



FLAMIN' CAIMAN TALES

www.flamincaiman.org

Jan 2024

COMMANDER'S SCUTTLEBUTT

Here we are in leap year 2024. We first started the USS Caiman Association 20 years ago. Our next reunion will be our 10th reunion. We have come a long way in the last 20 years, or have we? In 2004, the year of our first reunion, Facebook was launched, the Red Sox won the World Series, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia were admitted to NATO, Israeli helicopters fired missiles at a convoy of vehicles in the Gaza Strip, SpaceShipOne became the first privately funded spaceplane to achieve spaceflight, George W Bush was re-elected, San Francisco began issuing same-sex wedding marriage licenses, Saddam Hussein went on trial for war crimes and it was a leap year. So, how far have we gone? Hmm... We have always had a good time at our reunions, and we will once again in May. It's time to start planning your trip to be in San Diego this coming May. The dates are May 6th through the 9th. See you there.

Greg "Hawkeye" Baer, Commander

O'KANE AND THE USS TANG

The USS Tang – named for a [fish species](#) and not for the powdered orange juice drink [popularized by the Gemini astronauts](#) – was a Balao-class submarine. Under O'Kane's fearless leadership, the sub sank 33 ships totaling 116,454 tons, immortalizing its skipper as the [most successful submarine commander of WWII](#). Ironically, during the Tang's fateful fifth and final war patrol, it was not an IJN destroyer's depth charges but rather one of the sub's own torpedoes which compelled then-Commander O'Kane and his surviving crewmen to put Swede Momsen's invention to the ultimate test. On October 25, 1944, after firing a total of 25 "tin fish" that resulted in the sinking of the freighters Kogen Maru and Matsumoto Maru, the very last torpedo malfunctioned making a circular run and slamming into the submarine. O'Kane's boat sank by the stern to a depth of 180 feet (54.8 meters). (Among the crew, 78 of the American sailors lost their lives, among them [Cook 2nd Class Rubin MacNiel Raiford](#), who at the tender age of 15 was the youngest USN submariner to perish in combat.) O'Kane and seven of his men managed to escape the sinking sub. These eight men were picked up the next morning by a Japanese frigate. In yet another ironic twist of fate, the IJN frigate was also carrying survivors of Tang's previous sinking. These enraged surviving Japanese merchant mariners started exacting their revenge on the submariners. Later, O'Kane would quip about the ordeal, "When we realized that our clubbing and kicking were being administered by the burned and mutilated survivors of our handiwork, we found we could take it with less prejudice." O'Kane and his surviving crewmen were held as special prisoners at Ofuna prison camp (**an unreported prisoner of war**

camp where the Japanese held submariners and other unreported POW's) near Yokosuka [for the duration of the war](#).

O'Kane retired from the Navy as a Rear Admiral in 1957 and passed away at the age of 83 due to Alzheimer's disease on February 16, 1994.

SUB VETS 2024 CALENDAR

The Sub Vets theme for the 2024 calendar is Guppy Conversion Submarines. Caiman is the picture for the month of June. She is shown with a step sail. This was the first conversion Caiman had in the 50's. As many of us know, in the 60's she was given a full sail and other upgrades. Any Sub Vet's base will be happy to sell you their 2024 calendar.

LONGEST OPERATING SUBMARINE

The USS Caiman (SS-323) was commissioned in 1944 and decommissioned in 1972. After serving through three wars, she was transferred to the Turkish Navy as the TCG Dumlupinar (S339) and operated until 1986. This makes the Caiman/Dumlupinar after 42 years the longest operational Balao class submarine.

The USS Blueback (SS-581), a Barbel-class submarine, was in service for 32 years, from 1959 to 1990. It had a long and active career serving with the U.S. Navy and later with the Turkish Navy as the TCG Prevez (S 343) before it was decommissioned. The USS Blueback is also notable for being the last non-nuclear, diesel-electric submarine in the U.S. Navy's Active fleet. The USS Blueback is now in Portland, Oregon.

THE U.S. NAVY JUST COMMISSIONED ITS MOST POWERFUL SUBMARINE EVER

The U.S. Navy recently commissioned its newest fast-attack submarine, the USS *Hyman G. Rickover* (SSN-795). It is the fourth Block IV Virginia-class submarine to enter service.

The boat was designed with enhanced stealth, sophisticated surveillance capabilities, and special warfare enhancements to meet the Navy's multi-mission requirements. The USS *Hyman G. Rickover* will provide the capabilities required to maintain the nation's undersea supremacy well into the 21st century.

[Since entering service in 2004](#), Virginia-class subs have supported five of the Navy's six maritime strategy core capabilities, including sea control, power projection, forward presence, maritime security, and deterrence. They do this by providing a combination of stealth, endurance, mobility, and firepower.

At present, Block IV could easily be considered the Navy's best submarine with a new Block V coming soon. The SSNs have a fly-by-wire ship control system that also provides improved shallow-water ship handling. The subs were also designed to deploy special operator forces including Navy SEALs. A reconfigurable torpedo

room can accommodate a large number of special operators and all their equipment for prolonged deployments and future off-board payloads.

The submarines displace 7,835 tons with a hull length of 377 feet and a diameter of 34 feet, and they can attain speeds of 25 knots with the power from their nuclear reactors. Each of the Block IV boats can dive to more than 800 feet.

The Virginia-class Block IVs are replacing many of the older Los Angeles-class attack submarines.

The submarines feature Mark 48 advanced capability torpedoes and Tomahawk cruise missiles. The boats are equipped with the Virginia Payload Module, an 84-foot-long mid-ship section that has four large-diameter vertical launch tubes for keeping and launching Tomahawks and other payloads.

SHIPS STORE PRICES

We need to decrease our ships store inventory. The reunion gift this reunion will be any two items from the ships store free – your choice. Ships store prices for this reunion are as follows:

<u>NORMAL PRICE</u>	<u>SALE PRICE</u>
\$5.00	\$1.00
\$10.00	\$3.00
\$15.00	\$4.00
\$20.00	\$5.00
\$25.00	\$6.00

REUNION REGISTRATION

The reunion registration form is attached to this newsletter. Don't forget to mail it with your check. The prices are higher than what we usually pay but this is San Diego. Dings and I worked to get the best prices we could. We normally can do better but every hotel was firm and refused to budge. At previous reunions the hotel worked with us and we had a special menu just for CAIMAN that was much cheaper than the hotel's expensive planned menu. The hotels in San Diego refused. Once again this is San Diego. The hotel has paid parking with in/out privileges. We did get this down to \$5.00 from \$12.00. I believe Dings and I did the best we could. I suggest no more reunions in San Diego.

REUNION TOUR

If you pick up your free veteran's pass to national parks, the only expense with the reunion tour is transportation which is the price on the registration form. The buses will stop on the trip back to the hotel at Liberty Station (old NTC) for lunch and shopping. There are several restaurants and stores, so you will not be bored for a few hours. While at Liberty Station, I recommend the monument to the 52 boats lost in WWII. I believe that it is worth visiting.

BURIAL IN A NATIONAL CEMETERY

Burial in a national cemetery is free to all eligible veterans, spouses and some dependent children may also be eligible.

There are 155 national cemeteries in 42 states and Puerto Rico.

Burial benefits available include:

- A gravesite in any cemetery with available space
- Opening and closing of the grave
- Perpetual care

- [A government-provided headstone or marker](#)

- [A burial flag,](#)

- [A Presidential Memorial Certificate](#)

All of this is provided at no cost to the family.

Some veterans may also be eligible for [burial allowances](#).

Cremated remains may also either be buried or placed in a memorial space in national cemeteries.

[For a listing of national cemeteries, visit the Department of Veterans Affairs' website.](#)

Eligibility for Burial in a National Cemetery

Veterans and those who die on active duty are eligible for burial in one of VA's 155 national cemeteries. An eligible veteran must have been discharged or separated from active duty under conditions other than dishonorable and have completed the required period of service. A U.S. citizen who served in the armed forces of a government allied with the United States in a war also may be eligible.

Spouses and dependent, minor children of eligible veterans and service members may also be buried in a national cemetery.

A surviving spouse who remarried on or after Oct. 31, 1990, is not eligible for burial in a national cemetery.

There are other rules for surviving spouses who remarried before that date, so check with VA for details.

Requesting Burial in a National Cemetery

Burial in a national cemetery is based on military service. If the veteran wasn't receiving any other VA benefits, VA may request proof of military service to determine eligibility for burial.

VA allows veterans to find out their eligibility for burial in a VA National Cemetery before the time of need.

VA calls this "pre-need determination." To apply, visit [VA's Pre-Need Burial Eligibility Determination](#) webpage.

ETERNAL PATROL

As much as I dislike including this article it is necessary to inform crew members that we have lost more shipmates and friends.

Bailey, Allen EMC(SS) (69/72) 30 April 2020

Bray, Raymond IC3(SS) (64/65) 9 February 2020

Lotz, Ralph EM1(SS) (56/57) 26 April 2015

McCraib, Michael QM3(SS) (65/68) 29 October 2023

SAILING LIST

Our Eternal Patrol list is increasing. Again, I am advocating for all hands to attend our reunions. We are all in the twilight of our life so this could be the last time to visit with our friends and shipmates.

Located shipmates 1376

Hopefully at the next reunion: 380

Eternal Patrol: 996

Lost List: 38

**I AM NOT PERFECT
BUT I HAVE MY DOLPINS
AND MY DD214
FOR AN OLD MAN
THAT IS PRETTY CLOSE**