

# The Piper Report

USS Piper (SS409) 1944 - 1967



April 2011



## USS Piper (SS409)

Keel laid by Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Kittery Maine, 15 March 1944; launched 26 June 1944; commissioned 23 August 1944; decommissioned 16 June 1967.

Balao class; Length 311' 8"; Beam 27' 3"; Speed 20.25 knots surface, 8.75 knots submerged; Test depth 400 feet; Displacement 1526 tons (surface); 2401 tons (submerged); 21 inch torpedo tubes: 6 fwd, 4 aft; Propulsion: twin screw, diesel electric drive (Fairbanks Morse engines) with Guppy (snorkel) conversion in 1951. Design Complement: 6 officers, 60 enlisted men.

Although built late in World War II, Piper completed 3 successful war patrols in the Pacific, winning four battle stars before the end of hostilities. She was responsible for sinking more than 6000 tons of Japanese shipping.

After the war, Piper operated out of the U.S. Naval Submarine Base in Groton Connecticut until her decommissioning in 1967.

## 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 of" 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, Greyback, the two Salmon's and the three "B" girls 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 be-

tween 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 offi-

(Continued on page 6)

## Commander's Column

Shipmates:

You will see a previous letter in this edition concerning shipmate Mike Lally's passing, which I had Mike Bray hold back until I sorted things out.

I have had scant responses to my original request concerning a reunion this summer, but I realize some of us (I'm pleading guilty) don't always follow through as promptly as we should. Here is what we've come up with.

Over the weekend of 29-30-31 July, we will gather in Groton for a reunion, which will include a memorial service for Mike Lally.

In response to Mike's family's request, we have arranged to have Mike's ashes interred to sea off the USS Nautilus (SSN 571), which as we all know is the museum boat at the front gate of the SubBase. The event is confirmed, the ceremonial contingent is formed, and they will conduct this solemn service.

This will take place at 1100 hours on Saturday, 30 July, and will be followed by a luncheon and celebration of shipmate Mike's life for his family, as well as members of the Long Island base, other interested shipmates, and of course the USS Piper Association.

We will start this weekend with a Welcome Aboard party at USSVI HQ at 40 School Street in Groton on Friday night at 1900 hours. Saturday morning and the subsequent luncheon will be as stated above.

Saturday evening we will have a catered meal and light entertainment back at the club. Sunday morning, we will have our traditional brunch, but that will be held at the Radisson as well. Some members have asked about a trip to the Mohegan Sun Casino. That is doable, and I will get those details out to you all at a later date. That shuttle trip could be arranged for Saturday afternoon leaving from and returning to the Radisson in time for the reunion back at the club, perhaps from 1400-1800 hours. That should give attendees enough time to make their donation or fortune.

All attendees, Piper shipmates, Long Island Base members, or others, are welcomed to attend any scheduled events.

Once again, I need your feedback. Please e-mail me directly to [Whitty409@aol.com](mailto:Whitty409@aol.com) with your thoughts and comments.

There is a registration form in this Piper Report. Please return with a \$100.00 per person minimum deposit no later than May 15th.

That being said, I really need some feedback now on how many are attending and how many rooms at the Radisson we

need to reserve, so if you can please e-mail or snail-mail your RSVP to me as soon as possible with your meal choice for Saturday night, it would be a great help.

Regards,

Frank

Frank Whitty  
269 Plymouth Street  
Middleboro, MA 02346  
[whitty409@aol.com](mailto:whitty409@aol.com)

Planning Notes:

The normal Radisson room rate for weekends in the summer is \$199.00. However, I was able to negotiate a special rate for this event: \$109.00.

Registration fee: \$10.00

Friday Welcome Aboard Party: \$15.00

Saturday Luncheon at Radisson: \$19.00 (our cost) includes:

*Tossed Salad with assorted dressings*  
*Rolls or Garlic Bread*  
*Baked Ziti*  
*Grilled Chicken Breast with lemon and thyme*  
*Baked Cod topped with a light cream sauce*  
*Fresh Seasonal Vegetables*  
*Choice of Cake*  
*Coffee, Tea and Soda*

Saturday Reunion meal: Range will be \$25 to \$50 depending on menu.

This reunion menu is not finalized, but if enough of you are interested, we'll have a lobster/steak dinner brought in since we won't be holding our traditional clambake at Fife Park. I will ask Mike to show it on the registration form at \$50.00 subject to refund based on the final cost.

Sunday Breakfast/Brunch at Radisson: \$12.00 (our cost)

*Breakfast Entrée Choices:*

*Scrambled Eggs*  
*Plain, with Cheese, or with Diced Vegetables*  
*Hash Brown Potatoes*  
*Bacon or Sausage*

Or

*Texas Sized French Toast*  
*Dusted with Cinnamon and topped with sweet butter*  
*Served with warm maple syrup*  
*Fresh Fruit*  
*Bacon or Sausage*

**2011 Piper Reunion  
Groton, CT  
29-30-31 July 2011**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Guest Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**Registration fee:** (#) \_\_\_\_\_ @ 10 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Schedule and Pricing:

**Friday:**

Welcome Aboard Party at USSVI HQ, Groton (#) \_\_\_\_\_ @ 15 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Saturday:**

Luncheon at Radisson (#) \_\_\_\_\_ @ 19 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Reunion Meal at USSVI HQ, Groton (#) \_\_\_\_\_ @ 50 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Sunday:**

Breakfast/Brunch at Radisson (#) \_\_\_\_\_ @ 12 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total Payment Enclosed = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make check payable to Piper Association.**

**Send this form and payment to:**

Michael Hubbard  
271 Elm Street  
New London, CT 06320

[bldgmaint@subvetsgroton.org](mailto:bldgmaint@subvetsgroton.org)

Phone: 860-444-7649

## Obituaries

**SUBVETS GROTON BASE  
ETERNAL PATROL NOTICE**  
**U.S. SUBMARINE VETERANS GROTON  
BASE**  
40 School Street  
Groton, CT 06340  
Club: (860) 445-5262

**Tom Russell**  
Base Chaplain  
[chaplain@subvetsgroton.org](mailto:chaplain@subvetsgroton.org)

Shipmates,

It is our sad duty to inform you all of the passing of a Shipmate. Peter "Honey" F. McCormack, 84, formerly of Oakdale, CT passed away peacefully on Jan. 10, 2011, after a brief illness. Peter was born on Oct. 1, 1928, in Queens, N.Y. Peter married Helen McCormack, who predeceased him in June of 1990. Peter then married Arlene McCormack in July of 1992, who predeceased him on Dec. 20, 2010.

Peter joined the Navy in 1948 and qualified in submarines onboard the USS CORSAIR (SS 435) in 1949. He also served onboard the USS SEA POACHER (SS 406), USS PIPER (SS 409), USS MACKREL (SST 1), and USS SEAROBIN (SS 407). Peter retired a YNCS (SS) in 1970.

Peter joined USSVI Groton Base in 1999, he was a Life and Holland Club member. He was also a member of St. John Parish in Uncasville and was a very devoted Mason and Shriner.

Peter is survived by a daughter, Sandra Radford and her husband, Dave, of Oakdale; three grandchildren, Sherri Sheetz and her husband, Garry, of New York, David Radford II and his wife, Stacy, of Uncasville, and Tonja Hillyer and her husband, Matt, of Massachusetts; and six great-grandchildren, Jessica, Samantha and Dustun Sheetz, Rebecca and Tyler Radford, and Bray Turner.

Burial was private in North Carolina. Donations in Peter's memory can be made to The Shriners Hospitals for Children, 51 Blossom St., Boston MA 02114 or the American Cancer Society, 238 West Town St., Norwich CT 06360.

***"There is a port of no return, where ships  
may ride at anchor for a little space.  
And then some starless night the cable slips,  
leaving only an eddy at the mooring place.  
Gulls veer no longer, Sailor rest your oar.  
No tangled wreckage will be washed ashore."***

Hand Salute  
YNCS(SS) Peter F. McCormack. . Rest your oar.

Ready Two

To: All hands, Long Island Base  
From: Mike Carmody, Vice Cdr., by dir of  
Cdr. Michael Zenser  
Subj: Passing of Shipmate Michael Lally

**Mike Lally**  
**22 Jan 1941 to 12 Feb 2011**

It is with sad duty to report the passing of Shipmate Michael Lally who went on Eternal Patrol this morning after a long illness. Mike served as Base Treasurer for many years and continued to hold that



office until his passing. Mike was a faithful and dedicated member of Long Island Base and will be missed by all of us who knew him. Our deepest condolences go out to his wife, Patricia, and their three sons. Also in our thoughts is Mike's brother, John Lally, who also is a member of Long Island Base. Mike qualified on the submarine Piper (SS409) in 1961. Just recently, several of Mike's shipmates visited him and presented Mike with the U.S. Submarine Veterans "Holland Club Award." The award is given to those members who have been qualified in submarines for 50 years. The award was presented to him by Chief John Hendry, USN (Ret). Chief Hendry served on the USS Piper with Mike in the 1960's.

Since Mike's wake service will be held on the evening of our scheduled monthly meeting, said meeting will be cancelled. A new meeting date will be forthcoming. All hands are urged to attend Mike's wake on Monday evening. Uniform of the day will be base vests and/or jackets or attire that will identify you as a fellow submariner. See below for wake and funeral arrangements:

Maloney's Holbrook Funeral Home 825 Main St., Holbrook, NY 11741 (631) 981-7500

Date & time of viewing: Mon., 14 Feb 2011  
1400 hrs. to 1600 hrs & 1900 hrs to 2100 hrs.  
Military Service will commence at 2000 hrs.  
Please muster at funeral home on or before 1945 hrs.

Mass service will be at Our Lady of Snow  
175 Blue Point Ave., Blue Point, NY  
Tues., 0945 hrs., 15 Feb 2011

### Ailing Shipmates

We have received news that the following members are not feeling up to par. Why not take the time to lift their spirits by sending them a card? They would love to hear from an old shipmate!

Jim "Mother" Burke  
78 Eagle Drive  
Whiting, NJ 08759

### Eternal Patrol

Peter McCormack passed away on January 10, 2011. Pete was a YN2(SS) aboard Piper 1951-1953.

Michael Lally passed away on February 12, 2011. Mike was an ET1(SS) aboard Piper 1961-1963.

Sincere condolences go to family and friends.

Please notify us of the sickness or death of any association member.

### New Address?

To ensure that you continue to receive this newsletter and information about upcoming reunions, etc., please notify Bill Fuchs of any change of mailing address, email address, or telephone number.

**William Fuchs**  
533 North Kings Ave.  
Lindenhurst, NY 11757  
[billss582@hotmail.com](mailto:billss582@hotmail.com)  
Phone: 631-884-5664

February 16, 2011

Shipmates:

On Monday, 14 February, Dolores and I picked up shipmate Mike Hubbard in New London and after a smooth ferry crossing to Orient Point, we drove down the island to represent our membership and attend Mike Lally's wake and funeral. Tom Kucharski drove in from Cleveland and arrived just after 7 PM after an 11 hour run.

We arrived at the funeral home in time to join over 30 members of the Long Island base for a moving memorial service honoring Mike for his devotion to US SubVets and the USS Piper Association. Piper shipmates Bill Fuchs and Scotty Hendry, accompanied by their wives, Ronny and Aurelie, both from Long Island and members of that base, were with us as well.

Tuesday morning, 15 February, we drove from our hotel to a lovely church in Blue Point for the Mass of Christian Burial. It was a solemn time as Mike's loving family, their friends and acquaintances, and our Piper shipmates honored his memory and bade him farewell. We then traveled to Patchogue for a reception at Mike and Pat's son's home. We gathered around the table and not surprisingly, the sea stories began. Reflections on Mike and what a great guy and loyal Piper sailor he was certainly were included. The tone was lightened by these reflections and laughter seemed to help dissolve the somber nature of what had come before.

Mike requested that he be cremated and his ashes put to sea. As you know, we had been considering a reunion this summer, and despite the typically poor returns of the questionnaire, we will go forward. For those of you, who did respond, thank you. Your voices have been heard and we will make some modifications. You will be hearing more about the planning in the next couple of months, and Mike Lally's memorial service will be included in the agenda.

Bill Fuchs has stepped forward to assume Mike's duties as membership coordinator. If any of you have membership renewal checks that haven't cleared, under the circumstances of Mike's long and challenging illness, they will be processed by Bill in the near future. For those of you, who wish to renew now or commit to a life membership, please address to Bill Fuchs, 533 North King's Ave., Lindenhurst, NY 11757.

I look forward to seeing you this coming summer. Please make an effort to attend. Our attendees were down by 35% in 2009, but the expenses didn't follow suit. These reunions are a great opportunity to renew friendships and share memories of our time on Piper. As the events of the last week attest, only God knows how many more times we will be privileged to join together in friendship and camaraderie at a Piper Reunion.

Frank



Photos from Mike Lally's Memorial

## The DBF Pin

(Continued from page 1)

cer 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.



This is the original DBF design that started the "Diesel Boats Forever" movement. Designed and drawn by Lee Figurido. West Pac 1970

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 enginemen 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* continu-

(Continued on page 7)

ing 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 broken-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*.

### About 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.

## Letters

**John T. Lowry**

12440 Alameda Trace Circle, Apt 1212  
Austin, Texas 78727  
(512) 231-9391  
[jtlowry35@gmail.com](mailto:jtlowry35@gmail.com)  
[lowry-john@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lowry-john@sbcglobal.net)

1 February 2011

Dear Mike Bray and Cal Sutliff,

This is to recommend to you, and through Mike to all The Piper Report readers, a very interesting and well done American Web site concerning submarines. Specifically, concerning German U-boats: [www.sharkhunters.com](http://www.sharkhunters.com)

I was watching the History Channel earlier today, a program called "Famous escapes of World War II." I watched a fascinating story of the rescue of a French resistance fighter from his Gestapo prison, but it was followed by a story of many members of a captured U-boat crew escaping (for relatively brief periods) from their internment camp in Arizona.

The boat was U-162, commanded by Captain Jurgen Wattenberg. Mary Ann came in early from work and we watched the story together. She was as fascinated as I was. It turns out that Wattenberg had been navigator on the Graf Spee, scuttled off Montevideo, and interned in Argentina. He escaped, got back to Germany, and went to submarine school.

He rapidly rose to become Captain of U-162. On his third war patrol (after having sunk 14 ships, a total of 82,000 tons) he was in turn depth-charged by three British destroyers near Trinidad. All but two (or maybe three, accounts differ) of his crew survived and were captured. Their escape story is the usual stuff: a lengthy tunnel, picking Christmas Eve when many of the guards were off duty, a "party" which deflected attention of the remaining guards, etc. Anyway, about 25 U-

162 crewmembers escaped. Some for only a day or two, some for a week or two.

But Wattenberg and a few others holed up in a cave and began to “live as Indians.” Even adopting made-up Indians names. Wattenberg had been enamored, in his youth, of stories of the American West. Eventually he too was forced to give up – it’s tough sledding out in the wilds of Arizona, even in January – the last to do so. His men cheered as he was brought back through the compound gates.

Wattenberg was interviewed by the History Channel for this story and ending by saying that he, like everyone else in Europe, had always wanted to see the United States, the greatest country on earth, and he was glad, even under the circumstances of being a prisoner, to have had the opportunity to do so. What a gracious fellow!

After the war Wattenberg became CEO of St. Pauli Brewery (good beer!) and lived with his wife in Lubeck until he was 94. The Web site is VERY well organized, with links to synopses of war patrols of each U-boat, links to officers’ biographies, in some cases links to photos of the ships they sank. I think former Piper crewmembers will enjoy it!

Anyway, Mike, you might consider putting in a notice about that Sharkhunters Web site!

Sincerely,

John T. Lowry

### **Letter to the Editor Meadville Tribune**

The Japanese disaster is indicative of what can happen anywhere when Mother Nature unleashes its fury. What the earthquake started, the tsunami finished; complete and total destruction. Loss of life unequalled by comparison to hurricanes, wars, and other inland earthquakes.

I cannot forget an incident in the summer of 1945 during WWII which is indirectly related to the nuclear catastrophe now occurring in Japan. The war with Japan was at this time in August of 1945 focused on an invasion of the Japanese Empire, which, without a doubt would have resulted in thousands of American lives lost. Atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The USS Piper (SS409) was on its third war patrol and was patrolling in the Yellow Sea along the southern coast of Japan when we received orders to “take maximum deep submergence and stay down as long as possible.” We were too close to Nagasaki and in harm’s way relative to radiation fallout. A submarine on the surface would be subjected to radiation contamination. The OD and lookouts were on the bridge and the main induction was open, bringing air in the boat required by the diesel engines. The entire inte-

rior of the boat would have been contaminated.

The atomic bombing in August of 1945 let the nuclear genie out of the bottle. What followed in peace time was the complete change over our navy. Surface ships and submarines were equipped with nuclear reactors which provided power and propulsion. Personnel serving aboard the “nukes” are well-trained with safety being priority #1. The difference with land nuclear reactors is that they are located in heavily populated areas. Electrical power is the product sold for profit. Reactors that should be closed for repairs is money lost, thus safety is of lesser concern.

Let the Japanese disaster be a wake-up call. Outdated reactors should be closed. Others that need repairs should be compelled to make required repairs and rigid inspection done before continued operation.

Sincerely,

John Clarkin  
WWII Veteran

August 9, 1995

Dear Third War Patrol Piper Shipmates:

50 years ago today, the Piper was close to Nagasaki when the atomic bomb was dropped. As I remember, we were ordered to take maximum deep submergence and stay down as long as possible. Several days later we penetrated the mine fields and entered the Sea of Japan only to see the war end before any action.

Recently Captain Beach asked me to arrange some book signing engagements in Indianapolis to promote his latest book *Scapegoats*. In May, Captain and Mrs. Beach were here for three days for a speaking engagement and three book signing sessions. Elaine and I thoroughly enjoyed being with them during their visit here as well as meeting their son Ned, Jr., who is a professor at Evansville (IN) University. Enclosed are some articles that appeared in our local newspapers.

John Clarkin sent me some Piper crew pictures taken on the third war patrol. I have enlarged the photos and will circulate them around so we can identify our shipmates. After crew identification, I will send the photos to the Submarine Museum for posterity.

Elaine and I cannot attend the Sub Vets Convention in Salt Lake City, however we hope to attend the 1996 convention which I think is in Milwaukee. I will be happy to act as a self appointed secretary to organize a 1996 Piper Reunion if there is enough interest. For those of you attending the Salt Lake Convention, discuss this with Piper attendees and let me know.

Good sailing and God bless you.

Wm. Ripley Harrison



**A Note About Membership**

So that we can all be in touch with each other as friends and old shipmates, a Piper Association was formed some years ago by Frank Whitty . We have reunions and publish an occasional newsletter called the Piper Report. In order for the Association to exist we need to have paying members.

The dues money goes for paper, ink, postage, etc. This is a considerable expense. A newsletter, The Piper Report, is published once or twice a year (depending on health and work) to bring you up to date on what's happening about future reunions, picnics, etc. It isn't much for \$10.00, but think of how sweet it is.

It sure would be nice to see 100% signed up for the Association. To receive a copy of the newsletter or other correspondence (reunion news, etc. you must be a paid member of the Piper Association.

**USS Piper (SS409) Veteran's Association  
Membership/Renewal Form**

**Send form and payment to:**

William Fuchs  
533 North Kings Ave.  
Lindenhurst, NY 11757  
[billss582@hotmail.com](mailto:billss582@hotmail.com)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Year reported aboard Piper: \_\_\_\_\_ Year departed Piper: \_\_\_\_\_  
Highest rank/rating while aboard Piper: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Enclosed is my \$10.00 for the year beginning July \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Here's another \$10.00 for next year  
\_\_\_\_\_ Enclosed is my \$100.00 for Life Membership!

Make check payable to Piper Association

Total enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The dues are \$10.00 each year. A year is between 1 July to 30 June or any part of it. Sorry it has to be that way, as we are unable to take care of the books for "parts of a year".

**Please consider a Life Membership payment. This would eliminate paying each year and result in less paperwork for us. DUES FOR 2011-2012 ARE DUE JULY 1st**

**Shipmates on Eternal Patrol**

Thanks to the work of shipmate Larry Boutelle, IC2(SS) who was aboard Piper from 1953 to 1956, we have a more complete listing of Shipmates on Eternal Patrol on our web site. Larry did research on the crew members that were on board Piper during his tour of duty.

Obituaries, where available, are included in Newspaper Clippings which can be accessed by a link on the News page of the website.

See <http://webpages.charter.net/usspiper/index.html>

An updated list will be included in The Piper Report from time to time.

If you have information of the death of a shipmate that is not on the Eternal Patrol list, please send it to:

Mike Bray  
W3821 Waucedah Road  
Vulcan, MI 49892-8483  
Or via email to: [mikebray@chartermi.net](mailto:mikebray@chartermi.net)

**Life Members**

- |                  |                     |                     |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| William Bailey   | William Fuchs       | Charles Patch       |
| Bob Baker        | Chester Fuller      | Joe Pow             |
| Paul Barlow      | Chic Gilgore        | Frank Reinhold      |
| Robert Batscher  | Charles Halbing, Jr | Michael Remington   |
| Tom Black        | Gerald Haring       | Benjamin Rollonston |
| Michael Bray     | John Hendry         | George Sanderson    |
| Jim Burdett      | Jerry Holland       | Ralph Schmidt       |
| Jim Burke        | George Holst        | Charles Schwartz    |
| Thomas Calabrese | Michael Hubbard     | David Shoaff        |
| Richard Caldwell | Charles Jones       | Robert Smith        |
| Aldo Cecchi      | Edmund Lee Joyner   | Clarence Spencer    |
| Howard Clark     | Ernie Kertzscher    | Thomas J Stanton    |
| Ralph Clark      | James King          | Bob Staufenberg     |
| Willis Clifford  | Thomas Kucharski    | Gilles St. George   |
| Richard Collins  | Robert Lloyd        | R Calvin Sutliff    |
| William Cotter   | David Mogil         | Joseph Vanderbosch  |
| Edward Cushman   | Noah Monsour        | Douglas Ward        |
| James Delaney    | James Morris        | Terry Welsh         |
| Don Del Core     | Ross Morrison       | Frank Whitty        |
| John Donkus      | Robert Neidlinger   | Hank Wiley          |
| Preston Douthitt | Morris Newkirk      | David Winnington    |
| Al Dube          | Ralph Norman        | Eugene Zakutansky   |
| Richard Fohn     | Mike Paquette       |                     |

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# The Piper Report

USS PIPER VETERAN'S ASSOCIATION  
c/o Michael F. Bray  
W3821 Waucedah Road  
Vulcan, MI 49892-8483



**USS Piper (SS409)**  
Great boat, great crew!



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## The Piper Report

### Material for The Piper Report & Piper Veteran's Assoc. Website

We are always looking for photos, [sea stories](#) and memorabilia to print in the newsletter and put on our website.

Email attachments are welcome, you can send scanned photos and material formatted with software in the Microsoft Office suite. Please provide as much information about the photos as you can.

If you have anything, please send it to me:

Mike Bray  
W3821 Waucedah Road  
Vulcan, MI 49892-8483  
Email: [mikebray@chartermi.net](mailto:mikebray@chartermi.net)

The URL for the USS Piper Veteran's Association website is:

<http://webpages.charter.net/usspiper/index.html>

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