

# TO THE BOTTOM AND BACK



## USS NARWHAL SS167

The USS NARWHAL SS-167 also classified as N1 & V5, and the USS NAUTILUS SS168 N2 & V6; with the exception of the USS ARGONAUT SS166, were the U.S. Navy's largest Fleet diesel Submarines prior to WW2. They were 371 feet long and carried 2 - 6 inch deck guns fore and aft on a raised gun deck which surrounded their conning towers. These gundecks also stored torpedoes. However, the ARGONAUT did not have the raised gundeck as it was primarily a mine layer and its 2-6 inch guns were mounted on its main deck - fore and aft of its conning tower. It was the largest of the 3, measuring 381 feet in length. It was lost off Rabaul 1/10/43.

The Nautilus sank the first Jap carrier - the Soryo. off Midway. The Narwhal made 16 War Patrols. Nautilus made 15 War Patrols.

The Narwhal was one day out of Pearl, running at flank speed riding the vents, approaching Midway with 1 lookout - who spotted a plane off the stern. It was in the distance but coming up fast. He passed the word a-s-Hte dove for the Conning tower hatch. Before he could get down and secure the hatch the Klaxon was blasting out "DIVE - DIVE!"

We went into a 30° dive at Flank speed with the bow planes full down. As the diesels quit sucking air we shifted over to Battery power, and amidst sparks and explosions from the control sticks we set the Main motors at full speed. No sooner had we done this when the bow plowed onto an uncharted reef with a force that bounced it back up - out of the water - sending the stern with both screws and the rudder down onto the reef with such force that it sounded like the Stern exploded.

I was in the Engine room when it all started. The deck began leaving my feet as we started the dive. Suddenly, the deck came back up so fast that it brushed my feet aside and jolted my butt - stretching me out on the oily deck plates where I watched a bucket and 3 rags fly over me - against a bulkhead.

The main motors were still grinding away on full power, turning the screws as best they could and wallowing out the shaft glands. Somebody cut off the battery power and the Boat become still. After what had happened - anyone not sitting down, suddenly become sitting or lying down - somewhere in the Boat.

The Plane spotted by the lookout was a Navy PBY on patrol. It's crew was aghast watching our antics. At first they thought we were a Whale in heat. But after we surfaced and hobbled around they realized we were a Submarine, but they'd never seen one operate like that before. They contacted us by radio and asked if there were any casualties or if we required help. We assured them that we had everything under control and needed no immediate assistance. They acknowledged our transmission and sent word of our incident back to Pearl Harbor. We didn't need this right now as we didn't actually know our condition.

We began checking for damages. Everything that had been adrift suddenly become airborne and began flying throughout the Boat. This also included pieces of insulation, odd parts and personal things from lockers. However, the crew was lucky. No broken bones, but hurts and bad bruises. As for the Boat - water was coming through both stern glands. Water was also coming in around the forward tubes. Especially the stem and star-board bow.

The main engine room had also taken a pretty hard jolt. Both main engine bedplates, designed for the present main engines, were not properly designed to be integrated into this hull, nor the Boats keel structure. In fact, the Hull was designed and the keel laid before the monstrous engines were selected as their main power sources' To originally fit them into these Boats took a lot of calculating. So, when the Boat hit the bottom the engines that

originally didn't have much to hold on to, shifted around with the screws and main motors when the stern bot-tomed out. Thus, as later discovered, the main keel was warped.

The Boat wasn't internally damaged. However, we had outside problems that we knew were bad. How bad, we'd have to check, under the hull. That meant sending out Divers. There wasn't time or a need to suit up for full underwater diving operations so Andy Berkle, CTM, grabbed an air hose and went over the side. He was down there quite awhile. We began to worry. He came up coughing and spitting. When he got his breath back the first thing he said was; "GOD! what a mess! Both screws our damaged and the rudder is bent up over the Tubes!" Our outlook looked bleak.

I remembered reading about an old Pigboat in the past that lost all its power - engines and batteries, and returned to port under a jury rig sail the crew had rigged up with mattress covers. That would be a sight. But, I don't think there were enough mattress covers aboard the Narwhal to rig enough sails to move it back to Pearl.

A couple other crew members had gone over the side to check out the forward section of the boat - and bow planes. It was some time before they came up with any information, although, they were coming up and down continually for air. Finally, they came up and asked that the planes, which were still in the 'down position, be- raised and caged. The Port plane went up and caged, but the starboard plane didn't move from its 'down' position. Nothing they tried would move it from 'full down'. The linkage was bent. We'd have to sail with it in the 'down' position. That should be interesting - trying to Keep the Bow above w

Chief Switzer and Bill Lewis - machinist mate 1/c, knew the diesels from the inline 12 cylinders to their 24(?) inch bores & strokes. Lewis had spent much time inside the crankcases of both and knew every part first hand. However, the bedplate on the starboard engine appeared to be cracked, and the engine out of line.

Evidently, the starboard side of the stern hit the reef the hardest, as the starboard driveshaft was warped and the screw blades were bent. The Port shaft appeared OK but the Blades were bent and broken. When the engines were run they both had a wobble to them. However, both Main motors appeared OK - and they were still secured to their mounts.

While we were all busy checking the Boat and our stations, the Brass was busy explaining to Subron in Pearl. Reporting causes, circumstances and everything else that was to blame for our shallow water dive. The primary question asked: "Can you get underway or do you need to be towed?" The Skipper: Commander J. Haines, (who later became Commodore Haines) advised Pearl that we'd try it on our own. However, after more deliberation, and, reconsidering the condition of our bent drive units and their leaking shaft glands. The bent rudder and the dragging starboard bow plane made us re-evaluate the situation a little more. But, saving face in the Submarine Navy carries a high priority. And, the Diving Officer; Lt. Jesse L. Hull (who later commissioned the USS Finback - the Boat that saved our 39th President after his Plane was shot down) was happy that we were going to try and make it back on our own. It made a near disaster appear as a lesser incident, on his record. The XO, Lt. Ralph Calhoun, played it cool and watched history about to be made

We were ready to get underway. Both diesels were started and checked OK.. Although, the starboard engine's bedplate was cracked and vibrated when the engine was running, different speeds didn't make much difference to the crack. But, it did make a difference to the crack when the engines were attached to the main motors and the screws. It wobbled more and could be controlled by the engine's speed. What happened if the engine was run too fast?

Something else that hadn't been given enough thought was the rudder. We're all set to get under way with a 'derelict Whale' and we can't steer it. The report said - "The rudder was bent up over the rear tubes." "That would keep us from firing fish from the after tubes! OK?" A TM3/C asked? "Who'n the hell is interested in firing fish aft? or forw'd Replied Pete Petersen, QMC, pissed off by that remark. "They're still working on the rudder, and, the engine room and maneuvering room have been told not to mess with the screws!" He continued. "It looks like the word needs to be passed to the Torpedomen to leave the fish alone or we wont be worrying about the rudder!"

We were advised by the control room that something had been removed from the rudder and it can now be moved manually. And, they said it'll take 2 crewmen - together, to do it.

But. It won't turn side to side. Only, sort of up and down "How can you use a rudder if it isn't side to side?" Asked Pete? "We could only get it to move up and down - sideways. And that's the best we can do out here in these 'Gol darn boon docks'". Replied Charlie Small, E6M2/C - bleeding from numerous cuts all over him from fighting sharp, bent steel hull fragments.

Nothing more was said. Nothing more could be said. Everyone stood there with blank stares on their faces. They'd figure out something, they always did. But, this time they weren't tied up along side a dock, somewhere. They couldn't get off the Boat and scrounge things to improvise with. There were too many different problems with too few answers - all happening at once!

Finally, Pete said: "What the hell. Let's get underway!" Pete had the last word - with ALL hands. We got under-way!

It took nearly 3 harrowing days to get back to Pearl. And, we were lucky to get back. The shaft glands were letting in as much seawater as the bilge pumps could get rid of. Also, we had to keep the speed down to keep the starboard engine from tearing up its bedplate and stern gland. And, it was getting more difficult to keep the Bow from diving under and swamping the Boat - as the 2 husky crewmen, who were assigned to manually steer it, were having trouble keeping the rudder in an 1 up-down-sideways' position. And, they couldn't keep the Boat from yawing to Port; which was helping it keep sticking its prow down. After awhile, the Boat itself cried: "ENOUGH!" We weren't going to let our Boat give up before we did. Lewis moved the Port engine's throttle up, in hopes of taking some of the load off the starboard engine. He should not have done that. The Starboard engine nearly jumped off its broken bedplate from loosing its load and broke loose from its muffler.

The noise it made could be heard all over the Pacific. Various Units of our entire fleet came steaming up to us, thinking a Sea battle was in process. They would all leave as fast as they came when they saw the 'derelict whale.' It bothered us too. We tried shutting the engine down, but the Port engine couldn't do much by itself with its missing and bent screw blades

We did everything we could think of to keep the Narwhal moving towards Pearl, except swim and tow it. And we had a few that said they'd do that if it would help. Maybe we should have rigged a sail. It would have given some of the crew something to do. The only crewmen that capitalized on this 'nightmare' were the Filipino mess cooks. They spent most of their time fishing over the side - and caught enough fish for the entire crew.

When we arrived off the entrance to Pearl Harbor it was more than a relief - it was the answer to three days of prayers by 99% of the entire crew. 2 Tugs and every small boat in the harbor and around the island of Oahu were about us like flies. With the pressure finally off us - the entire crew collapsed.

Both Tugs came along side and our sick diesels were finally shut down. Thank you Jesus! The Tugs guided us over to the south dock where we tied up and unloaded our personal gear and left the red tape and explanations of what happened up to those whose responsibility it was for our dilemma

A Navy investigation team praised our handling of the incident and returning the Narwhal back to Port. We'd never tried to figure out whether we could get it back or not, or we probably wouldn't have been able to. But it is said -I don't know by whom - that Submariners can fix anything. That's nice to know.

We learned later that none of our Officers were outwardly blamed for our - mishap. In fact, there were some changes in the Navy Department's Top Brass, in D.C., over our ordeal. The crew was complimented for having saved the Boat. Supposedly, citations were to have been awarded to each crew member. I never saw what they looked like. I was just happy that we got back

The next day the drydock was ready for the Narwhal. the Boat was guided in and the large solid gates closed behind her. As the water was slowly pumped out, the large Boat slowly settled down onto the camels, into its cradle. It was an awesome sight seeing it there with its ragged screws and bent rudder. It was a wonder that we made it back. The damaged bowplane made it look like a Seal ion with a broken flipper.

The damage that presented the biggest repair problem was to the starboard bowplane. It had to be removed from the hull before it could be repaired as the damage was to its mechanism, inside the superstructure and the hull.

The Navy Yard workers had been working on it for some time. They had gotten it back up to its horizontal position on the hull, but they couldn't get it to move up or down. With or without power. It was jammed.

To remove it from the Boat was going to be a problem, it was so big and heavy, and, with the Boat raised up-off the bottom of the drydock it put the bowplane about 40 feet above the bottom, making it awkward and hard to work on, and dangerous.

It was fastened to the Boat with large bolts. The workers had removed the bolts, even though it was a big job. The problem now was to get it to come loose from the hull. They had attached 2 cranes to the edges and put a strain on it. Nothing happened.

After much discussion it was decided to position a large Hawaiian worker, with a sledge hammer, near the edge of the plane where the cranes were fastened, and have him begin pounding along its edges.. He began pounding and pounding.

Suddenly! the bowplane broke loose from the hull and slid off the cranes. It fell 40 feet to the bottom of the drydock carrying the worker with it. He died instantly.

None of the Crew had really felt relaxed, nor had any piece of mind since we'd hit bottom off midway. It was a traumatic experience. After that, our feelings were constantly being put to test - which, on a submarine, is not too unusual. But, after while, you begin looking for a jinx. Tension!

We'd set a new 'deep dive' record off 'Pigeon Point' a few months ago. Everything went well with that. We went to the bottom there too, but that was planned. We were ready for it. We even got certificates for that - which is unusual. So, was there something carried over from that? who knows? One thing, I don't want to make any more deep dives on the Narwhal, anymore. NOTE: (The Narwhal made dives over 500 feet during WW2.)

It was finally concluded' that this Boat was never going to be rebuilt for Sea duty here in Pearl Harbor. Why anybody thought so, was probably why most pre-WW2 Sub-Skippers were replaced by younger new ones, shortly after December 7th. A different breed of cats was needed to Sail the Boats.

Scuttlebutt was to get the Narwhal running and send it back to Mare Island, where it was born. And, maybe get new engines. Hearing this, I put in for a transfer to the Sturgeon SS187, in Mare Island. However, this nearly turned out to be a bad decision, worse than duty on the Narwhal.

After the Sturgeon was commissioned and prior to beginning its new-construction acceptance tests, we were standing-by to get underway, to make our initial diving sequences, when Chuck Strock, S1/M, at his station on the Bridge, observed that the main air induction cover, for the ships main air and engine room air intake, was mechanically disconnected from its actuator. It had been tampered with.

This is what happened to the Squalus, although, neither of these incidents were ever revealed. We would not have been as fortunate as the Squalus, however, they dove in shallow water, off the east coast and were partially rescued. We were to dive in the Pacific, off Frisco. Mumson's Lungs - neither of them, would have been much use for us.

The Narwhal and Nautilus spent much time in Mare Island. One of the times the Narwhal was at the Island was for new power cables. This was a difficult job, taking out these breeze (wire mesh) covered cables and replacing them with new ones. They had just been replaced and power was to be put on the Boat when an alert EM/2c, who had the watch, found metal phonograph needles stuck through the breeze - into the copper cables. If power had been applied, as intended?

I began to think that Mare Island was a bad place to be. I didn't get much chance to look around as we didn't spend much time checking out the Sturgeon. It wasn't long before the Sturgeon had orders: Shanghi - Pacific. I tried to keep track of the Narwhal, as best I could. It and the Nautilus were the most expensive Boats the Navy had they were 2 of a kind and everything had to be special for them.

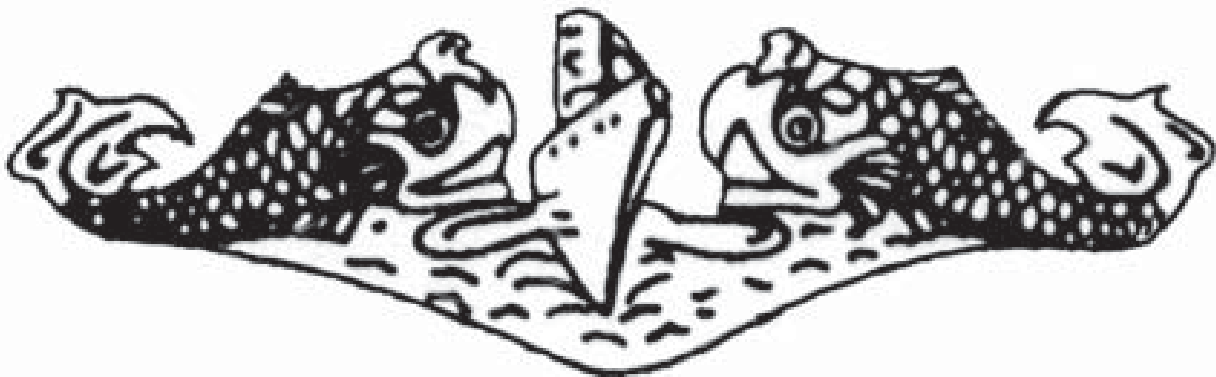
Finally, the Narwhal was turned loose. I later learned that on its first dive it started nose down, and had to have its tanks blown to stop it. And, on other dives it wasn't stable, and hard to control. Due to this problem it was to be used primarily as a transport - for material and personnel.

It and the Nautilus both were used as transports, nearly all their sailing times. However, if you check both their WWII records, they had nothing to be ashamed of. They did it all

Another incident that happened on the Narwhal, was on a 'Battle Surface1: a CGM and 2 Gunners were involved. THE THEORY of a Battle Surface is for the Gun crew to have the Deck gun unlimbered and ready to fire the first round at the time the Boat surfaces, or before.

On the Narwhal, the gun crew had to go Up through the Control room hatch - into the conning tower, Through the conning tower outer door and out with the air bubble to top side. WHAT HAPPENED: The pressure in the Boat was too low. The Boat's surfacing was too slow - (tanks not emptied). So, when the control room hatch was undogged the Boats pressure went out at one fathom allowing sea water to come back into the conning tower and down the control room hatch..

The Gunners had no bubble to come out with and had to swim underwater to the handrails until the Boat surfaced to get to the guns. Things like that usually spoiled your day



# Shipmates in Eastern Region.



**ERD John Carcioppolo - Groton Base**

**Happy New Year. I hope that all of you had a great Christmas and New Years.**

We are off and running with a New Year here in USSVI. If you haven't renewed your Base or National Dues as applicable yet please do so in the very near future. Your Membership Renewal is so important to the Bases, and our organization.

Much has been accomplished in the past year, and we all look forward to accomplishing many other things this next year.

First of all I would like to say thank you to all those who voted for me as the Eastern Region Director. I have some big shoes to fill behind George Boyle, but I'll do my best to assist you in matters pertaining to USSVI.

USSVI Eastern Region is from ME to FL, and as far west as LA. It encompasses the states of ME, VT, NH, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, PA, DE, MD, VA, NC, SC, GA, FL, WV, KY, TN, AL, LA. In those 21 states there are a total of 6 Districts, 61 Bases, and over 6100 members. That is a lot of responsibility and the bulk of USSVI.

Although I would like to, obviously I can not be everywhere within the Eastern Region. To help me in the management of all of this responsibility I depend heavily on the six District Commanders. D-1 PW Louthain; D-2 Jack Ensminger; D-3 Dick Kanning; D-4 Jerry Stout; D-5 Jim Irwin; and D-6 Frank Holland. These are top notch Shipmates who have stepped forward into these leadership

positions. Each of these Shipmates has a lot of experience with USSVI so if you have questions or issues within your bases please do not hesitate to contact them. These are the guys who are there at the deck plates with the Bases in Eastern Region. You can also contact me at any time by phone or email.

I would like to congratulate the guys who have established the following new Bases within USSVI Eastern Region since the National Convention: West Tennessee Base in Millington TN; USS HADDO Base in Cleveland TN; USS SCRANTON Base in Scranton PA, LOUISIANNA Base in Ruston LA, and the Westport Satellite Base a new group from Groton Base in Westport CT.

I believe in setting goals. So here are my goals for Eastern Region for 2007. Goal # 1 is to work with the Bases within Eastern Region to help grow our membership. Goal # 2 is to improve the communications within the Region. Goal # 3 is to increase participation with our Active Duty Shipmates in the Eastern Region.

For starters although we are the largest Region in USSVI with regards to Membership, there is so much potential for Eastern Region to be so much larger. No other Region has as many Submarine Bases, Submarines, and Submarine Qualified personnel as Eastern Region. We have PNSY Kittery ME, SUBASE New London and Kings Bay; and Submarines, Support Commands, and Submarine Personnel in Norfolk VA. Each of these locations has a large number of past and present Submariners that includes Active Duty, Retired, or Honorably Discharged Submariners who live close by these Naval Installations. Additionally there are a ton of Submariners who live in Washington DC and the surrounding areas who are Submariners, and we also have all of the Submarine Detailers stationed in Millington TN. And let's not forget about the Submariners stationed at Prototype in Charleston SC. So why isn't the membership in Eastern Region twice what it is? Because they don't know about USSVI and because **WE HAVEN'T SIGNED THEM UP YET!**

Often we rely on Shipmates finding us. Sometimes that happens, obviously as indicated by our relatively low numbers most times it does not. It's up to each of you as members to serve as recruiters. Be proud of your association with your fellow Submariners. After all, wasn't your time in Submarines whether it was for 2 years or for 42 years the best years of your life? Didn't you establish ties with Shipmates that have lasted a lifetime and

in some cases ties with fellow Submariners that are stronger ties that you have with family? So why don't you bring new guys into our organization. If you are proud of your association others should know that you are proud. Others you know who are eligible should enjoy the same privileges of being part of the most elite Veterans group there is. U.S. Submarine Veterans. No other organization is as exclusive as ours. Wear hats and shirts with dolphins. Invite Shipmates that you know to join you for a meeting. Where are those Shipmates of yours you got back in touch with after 20 – 40 years at your last Boat Reunion. Get them signed up. Pass on those Base Newsletters, and National Magazines either to a friend, or to the local library where some one else may see it. Look around you and see who you know who is not a member and get them signed up so they can enjoy being a member like you do. **SPREAD THE WORD!**

To those USSVI Bases that are close to large concentrations of Submarines/Submariners use your combined talents. Be creative and be aggressive in recruiting Active Duty Submariners. What can you do to let those Active Duty guys know about you. Get them involved and get involved with them. Don't be an "Old Man's Group". Figure out what you have to do to attract those young guys into our organization. You guys were smart enough to operate the worlds most sophisticated Submarines. Putting your heads together and coming up with ideas to attract the Active Duty Submariners should be easy. Keep in mind that those young guys are the future of our organization. They are our lifeblood 10 - 15 years from now. **We need them as members now.**

To all of our Shipmates on Active Duty who read this magazine, we are your history, and we are your heritage. Do not let the word "Veterans" in U.S. Submarine Veterans deceive you. You do not have to be out of the Navy and a "Veteran" to be a member of USSVI. We have many Active Duty Shipmates who are members. Young Petty Officers, Chief's, COBs, Officers, COs, all the way up to Admirals. All you need is those Submarine Dolphins that you worked so hard for to be a "*Brother of the Phin*" and eligible for membership in our organization. You guys are out there today at the pointy end of the spear. You guys are kicking ass in the Global War on Terror. You are doing Submarine Operations better and safer than any of us could imagine. We are so proud of you and what you guys are accomplishing. You are making your own legacy and writing your own chapter in our Submarine Force History. You should be part of our group to share in that Submarine Camaraderie. To share your experiences. We are all Submariners. Our SUBVETS do a lot for each other, and in our communities. I know that you guys out there are busy as hell, but when you get a chance check out what your local SUBVETS are up to. Maybe they need a guest speaker, or help with a project. Maybe through the combined talents of a Submarine Crew and a SUBVETS Base you could work together on some project that all can be proud of. Or maybe you can make really make their day with a tour.

If a Base is wanting to contact a boat or a boat wants to contact a SUBVETS Base and is having problems establishing that contact, let me know and I'll see what I can do to help.

Ok I have to end this article before National Editor Mike Bircumshaw squawks that my article is too long. In closing let's work together to figure out how we can make the Bases in Eastern Region bigger and better. How can we improve USSVI to be a better organization? Above all, keep in mind what we are truly about and how you as USSVI Bases and as individual members live up to what we are about: "***To perpetuate the memory of our Shipmates who gave their lives in the pursuit of their duties...***"

I look forward to hearing from you with your thoughts and ideas. John "Gumba" Carcioppolo [ussvierd@comcast.net](mailto:ussvierd@comcast.net) (860) 464-8770.

## THANKSGIVING 2006

Thanks to donations from SUBVETS and businesses across the country on Thanksgiving SUBVETS Groton Base fed over 800 people. This included 445 Single Sailors, some of their families, SUBVETS, and Neighbors of 40 School Street; 260 area policemen, shut-in's, and Boats whose galley's were shut down for the Holiday; and over 100 volunteers, and their families.

With the left over funds Groton Base was able to present a check for \$5,000 to SUBASE New London Caring and Sharing Program. This program provides needy Navy Families with the makings for a home cooked meal for Thanksgiving and Christmas. An additional \$3,000.00 went to the USSVCF Caring and Sharing Program which is a similar program that takes care of all of the other needy Submarine Sailors in the other Submarine Homeports. And finally a total of \$3,550.00 to Operation SS Care Package. A program that sends care packages to Submarine Sailors who are on Shore Duty in Groton, but who have been temporarily re-assigned to duties in Iraq, Kuwait, and Afghanistan in the Global War on Terror.

Many thanks to individuals and SUBVETS Bases everywhere who contributed to this magnificent event. Your dollars had far reaching impact in making this years Thanksgiving and New Years Holidays just a little more special to hundreds of our Submarine Sailors and their families. **THANKS FOR CARING AND SHARING!**

**New Concept for Membership at Groton Base** The members of Groton Base have established a new concept to involve some of the members that are remotely located from the 40 School Street Club house.

The Groton Base Membership is spread out all over the state of CT, and elsewhere. And because of the distance many of those who live in other areas of the state are not able to participate in many of the Groton Base events.

One would think that it would just make more sense to start a separate base closer to home and that Base could go off on their own. Not in the Southwest corner of the state.

There is a group of Groton Base Members who live down in Westport, Bridgeport, Stamford, CT. an area that is 60 – 90 miles away from the home Base. Attempts to start a new base fell short. Sure they all wanted to be more active and to share camaraderie. But

there was no one interested in being Base Officers. There was also concern of whether they would be strong enough to survive as a new Base.

District One Commander PW Louthain got together and corresponded with several of the Groton Base Members in that area to try and determine how they could be more involved. Finally a group of them decided that they would establish a Satellite Base.

15 or so members assembled at the Westport VFW to establish this Satellite Base. What's a Satellite Base? It's a group of members who all belong to a parent base like Groton Base. Administratively they all continue to be Groton Base Members. They pay dues though Groton Base, and Groton Base maintains their records with USSVI National. Groton Base also continues to provide their newsletter to them, so that's another thing they don't need to worry about. Those who aren't Life Members Groton forwards their National Dues as they do all members. But they have no Base Officers and do not have to worry about the formality of meetings end of the year reports etc. And they still continue to enjoy the benefits of being members of Groton Base.

They get together on a regular basis. They have a dinner or some type of food. Exchange Sea Stories, and plan some events that they will participate in as a group.

Their first activity was a brunch that several members traveled to Groton and cooked breakfast. As a result they are considering putting together a regular crew.

Other events and functions they are looking at are possible Memorial Services of their own, local parades, and functions where they can show the SUBVETS Flag. Where possibly they might attract other Submariners who are unaware of USSVI.

There is a lot of potential here with this Satellite Base concept, and eventually, they may develop into their own base. After this foundation as a Satellite Base they will be even stronger if and when they decide to go off on their own. There is some interest in the Hartford Area that PW Louthain is working with them to establish a similar concept.

For those interested in the Westport Satellite Base concept they group they meet on the third Monday of each month at 7pm at the Westport VFW 465 Riverside Ave. Westport, CT at 7pm. For additional information please



Members of the Groton Base Thanksgiving Committee present a check to CO SUBBASE Captain Mark Ginda for \$5,000.00 for the SUBBASE Caring and Sharing Program

A check for \$3,000.00 was sent to the USSVCF Brotherhood Fund for Caring and Sharing

contact For directions or additional information please contact either Bill Hall at [william\\_s\\_hall@ml.com](mailto:william_s_hall@ml.com) 203-341-4950 or Bill Andersen at [andersen.wc@pg.com](mailto:andersen.wc@pg.com) Home: 203-869-7487

# Memorial to USS TRITON (SS 201)

For over 50 years the USS TRITON (SS 201) has been the SV WWII Lost Boat for the state of CT. And for over 50 years there has been no Memorial for this Lost Boat. Sure their guys were memorialized on other Memorials like at the SV National Memorial East. But on Veterans Day 2006 those Sailors lost onboard USS TRITON (SS 201) on March 13 1943 finally were memorialized as a group in the State of Ct.

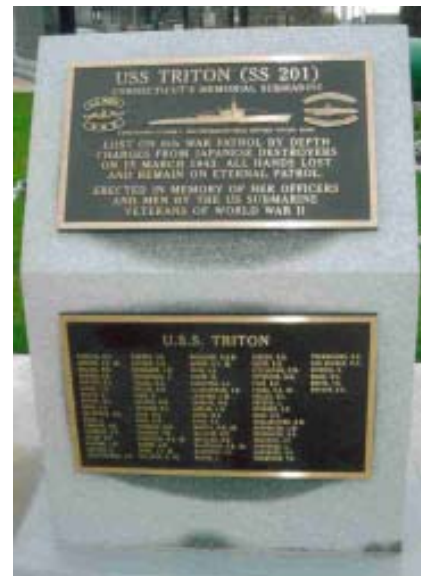
With funding from the Thames River Chapter of U.S. SUBVETS WWII and from the National Organization for U.S. SUBVETS WWII a fitting Memorial was erected at the western entrance for the U.S. SUBVETS WWII National Memorial East located in Groton CT. As pictured the top part has identifying information about the TRITON, and the bottom part has a listing of all Officers and Crew who went down with the Boat when the Boat was lost.

The Memorial was dedicated in a Ceremony that was part of the Thames River Chapter/SUBVETS Groton Base annual Veterans Day Ceremony. Present were many members and families of U.S. SUBVETS WWII including the Northeast Region Director Ralph Merola from NYC, Groton Base, and family members and descendents and Family Members of USS TRITON shipmates, and many Active Duty Shipmates from local commands at the Naval Submarine Base New London including over 60 Sailors from Naval Submarine School.

Many local politicians and representatives were also present on this beautiful New England day including Groton City Mayor Dennis Popp, Groton Town Mayer Harry Watson, as well as representatives for Sen. Lieberman, and Governor Rell.

The guest speaker was RADM Cecil B. Haney, Commander Submarine Group Two who did a wonderful job prior to the actual dedication. He spoke of the significance of Veterans Day, the impacts of all of our Submariners past and present in the defense of our country, and he spoke of the significance of the dedication of the USS TRITON Memorial.

When the dedication part of the Memorial Service was held the Master of Ceremonies shifted from Groton Base Commander John Carcioppolo, to SV WWII Thames River Chapter President John Deane. Deane talked of the significance of contacting as many TRITON Family Members as possible and the culmination of events leading up to the actual dedication. Finally the TRITON Memorial was uncovered by Deputy State Commander John Deane, TRITON Family Members and Admiral Haney.



After the Tolling of the Boats and the conclusion of the Memorial Service all guests returned to the Joe Negri Clubhouse for a catered reception and many sea stories.

**To all of those shipmates lost on USS TRITON (SS 201) . . . REST YOUR OARS!**





# THE LOSS OF USS TRITON (SS 201)

The fourth of our submarines lost in the Solomons-Bismarck area in the early part of 1943, TRITON, commanded by Lt. Cmdr. G. K. MacKenzie, Jr., left Brisbane on 16 February 1943 to begin her sixth patrol in that area. She hunted for traffic between Rabaul and Shortland Basin on her way north, and began to patrol the equator on 23 February.

She reported on 26 February having seen smoke on 22 February, and had obtained evidence of enemy radar on

Buka. Moving westward, she patrolled areas Northwest of SNAPPER and southeast of TRIGGER from 26 February to 6 March, when she left her area to attack a convoy in TRIGGER's area. Her report on 7 March, amended by another 8 March, stated that the convoy had been composed of 5 ships and 1 DD escort.

She reported their speed and course and the fact that she had sunk two AK's of the convoy and damaged another, claiming 3 hits out of 6 torpedoes fired at noon 6 March. A circular torpedo run forced her deep, where she was depth charged by the destroyer. She had later tried two night attacks, one dawn attack, and one afternoon attack, all without success, and was returning to her area at the time she sent the message. About eight hours after this message came, TRITON transmitted another telling of another night attack on the convoy. She claimed 5 hits of 8 torpedoes fired, and, although she could not observe results due to gunfire and attack by the escorting destroyer, she believed two more freighters to be sunk.

The last word received from TRITON came on 11 March 1943 when she reported, "Two groups of smokes, 5 or more ships each, plus escorts...Am chasing." She was ordered to stay south of the Equator, and was informed of the area (an adjacent one) assigned to TRIGGER.

On the morning of 13 March TRITON was told that three enemy destroyers had been sighted southeast on a northerly course. She was informed that they were probably on a submarine hunt or were a convoy cover and had missed contact.

TRITON, on 16 March, was ordered to change her area slightly to the east. TUNA and GREENLING were placed in adjacent areas (to the south and west, respectively) on 22 March, and all were to disregard areas when on the chase, and to avoid when encountering a submarine. TRITON was told to clear her area on 25 March 1943, and return to Brisbane. When she failed to make her report of position, new results, and estimated time of arrival when it was expected, she was ordered to do so. No report was received and she was reported as lost on 10 April 1943.

Information available after the war shows that TRITON was, without a doubt, sunk by the enemy destroyers of which she was given information on 13 March. Enemy reports show that these ships made an attack on 15 March. Their position was slightly north and west of TRITON's area, but she undoubtedly left her area to attack the destroyers or the convoy they were escorting. The report of the attack by the destroyers leaves little doubt as to whether a kill was made, since they saw "a great quantity of oil, pieces of wood, corks and manufactured goods bearing the mark 'Made in U.S.A.'" In addition, TRIGGER, in whose area this attack occurred, reported that on 15 March she made two attacks on a convoy of five freighters with two escorts. At this time she was depth charged, but not seriously, and she heard distant depth charging for an hour after the escorts had stopped attacking her. Since she was only about ten miles from the reported Japanese attack cited above, it is presumed that she heard the attack which sank TRITON. Apparently by this time the destroyers had joined their convoy.



TRITON was a most active and valuable member of the Submarine Force prior to her loss. In total, she is credited with sinking 16 ships, totaling 64,600 tons, and damaging 4 ships, of 29,200 total tons. Her first patrol, conducted around Wake Island, resulted in no damage to the enemy, but her second, in the northern part of the East China Sea, was very productive. In ten days she sank two freighters and damaged a freighter-transport and another freighter. She went back to the East China Sea for her third patrol, and again was most successful. She sank a trawler, two freighters, a freighter-transport, two sampans, and a submarine. The latter was I- 64, torpedoed south of Kyushu on 17 May 1942. TRITON's fourth patrol was made in the Aleutians. During it, she is credited with sinking two escort-type vessels.

On her fifth patrol, TRITON went into the Solomon area. She sank a tanker, and two freighters, in addition damaging a tanker of 10,200 tons and a freighter. She was credited with having sunk two medium freighters on her last patrol.

## Albany-Saratoga Base member departs on Eternal Patrol

On December 2, 2006 Robert J. Ondek departed on Eternal Patrol. Bob was not only a member of Albany-Saratoga Base, he was a shipmate, and he was most of all a friend. Bob was a driving force in the formation of the Albany-Saratoga Base. He was a former Base Commander and he was an integral part of the 2004 USSVI Convention Committee. Anyone who attended the National Convention in Saratoga will remember his smiling face as he rode up and down Broadway on either his golf cart or his scooter. He organized not only the Convention Parade, but he put together the Convention yearbook, the parade handbook, and organized the concert in the park.

Bob was born in Bridgeport, CT on July 2, 1930. He graduated from Bridgeport High School and went on to graduate from Union College in Schenectady NY with a Bachelors Degree and from George Washington University in Washington, DC with his Masters.

Bob served for eight years in the Navy as an Electronics Technician, and then for fourteen years in the Air Force (we forgive you Bob) as a chemical engineer. He qualified on the USS Irex SS-482 in 1950 and also served on USS Tang SS-563, USS Queenfish SS-393,



and USS Seawolf SSN-575. Bob attended the Nuclear Prototype Training Unit in West Milton, NY and was a member of the very first graduating class. After his retirement from the military, Bob worked at Knolls Atomic Power Lab as a health physicist until his retirement.

Perhaps Bob's greatest passion was the creation of a New York State Submariners Memorial, the project of which he had been serving as chairman. The Albany-Saratoga Base has formed a Memorial Foundation and will be establishing this Memorial. Outwardly it will have the appearance of a submarine with decks awash. Inside it will house the memorial, a library, a museum area, a meeting space, and an archive storage area. It was his vision to create this memorial to honor all New York State Submariners who had lost their lives while serving their country as members of the Submarine Service. He and WWII Sub Vet Paul Wittmer have spent literally 1000's of hours researching countless sources to identify the names of these sailors. He was still working on this project at the time of his death.

If you would like to honor Bob with either a monetary donation or a submarine artifact you would like to have exhibited when the Memorial is completed you can contact Al Singleman (518-355-2119) or al@awards4sailing.com ) or Jim Irwin (518-383-2481 or jirwin1@nycap.rr.com ) or send it directly to:

Albany-Saratoga SubVets Foundation

PO Box 4150

Schenectady, NY 12304-0150

Not only will you be honoring Bob Ondek but you will be  
"Perpetuating the Memory of our Shipmates..."



Robert J. Ondek

Several Hampton Roads Base members, including Base Senior Vice Commander Darryl Moyers and Chaplain Paul Rice attended the 1/13 funeral of **ETCS Thomas Higgins**, who was washed overboard from *USS Minneapolis-St. Paul*. Many others were present the day before at the Viewing and Family Reception.

# A Sailor Killed in Iraq

The clip-clop of the horse drawn caisson, window curtains parted revealing the flag draped coffin inside.

Salty old Submariners trying to say the dust kicked up by the wind was causing their eyes to water... just a little bit.

The wind buffeting U.S. Flags, making them snap proudly like the Ensign from the mast of haze gray destroyer cutting through a bow-on sea.

Hundreds of people, including the Governor and Governor Elect of Colorado, attended the funeral of **HM3 Christopher A. Anderson**, who was killed by a mortar round in Anbar Province, Iraq, on December 4, 2006. He was the U.S. Navy corpsman assigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 6<sup>th</sup> Marines, 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic, based in Camp Lejeune, N.C.

An estimated 200-300 flags staunchly held by leather covered 'Bikers', children, citizens, veterans in full dress uniforms... or parts of a uniform from a long time ago; a marine with 3 purple hearts, and yes, also... the Rocky Mountain Submarine Veterans.

A patch on the vest of one burley Biker from the Patriot Guard Riders read "I Wasn't There... But I Still Care" (meaning he was not a veteran). Well... he was sure there Saturday, and the Sub Vets were too; Paul Schultz, Chuck Grimes (WW-II Sub Vet), Bill Staab, Gene Kellar Bruce Marsden, Carla Gerle and Bob Gerle, representing the Rocky Mountain Submarine Veterans.

We Submariners may have been a small contingent, but we had one of the largest flags, a whopping 4 ft. by 8 ft. Ensign rigged by Paul Schultz on two 8 ft. poles. As flag bearers we were not only honoring one of our own, but were also shielding the funeral procession from potential hecklers of the Westboro Baptist Church, Topeka, Kansas.

As the procession drew into the parking lot of the Grace Evangelical Free Church, Longmont, Colorado, we were cold, our hands were numb, our knees and backs ached from bracing the flags against the wind for several hours... but we also opined it was small discomfort compared to the ultimate sacrifice young Anderson made. We stood fast outside the church, while inside; the Purple Heart awarded to Anderson was presented to his father, a retired Navy SEAL. We were honored to even be there. We wish it never happened.

Petty Officer Anderson will be interred at Arlington National Cemetery.

Bravo Zulu to the Patriot Guard Riders for organizing the flag-shielding, a most patriotic and somber event. Please visit their website at <http://www.patriotguard.org/>

For more information on the Westboro Baptist Church go to <http://www.godhatesfags.com>.

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Authors note: On 27 December, 2007, President Bush signed into a law an amendment to U.S. law protecting military funerals from protests like those staged by a controversial Kansas church that characterizes soldiers' deaths as divine punishment for homosexuality. Submitted: Robert A. Gerle, Sr. MCPO(SS), USN (Ret.)

