Bergeron was driving the submarine in somewhat rough seas when he misjudged the buoyancy of the sub and the *New Mexico* lurched to the surface unexpectedly, giving away the boat’s position.

An officer who broaches the boat must wear a pair of pilot wings on his uniform, a reminder that subs aren’t meant to fly and that mistakes aren’t quickly forgotten.

And so the next day, Lt. Bergeron, wearing the wings, was in a particularly bad mood and was correcting Lt. Plummer more than usual. As his watch in the control room was ending, in a grievous breach of military protocol, Lt. Plummer turned to his mentor and said:

“Maybe Broachy McBroacherson could teach me a thing or two.”

Lt. Bergeron looked at Lt. Plummer with what the other sailors described as a lethal stare. Rookies who have never driven the submarine do not make fun of the errors of more experienced sailors. Someone in a corner of the control room whispered into a handset, and the story spread throughout the boat.

The incident prompted Ensign Hughes to give Lt. Bergeron the power to beat Lt. Plummer. Lt. Bergeron insists he has never exercised his right. Lt. Plummer appreciates the mercy but said he fears he will never live down the comment.

“I am deathly afraid of the first time I have to bring the boat to periscope depth,” he said. “Who will be standing there over my shoulder with the wings ready?”

Israeli Invention Obviates Divers’ Need For Periscopes

Ilan Gattegno, israelhayom.com, Apr 30

Technion scientists develop camera that can see above the surface from underwater . Prof. Yoav Shechner: “We have just devised a passive system to counter distortions caused by water.”

Researchers from the Technion — Israel Institute of Technology have developed a new apparatus that enables divers and submarines to see above the surface of the water without a periscope.

The traditional periscope has been used by divers and submarine sailors for over a century, but its main weakness is that using it exposes the ship or diver to detection.

Prof. Yoav Shechner and doctoral students Marina Alterman and Yohay Swirski from the Technion’s electrical engineering department have built a camera that rests underwater and can see above the water level without breaking the surface.

“Distortions that are random in space, time and viewpoint are created when viewing objects through a wavy water-air interface. Such distortions are also created in turbulence. In both cases, the distortion is caused by dynamic refraction,” Shechner’s website says.

“We study how this situation can be handled. This is important to some predators. It is also beneficial to submariners, to avoid the salient use of a physical periscope. We have just devised a passive system to counter distortions caused by water waves, in a single-viewpoint and instant. This single-frame approach is deterministic: It can be stand-alone, or be an enabler for stochastic methods.

“In many cases, the moving objects are of interest, as they reveal animal, human, or machine activity. We show that moving objects can be detected very simply, with low false-positive rates, even when the distortions are very strong and dominate the object motion. While the object and distortion motions are random and unknown, they are mutually independent. This is expressed by a simple motion feature which enables discrimination of moving object points versus the background.”

The camera, which the researchers have named Stella Maris (Latin for “Star of the Sea” and short for Stellar Marine Refractive Imaging Sensor), will be displayed this weekend at a leading electronic imaging conference in California.

The researchers believe their invention will also have civilian use, such as tracking sea birds from underwater. They named the camera Stella Maris because it uses the sun to perform its calculations.

Being There Matters: The Case For A Strong Navy *Vice Adm. William A. Brown, St. Louis Post Dispatch, Apr 28*

America’s Navy protects and defends America on the world’s oceans. Navy ships, submarines, aircraft and, most importantly, tens of thousands of America’s finest young men and women — including those from St. Louis — are deployed around the world doing just that. They are there now. They will be there when we are sleeping tonight. They will be there every Saturday, Sunday and holiday this year. They are there around the clock, far from our shores, defending America at all times.

That they are there is critically important because, as in virtually any global endeavor, being there matters. It matters in business: It is why American firms maintain a presence in their overseas markets. It matters in politics: It is why the State Department maintains a diplomatic contingent in nearly every other nation on earth. It certainly matters to our national defense: It is why U.S. forces are stationed around the world.

On our planet, more than 70 percent of which is covered by water, being there means having the ability to act from the sea. The Navy is uniquely positioned to be there; the world’s oceans give the Navy the power to protect America’s interests anywhere, and at any time.

When America’s national security is threatened by the existence of a weapons facility or a terrorist camp on the other side of the world, being there matters. Where these threats exist, chances are high that Navy ships, submarines, aircraft and special forces are very close by, with the ability to engage targets located hundreds of miles inland. When the decision is made to act on one of these threats, the solution may involve launching attack jets or unmanned aircraft from aircraft carriers, firing cruise missiles from ships or submarines or inserting a team of Navy SEALs to do what only Navy SEALs can do. In any case, the Navy can do all of these things, and do them all from the sea.

More than 90 percent of the world’s commerce travels by sea. When piracy threatens innocent lives and disrupts shipping traffic in the Indian Ocean, when rogue nations threaten to deny access to vital Middle East waterways through which much of the world’s oil is shipped, being there matters. America’s Navy is there, patrolling what is essentially the world’s interstate ocean highway system, ensuring the free flow of global trade and, in turn, preserving America’s economic prosperity.

Following a humanitarian crisis, like the devastating typhoon that struck the Philippines in 2013 or the tsunami that ravaged northern Japan in 2011, being there mattered. Because the Navy is always deployed around the world, it

can provide nearly immediate humanitarian relief in the wake of a disaster, ferrying supplies, medicine and trained medical personnel ashore from Navy ships via helicopters and landing craft — and reassuring our commitment to stability.

When narcotics traffickers use speedboats and rudimentary submarines to ferry illegal drugs across the oceans and into America, being there matters. Navy ships and submarines work the waters near Central and South America with law enforcement agencies to intercept shipments of illegal narcotics before they reach our shores.

As the world's geopolitical and economic climates continue to evolve, the case for America maintaining a strong Navy grows. Indeed, the president's national security strategy calls for a renewed focus on enduring threats in the Middle East region, as well as an increased American commitment in the Asia-Pacific region — a vast, mostly ocean-covered area of the world ideally suited for operations from the sea and in which the Navy maintains a robust presence.

When it comes to protecting and defending America, being there matters. History has proven this point. America's Navy is already there serving our great nation. It is a proud honor to be able to serve in our Navy. Thank you, St. Louis, for your support.

Vice Adm. William A. Brown, the deputy commander of U.S. Transportation Command at Scott Air Force Base, is the senior Navy representative for St. Louis Navy Week, April 28-May 4.

USS Hartford Receives Unit Commendation

New London Day, Apr 28

GROTON — The USS Hartford received the Meritorious Unit Commendation during a ceremony Thursday, April 10, for unprecedented success in intelligence collection operations at sea in 2012.

Standing before his crew of more than 130 sailors at the World War II National Submarine Memorial East, Cmdr. Steve Wilkinson, commanding officer of the Los Angeles-class submarine, formally accepted the honor from the commander of Submarine Squadron 4, Capt. Jim Waters.

Waters thanked the crew members for their dedication, and said it was a great opportunity to recognize the hard work of the Hartford (SSN 768). According to the Navy, the Hartford conducted “first-of-its-kind intelligence collections” during a six-month deployment to the U.S. European Command area of responsibility.

US Navy Orders 10 New Subs for Record \$17.6B

Christopher P. Cavas, Defense News, Apr 28

WASHINGTON — The US Navy announced a record \$17.645 billion contract Monday to build 10 new SSN 774 Virginia-class nuclear-powered attack submarines. The order assures prime contractor General Dynamics Electric Boat and chief subcontractor Huntington Ingalls Newport News Shipbuilding of submarine orders through 2018.

The fixed-price incentive multiyear contract for 10 Block IV subs provides for two ships per year over the five-year period, each yard delivering one sub per year. The two shipbuilders share equally in a teaming arrangement to build the subs, with each yard responsible for certain portions of each hull.

“The Block IV award is the largest shipbuilding contract in US Navy history in terms of total dollar value,” said Rear Adm. Dave Johnson, program executive officer for submarines at Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA). It “builds upon the Virginia-class program's successful Navy and industry relationship,” he added, calling the program “a model of acquisition excellence.”

In a joint statement, the shipbuilders chimed in.

“This is the largest number of boats ordered to date in a single contract block, which is great news — particularly in light of today’s challenging economic and political environments,” said Newport News Shipbuilding President Matt Mulherin.

“This award has great significance for the US Navy, our company and the entire submarine industrial base,” Jeffrey Geiger, president of Electric Boat, said in the statement. “By continuing to produce two ships per year, the Navy and industry team retains the stability required to achieve increased efficiencies, providing the fleet with the submarines it needs to sustain the nation’s undersea dominance.”

The Block IV award covers hull numbers SSN 792 through SSN 801. None of the ships have yet been named. SSN 792 is funded in fiscal 2014. Construction of SSN 792, Electric Boat said, will begin May 1. SSN 801 is scheduled to be delivered to the fleet in 2023.

“The Navy and shipbuilders worked together to produce a contract that is both fair to the Navy and industry,” Johnson said. “This contract lowers the per-ship cost compared to Block III.”

Ten Virginia-class submarines already have been delivered and are in service, while another eight are under construction or on order. The North Dakota, first of the Block III group, is to be delivered this summer.

Electric Boat fabricates most of their submarine work at Quonset Point, R.I., and assembles the hulls at Groton, Conn. Newport News builds and assembles its submarines in Newport News, Va.

The Navy contract announcement noted that the award for \$17,645,580,644 includes options for on-board repair parts for each submarine. If those options are exercised, the Navy said, the total contract value would reach \$17,827,808,738.

Each submarine displaces 7,800 tons submerged, with a hull length of 377 feet and diameter of 34 feet. They are listed as “capable” of speeds greater than 25 knots with a diving depth greater than 800 feet, while carrying Mark 48 advanced capability torpedoes, Tomahawk land-attack missiles and unmanned underwater vehicles.

Nearly all Virginia-class submarines have been procured under block buy or multiyear contracts, which provide shipbuilders with greater opportunities for construction efficiencies. Each successive block buy has introduced further improvements into the design.

“Block IV submarines will incorporate modifications that reduce acquisition and lifecycle costs,” NAVSEA said in its statement. “Reducing the ships’ total lifecycle cost, an initiative called ‘3:15,’ aims to decrease the number of major shipyard availabilities from four to three, allowing for an additional deployment per hull — raising each submarine’s capability from 14 to 15 full-length deployments.”

The added deployment means, according to the Navy, that the price-per-deployment is lower for Block IV subs.

” Johnson said, “We are essentially getting more for less.”

Nuclear Submarine USS Miami Made History

Don Slesnick and Alberto Dosal, Miami Herald, Apr 25

It was a bitter cold morning on Nov. 12, 1988, as our frozen delegation from South Florida participated in the launch of the newest nuclear submarine, the USS Miami. A giant city of Miami flag waved across its bow, a bath of champagne flowed over the hull and the Navy anthem Anchors Aweigh filled the air as it slid into the Thames River at New London, Conn.

It was a proud moment as then-City Commissioner J.L. Plummer rose to bid the sub “fair winds and following seas” on behalf of the residents of Miami.

Thus would begin the efforts of the Miami's Commissioning Committee, created by the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce's Military Affairs Committee and chaired by John Pennekamp, to prepare for the ship's eventual entry into the U.S. Navy's fleet more than a year and a half later.

On June 30, the sub base in Groton, Conn., the Miami was placed into service as a vital part of our national defense. U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Mayor Steve Clark, local television legend Ralph Renick and Knight-Ridder Chairman Alvah Chapman led the sizable delegation from South Florida.

Miamians could be extremely proud of the naval vessel carrying their city's name. It was the first sub in its class to be outfitted with the new vertical launch system for the Tomahawk cruise missiles and was equipped with retractable bow planes and a hardened bow to enable it to conduct under-ice operations at the North Pole. During the sub's life in the fleet, the USS Miami experienced more than a dozen deployments in the North Atlantic, the Mediterranean Sea, the Adriatic Sea, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. It was the first nuclear-powered submarine to transit the Suez Canal.

The USS Miami became the first submarine since World War II to fire weapons during combat operations in two different theaters of war, launching missile strikes against Iraq in the opening salvo of Operation Desert Fox and then speeding to the Adriatic Sea to launch strikes against Serbian forces in Kosovo.

Of its many citations, it should be noted that the Miami won the Battenberg Cup, signifying the best ship in the Atlantic Fleet. It was the first submarine to earn that coveted award.

Throughout the Miami's life-span, the ship and crew made many goodwill port visits around the world — in each case carrying our city's name with pride and distinction. The ship had been well-stocked by the Commissioning Committee with commemorative tokens of our community for presentation to foreign officials, allied naval representatives and student groups that were regularly given educational tours of the ship.

Sadly the Miami's demise came unexpectedly — well before its projected life span. While in dry dock for technology upgrades and refitting, a disgruntled shipyard worker set a fire inside the boat in an effort to get off duty before his shift was ended. The small blaze quickly spread, engulfing much of the hull and, before it was extinguished the next day, causing some \$450 million of damage.

With Congressional budget cuts limiting the Navy's ship building and repair efforts, the decision was made to decommission the proud Miami. On March 28, in Maine, on a wintery day (much like the day of the launch almost 25 years earlier) the USS Miami's colors were struck and its crew relieved. Later this year it will be towed to the Puget Sound Shipyard and be scrapped.

The USS Miami is now part of naval history — during its life it made a contribution to our nation in which our city and its people can take great pride.

Don Slesnick was vice-chair of the USS Miami Commissioning Committee and chair of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, Military Affairs Committee. Alberto Dosal is chairman of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce.

