



FLAMIN' CAIMAN TALES

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SEPT 2008

COMMANDER'S SCUTTLEBUTT

Here it is September and the Association is diligently working on our 2010 reunion in Reno, Nevada. We have heard from 7 hotels that will accommodate our group and 7 tour companies that provide excursions to points of interest in the Reno and Lake Tahoe areas. We are working to get the best hotel rates for our members and their families while making sure they meet all our needs. Some of the tours we are looking into are a visit to historic Virginia City and Nevada's Capitol Carson City. These tours last approximately 6 hours and are reasonable priced. A professional guide in each motor coach will tell us all about the history, geology and characters of the areas as we ride along. Besides our tour, Reno and the surrounding areas have a lot to offer. Emerald Bay/Lake Tahoe; Truckee and Donner State Park Memorial; the National Automobile Museum; Pyramid Lake and Wild Horse Corrals (Sorry, Smitty, the Mustang Ranch has been Closed) just to name a few places of interest. Most all the hotels in Reno have great shows for your entertainment. There are several RV parks near the hotels for shipmates who will be driving their RV's. So plan now and save your yen for our fourth May 17-20, 2010 reunion in the "Biggest Little City in the World" RENO, NEVADA!!!!!!!!!!

John "Yeo" Fagereng, Commander

DUES

There seems to be some confusion on the way dues is credited. Dues are from Reunion to Reunion, or life. So if you paid dues for 2008, your dues expired at the 2008 Reunion. The Reunion year your dues will expire is on your address label. All CAIMAN Widows and Plank Owners are life members. Any questions contact Smitty (360-377-4763)

ELECTION

The Vice Commander position will be voted on at the next reunion. Anyone interested in running for the office, contact Smitty. Hoofs has not decided if he wants to continue in this demanding position.

DRAWING

We have started acquiring drawing prizes. As usual, all free rooms will go into the drawing. We are looking for items that are CAIMAN or submarine oriented. Any suggestions or donations, contact Smitty. We have not come up with the top prize yet, but we are working on it.

COMMEMORATIVE COINS

Everyone should have received their CAIMAN reunion coins by now. We had coins made with Silver and Gold Dolphins; ensure you received the correct coins. If you attended any of our reunions and have not received a coin or the correct coin, for each and every reunion you attended, contact Smitty. We have extras and will be selling them at the reunions – **only to CAIMAN sailors**. We are trying to make the coins collectables.

MOVIE STARS

Last newsletter I told you about our movie stars. The show is on the FLAMIN' CAIMAN web site. I know you will enjoy it. I was incorrect on Laura's last name in the previous newsletter, but she was nice and didn't complain or correct me as others like to do. She has requested to be added to our mailing list and will make the next reunion. Bryon "Big Mac" McDonald, Laura's father, has not confirmed or denied if he will allow her to attend again. Her fellow movie star, Richard "RC" Thompson, has offered no comments. We all know it is almost impossible to embarrass a CAIMAN sailor so he will be at the next reunion.

ROASTS

We are working on the roasts for next reunion. Ken "D'Goat" Sanderlin, or Couth as some know him, has volunteered to assist on the next roast. Those that know D'Goat, I am sure, can believe he will willingly assist. We had to edit and/or delete several of his stories as the reunions are mixed company.

RESURRECTED

Thanks to US Submarine Veterans of WWII, and Ken "Pig" Henry we resurrected two crewmembers. Two of our shipmates we had listed as on Eternal Patrol, Pig gave me their current addresses. I talked to them and they were glad to hear they were not on eternal patrol. As usual for submarine sailors, we work together. I gave Pig access to our complete sailing list. This is the first time we have given anyone access to our sailing list that is not a CAIMAN sailor, but believed it would help them and us. It did.

ETERNAL PATROL

We have had shipmates depart on Eternal Patrol since the last newsletter. They will be missed.

HILL, James W. CWO Plank Owner 44/45

LAMINACK, James , IC2(SS) 55/58

PETERSEN, Charles SO1(SS) 55/56

Sailor, rest your oars.

UNLOCATED CREWMEMBERS

I have had a couple of shipmates mention during phone calls that they had addresses or phone numbers for shipmates on our lost list. Recently a shipmate told me that he had an address for Roberts, a crewmember that we have listed on eternal patrol. Due to my fading memory, I do not remember the crewmember's name and can't find my notes. Please call or email me with any information on crewmembers, lost or otherwise. We have determined that most people return to the area they lived when they enlisted. If you remember any After Battery conversations, let me know. Also, Forward Battery residents, if you remember what school your fellow officers attended that would help. The Alumni associations have helped us locate shipmates.

SAILING LIST

Sailing List:	1133
Expected at the next reunion:	552
Eternal Patrol:	581
Lost List:	286

LOCATING

As you have read we had listed three shipmates as being on eternal patrol and they were not. We do not take this lightly and do not want it to happen again. The sources we have used are the internet (addresses and phone numbers), the US Navy (for retirees in the last 20 years), the VA (shipmates that used VA services), and the VA burial web site (name, rate and service had to match). The US Navy, for a fee, would only tell us if alive, dead, or no record. There was a disaster that destroyed records prior to about 20 years ago. So if a shipmate retired but passed away over 20 years ago, they do not have a record. They did send our letter to all retirees still alive. The VA was a free service that told us if any on our list were alive, dead, or no record. They did send a letter, for a fee, if they had a record. The VA seems to have a little trouble matching names correctly. I did find some errors, as the three mentioned earlier, but we did get a lot of useful information. Neither the Navy nor the VA would use our return address so we do not know if the addresses were good or the shipmate received our letter, unless they contacted us. We are still trying to locate shipmates and will continue until our lost list is zero.

PHOTOS

Our Webmaster, Greg 'Hawkeye' Baer, has added 141 photos from the 2008 reunion to our web site. There are more photos coming soon. Hawkeye does a great job on our web site. Mrs. Hawkeye, Alice, has been very generous allowing us all the time he spends on CAIMAN'S web site.

STATES

We have CAIMAN sailors in all but 4 states. Delaware, Massachusetts, North Dakota, and Vermont do not have the privilege of having a CAIMAN sailor reside within their borders. Since we have not located all our shipmates they still stand a chance. We recently found a CAIMAN sailor in Nebraska for the one and only in that state. In case you are wondering, California leads with 106 CAIMAN sailors. Since Reno is so close we should have all of them at the next reunion.

SWEETHEARTS

At present, Mrs. Hoofs, Carol, does not have any special event for the ladies when we have our short business meeting, so they may be asked to attend. It will be short as we don't have much planned.

REUNION TIME SPAN

Any suggestions I receive I will present at the business meeting. A shipmate submitted a suggestion that we change our reunions to each year due to the advancing age of our members. This will be presented during the business meeting. I am bringing the subject up early so everybody can think about it and decide their vote. Everyone will have a chance to voice their opinion about the suggestion, but I am hoping we can keep the discussion period short and conduct the vote.

SHIPS STORE

Soon Hawkeye and I will be updating the CAIMAN'S ships store with some of the new items that we have introduced at the reunions. So, stop in and look around. I know we have items that you can't live without. We have many items and you will not find better prices. We operate with a small markup so we can give you the low prices. All profits go to supporting our association and reunions. If you do not have internet access, call Smitty and he will send you a catalog.

DISASTERS

As you all know the US is being hit with storms, floods, and other nasty visits from nature. I use the internet and maps to determine if any CAIMAN sailors may be affected. If there is a chance a CAIMAN sailor and family is affected by the disaster, I attempt to locate them once I learn that they can return to their homes. If you know of any CAIMAN sailor and family that could use our assistance, please call or email me. Submarine sailors look out for our own.

RETIREMENT

We have all heard how great retirement is. I am going to tell you some of the disadvantages of retirement.

1. No days off. No more looking forward to a day away from work.
2. Holidays are just another day. Holidays and weekends become the days you stay away from the mall and off the roads.
3. Can't use the excuse – "I Ran out of time". Time is something we have a lot of.
4. Breakfast at 10 AM (1000). Sometimes staying in bed till 9:30 is a hassle.
5. You have to complete the "Honey do" list. See #3.
6. Waiting for happy hour to start.
7. You do not have an excuse for not attending USS CAIMAN reunions.
8. Naps become a requirement – your "job" becomes making sure your recliner does not escape. Maybe that is an advantage.
9. Having enough time to think of stupid lists to include in a newsletter

I hope I haven't changed anybody's mind on retirement. It is something we have worked long and hard to be able to enjoy.

DIESEL BOATS FOREVER

The article I have attached is to explain to the ones that were not on active duty after 1970 the reasoning and the history of the DBF pin and the saying "DIESEL BOATS FOREVER". They became a way for the smoke boats to get one on the nukes. Also a reminder that we did it first and for awhile did it better. As the article states, it is an unauthorized pin, but one we wore proudly and will always wear. As submariners we were not know for following regs.

"Submariners are a special brotherhood, either all come to the surface or no one does. On a submarine, the phrase all for one and one for all is not just a slogan, but reality."

-- VADM Rudolf Golosov of the Russian Navy

THE DBF PIN

By Patrick Meagher TMC(SS) USN RET.



Probably none of today's submariners know the origin or the significance of the Diesel Boats Forever (DBF) pin. Most former Diesel boat sailors are also ignorant of its origins even though it is worn with pride on many SubVets vests.

The last diesel attack boat built for the US Navy was commissioned in October 1959 (1). At that time there were five classes of nuke boats along with two "one off" designs in various stages of construction and pre commissioning trials along with USS Nautilus SSN-571, and the four Skate class boats in operational status (2). The diesel boat force made up predominantly of modernized fleet boats (Fleet Snorkels, Guppy 1A's, Guppy 2's, Guppy 2A's, Radar picket, Regulus missile, troop carrier, and hunter-killer conversions), six Tang's plus Darter, Growler, Grayback, the two Salmon's and the three "B" girls (Barbel, Blueback, and Bonefish) had become the source of pre-commissioning crews for the nuke boats. There was a steady stream of 9901's passing through the diesel boat force, spending seven months onboard learning the boat and earning their dolphins before departing for nuke school. A smaller number of career enlisted electricians, machinist mates, enginemen, and electronic technicians also volunteered for the nuke program.

Admiral Hyman Rickover personally interviewed all officers applying for the nuclear power program as well as many of the senior enlisted submariners. Tales of Rickover's interviews consistently reported on his efforts to intimidate and discredit the accomplishments of the officer interviewee's, alienating many who interviewed with him. Disturbing reports from senior enlisted veterans of the nuke boat navy in favorite submarine "watering holes" ashore indicated Rickover's new operating philosophy was at work in the engineering spaces. "Don't trust enlisted engineers." Nuke trained officers consistently checked, double checked, and triple checked the work and system lineups of the enlisted engineers, a major change to the long standing professional relationship between enlisted and officer submariners. In addition, "front-enders" the non-nukes, were reporting excessive wardroom focus on the engineering plant at the expense of the historic mission of the submarine. They were also describing the "no-touch" rule from the reactor compartment aft. If you were not a nuke, you couldn't touch any part of the engineering plant-period. You could learn it in theory, identify major components, valves and panels, but that was it. Gone was the traditional submarine qualification program that demanded standing all watches under instruction as well as rigging all compartments for all evolutions. Lost on most submariners was the reason Rickover imposed the new operational Philosophy which is best summarized by Gary E. Weir (3)

"The potential for major disaster in the nuclear propulsion program caused him (Rickover) to elevate professional competence, discipline, and responsibility to the rank of absolute virtues required of every naval and private participant.....Unfortunately for a great many people, Rickover's personal and professional manner made the lesson difficult to learn." (pg. 168)

By early 1967 total nuclear submarine crews numbered in excess of one hundred counting blue and gold SSBN crews with sixty four nuke boats (forty one of which were SSBN's) in commission. The thirty seven Sturgeon class nuke boats would start to commission with the lead ship in March of that year. The Diesel boat fleet in contrast numbered slightly over one hundred in commission with most of the modernized fleet type boats nearing the end of their useful lives. Former SSR's, SSK's, and Fleet Snorkels would start to decommission within eighteen months to be followed shortly by the guppy conversions.

More and more Rickover trained officers were appearing on squadron and force staffs bringing with them Rickover's operational philosophy. It was apparent to all that the diesel boat navy were dinosaurs soon to be extinct along with their officer community who were either unwilling to become nukes or passed over by Rickover as unfit to become nuke boat engineers in order to ascend to command of a nuke boat (4). Diesel boats were still conducting most of the non-deterrent submarine operations including "special missions." Nuke attack boats were "wowing" many with their performance and potential along with occasional contributions such as "a mission of great value to the government of the United States of America." The nukes were not without their teething problems however. It was not uncommon for a nuke boat to be unable to get underway as scheduled due to an "engineering problem." A refueling every three to four years also required

a shipyard stay of from eighteen months to two years again reducing the number of nuke boats available for operations. So it was left to the diesel boats to pick up the slack.

'Dex' Armstrong (5) describes the thinking of the enlisted smokeboat sailor during these years.

"We were it...One crew. Nobody took over our boats when we came in. When the old girl went to sea, we were there. The same names, same faces, same officers forward. If someone failed to maintain a system or piece of equipment, the Chief of the Boat knew precisely what butt to put his boot into when ass-kicking time rolled around. Those were great days... Didn't know it then, that came later...much later. We knew nuclear boats represented progress but we didn't think much about it.....We could see the future of submarining floating in the after nest. The big, fat, black monsters getting all the attention. High speed, deep-diving ugliness rapidly sending our smokeboat fleet up the river to the scrapyard. To us nuke boats were like elephants... They were big as hell, uglier than sin and none of us had any idea what went on inside of the damn things. They were just there." (pg.5)

This brings us to the DBF pin. In 1969 USS Barbel SS-580, the lead ship of the last class of diesel boats built for the US Navy was deployed to WesPac. While on a "special mission" in early 1970 the control room gang got into one of those nuke boat vs. diesel boat discussions.

It was pointed out during the discussion that on a number of occasions a diesel boat would have to get underway for a "broke-down" nuke boat again proving the superiority of smokeboats over unreliable nuke boats. Someone suggested there ought to be a pin for smokeboat sailors, something like the new Polaris Deterrent Patrol Pin for "boomer" sailors, for the times you had to take a nuke boat commitment because they were broke- down. A contest was commissioned to design the pin. ETR3(SS) Leon Figurido's winning design was a broadside view of a guppy boat with SS superimposed on the North Atlantic sail. There were two bare breasted mermaids, one on the bow and one on the stern facing in with arms extended. Completing the design was a ribbon underneath the boat with holes for stars, and centered on the ribbon the letters "DBF". ETR3(SS) Figurido received appropriate recognition for his winning design along with a prize of some sort, now long forgotten. Upon Barbel's return to Yokosuka the design of the DBF pin was hand carried to a local manufacturer of nautical gewgaws where a batch were cast and brought back to the ship and sold at cost to Barbel crewmembers that began to wear them ashore. As the DBF pin grew in popularity within the diesel boat community it continued to be cast and sold in shops around Yokosuka eventually making its way to Pearl Harbor, San Diego, and on to the east coast. Most "smokeboat" sailors assumed a gold star would be placed in the ribbon for each diesel boat served on. However, it was confirmed to the author years later by Capt. John Renard, USN RET. Skipper of Barbel at that time, a star was to be placed on the ribbon for each time a diesel boat you served on had to get underway for a broke-down nuke.

The DBF pin continued to gain in popularity among current and former smokeboat sailors who wore them with pride as either a pin or on a belt buckle, all the while collecting the ire of the senior nuke officer community. As the wholesale decommissioning of the fleet type boats occurred during the early 70's scores of career electricians and engineers were forced to "surface" as there was no room for them on Rickover's boats. Their designation was changed by BUPERS from "SS" to "SQ" indicating they were excess to submarine force manning requirements although they were still allowed to wear their dolphins. Soon they too would be gone along with their collective histories. In 1973 Rickover issued an edict that Midshipmen would no longer go on summer cruises on diesel boats. Rumor had it that too many were showing up at his interviews with "bad attitudes" about nuke boats picked up on their summer cruise on the smokeboats. It was reported in favorite submarine hangouts ashore that on more than one occasion nuke boat skippers banned the wearing of DBF pins by their crew members, typically "front enders" the non-nukes, implying that to do so would indicate disloyalty to the nuke submarine force. In the mid 70's the DBF pin went into the display of submarine insignia maintained at the Pacific Submarine Museum then located at the Submarine Base, Pearl Harbor. The caption alluded to an "unofficial" insignia worn by a disappearing breed of submariner nostalgic for the days of diesel boats. In July 1975 the last guppy submarine in US service, USS Tiru SS-416, decommissioned in Charleston SC. A handful of the guppies sailed on in foreign service into the late 90's with two, ex-USS Cutlass SS-478, and ex-USS Tusk SS-426 continuing to serve today in the Republic of China (Taiwan) navy as training boats. The last diesel attack boats in US service were USS Darter SS-576, USS Barbel SS-580, USS Blueback SS-581, and USS Bonefish SS-582. They decommissioned between 1988 and 1990. Two Tang class boats, ex-USS Tang SS-563, and ex-USS Gudgeon SS-567, recently decommissioned in the Turkish Navy with ex-Gudgeon slated to be Turkey's museum submarine. The Turkish skipper of ex-Tang when asked about the difference between the German designed and built replacement boats for their retiring ex-US boats is reported to have said, "American submarines are built for war, German submarines are built for export." (6)

It's ironic that 15 years after decommissioning of USS Blueback SS-581 at the Submarine Base in San Diego, a Swedish Navy Type A-19 Gotland Class Air Independent Diesel Boat is conducting weekly ops there to "familiarize" US Navy ASW forces with the operating characteristics of advanced non-nuclear submarines. When the Swedish crew comes ashore on Friday after a week at sea they still look and smell like the smokeboat sailors of old. Our current crop of submariners avoids them.

The DBF pin, originally designed by a USS Barbel SS-580 crewmember as an unofficial insignia to recognize the diesel boats ability to fill-in on very short notice for broke-down nuke boats, now resides with pride on the blue vests of Submarine Veterans who qualified and served on smokeboats. Today the DBF pin is the unique symbol of the professionalism, discipline, and camaraderie of American smokeboat sailors who sailed on, unloved, unwashed, and underpaid as their era was coming to a close. **DBF!**

Notes:

1. USS Dolphin AGSS-555 was completed and commissioned after the Barbel class were operational. Dolphin, a deep submergence research submarine, is diesel-electric. She continues her research projects out of San Diego.
2. USS Seawolf SSN-575 was in the yard at EB having her liquid sodium reactor replaced with a pressurized water reactor similar to Nautilus. Seawolf would not rejoin the fleet until late 1960.
3. Wier, Gary E., FORGED IN WAR, The Naval-Industrial Complex and American Submarine Construction 1940-1961, Brassey's, Herndon, VA, 1998.
4. The following is the gist of a conversation the author had with the CO of HMAS Onslow S-60 in early 1972 during a cocktail party onboard the boat while they were in port in Pearl Harbor.

"Following long standing custom and tradition the RN viewed nuclear propulsion as just another method of making steam and decided that with proper training their engineering officers would have no problem operating the plants. Following this line of thinking they also determined that submarine commanders did not have to be qualified and experienced nuclear engineers to ascend to command of a nuke boat." The RN continues to follow this operational philosophy to this day.

5. 'Dex' Armstrong, The Take From A Trash Dumper, THE PUMP ROOM, The Mare Island Base Newsletter, Volume VII, Issue 10, October 2005, USSVI.
6. Reported to the author in January 2004 by a USS Pampanito SS-383 volunteer who had just returned from a trip to Turkey where he had filmed submarine operations onboard ex-USS Tang SS-563.

The Author

Patrick Meagher, TMC(SS) USN RET. Qualified and served on USS Cusk SS-348, USS Andrew Jackson SSBN-619B, and USS Barbel SS-580. He served on active duty with the Submarine Force from 1960 through 1977. A life member of USSVI, and associate member of USSVWWII, he wears a DBF patch on his blue vest.