

The Piper Report

USS Piper (SS409) 1944 - 1967



June 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.

Men Who Walk Apart

What one reporter said about our duty in submarines.

Taken from the Submarine Veterans of WW II "Blow & Vent" Newsletter by Bob Dixon

In the days when, with other war correspondents, I loitered about Honolulu, waiting with polite skepticism for the Pacific Fleet to work its miracle, submarines held interest only as mysterious gadgets that had no real part in the war we lived with. We would see them slide into harbor occasionally, salt-caked, battered and ugly looking long black sewer pipes covered with patches of white. We were struck by the pomp and circumstance of their arrival with a busy looking four-piper ahead and sometimes another behind them. We had heard the legend of how one of them had to work for two days to get the channel patrol to quit dropping depth charges on it, so we weren't surprised at the escort.

For a long time submarine men were as rare in our jittery little community as visitors from Mars. After a while, we came to see more of them and marked them instantly as creatures apart. They were for the most part pale and nearly always thin young men who walked quietly aloof with others of their kind. High-hat, some of the gobs from the surface ships called them, but they said it without resentment or unkindness. If these lads considered themselves a special breed of Navy men, well so did everybody else. The boot looked at them with obvious awe, the older men with grave respect. For whatever the current status of the submarines as warships, nothing had lessened their hold on the imagination of men in the less secret services. It was tradition in the Navy that only the most intelligent applicants were ever selected for the submarines, that only the men without fear volunteered for the duty and only the strong survived.

For my part, I was struck with the extreme youth

of submariners. The skippers were all lieutenant commanders, few of whom seemed to be more than thirty years old. The crewmen, you felt, might average nineteen or twenty. The CPOs of the service, the graybeards and high priests of this highly exclusive sect, were usually twenty-five or twenty-six.

One thing about them, strikingly obvious to those who lived next door to them in close confines of wartime Honolulu was their resilience. Uniformly when they came off patrol they were pallid strained-looking and tired. All of them were thin, some positively emaciated, as you might expect in men who had just passed a couple of months locked away from sunlight inside an iron barrel. They were alert and pleasant and interested in their surroundings, but so far as my own observations went, few of them in their first two or three days ashore ever laughed out loud. If any of them went out and got drunk, which certainly seemed a good and excusable idea, they did it like every thing else they did, in their own way and at their own convenience.

Even after the provost's anti-liquor order had been repealed, you never saw one of them in any of the local dives. I, for one, was too old a hand to figure that this indicated they had been recruited in Sunday Schools of the stricter order, but it seem to hint at least they were fastidious.

They would come ashore and for two or three days disappear from sight, which I suppose was not remarkable in-as-much as in those days they quartered on the base. But in a matter of some seventy-two hours, they'd be in circulation again and we'd stand and look at them as they passed wondering at their metamorphosis. By some miracle of the Hawaiian sun, or more likely of their tough youthfulness, they would have lost their corpse like whiteness and with it their grave reserve. You knew, while doubting the evidence of your own eyes, that

(Continued on page 6)

Commander's Column

May 18, 2011

Shipmates:

The 2011 reunion is only 10 weeks away. When planning an event like this, that isn't really a lot of lead time. We have only had 11 Piper sailors register so far. That is confusing and a little disappointing. Two years ago the attendance was down a bit but not like this. We had received at least twice the number of registrations by this time in 2009. Remember, the membership consensus was to hold one this year rather than wait until 2012.

I am hoping that if you are reading this, plan to attend, and haven't registered yet, that you will do so now. The "deadline" has passed but guess what...it's now extended.

If deposit amount is an issue, send a respectable amount and you can pay the balance when you arrive. The Saturday night meal at the club will be the usual choice of lobster or sirloin steak as the main entrée. Flanders, who has always done the onsite bake at Adm. Fyfe Park, will provide the meal at the club. Please let us know your choice when you register. For those who have already registered, let us know your choice(s) by sending an e-mail to:

Mike Hubbard bldgmaint@subvetsgroton.org or Mike Bray, mikebray@chartermi.net who can forward it to Hubbard.

The reunion is still going to take place no matter what, but your attendance will help make it memorable. Your involvement and interest are what will keep this event going or spell its demise.

Hope to see you at the Welcome Aboard party on Friday, July 29th.

Regards,

Frank Whitty
269 Plymouth Street
Middleboro, MA 02346
whitty409@aol.com

Reunion 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. **When making reservations, please be sure to mention the Piper Reunion to receive the special rate.**

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

List of Attendees (as of May 21, 2011):

Frank and Dolores Whitty
Mike Hubbard
William (Beetle) Bailey
Bill and Ronnie Fuchs
John (Scotty) and Aurelie Hendry
Al Dube
James Morris
Richard Collins
Charles Schwartz and Cathy Crowe
Charles Halbing, Jr.
Ross Morrison, Jr.

**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
(Provided by Flanders)

Lobster (#) _____ @ 50 = \$ _____

or

Sirloin Steak (#) _____ @ 50 = \$ _____

Sunday:

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

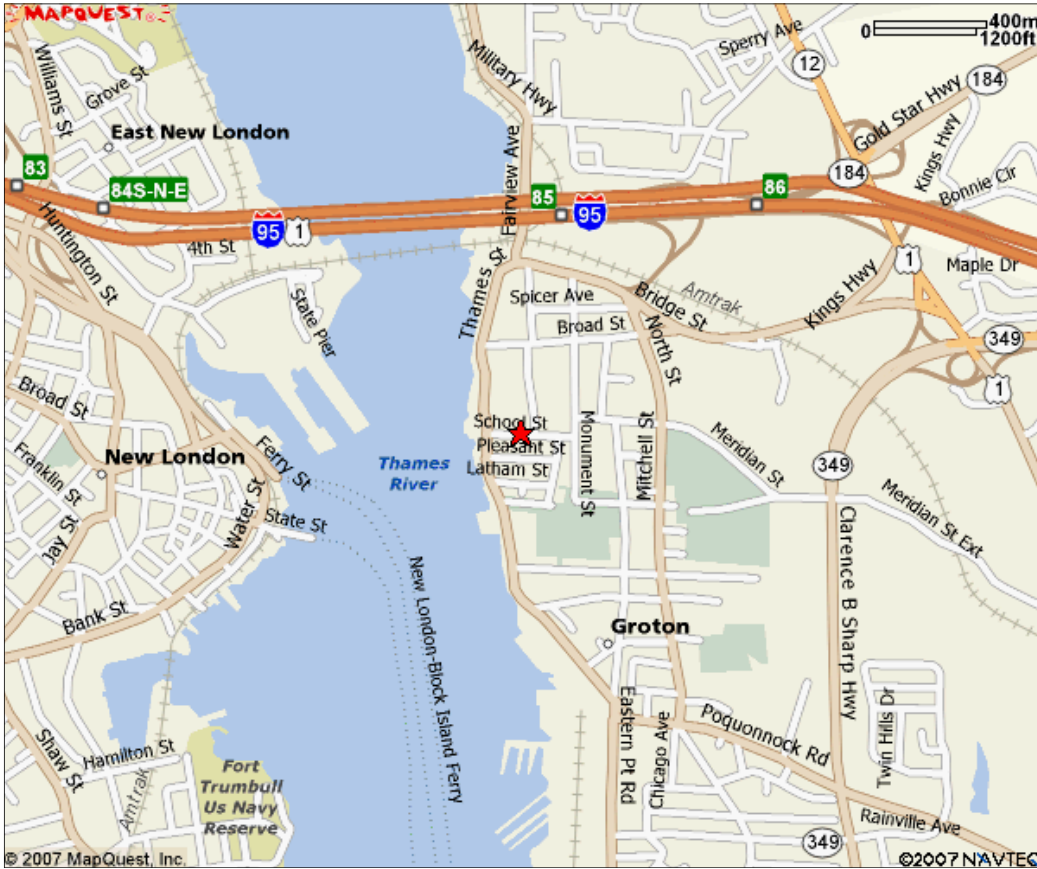
Total Payment Enclosed = \$ _____

Please make check payable to Piper Association.

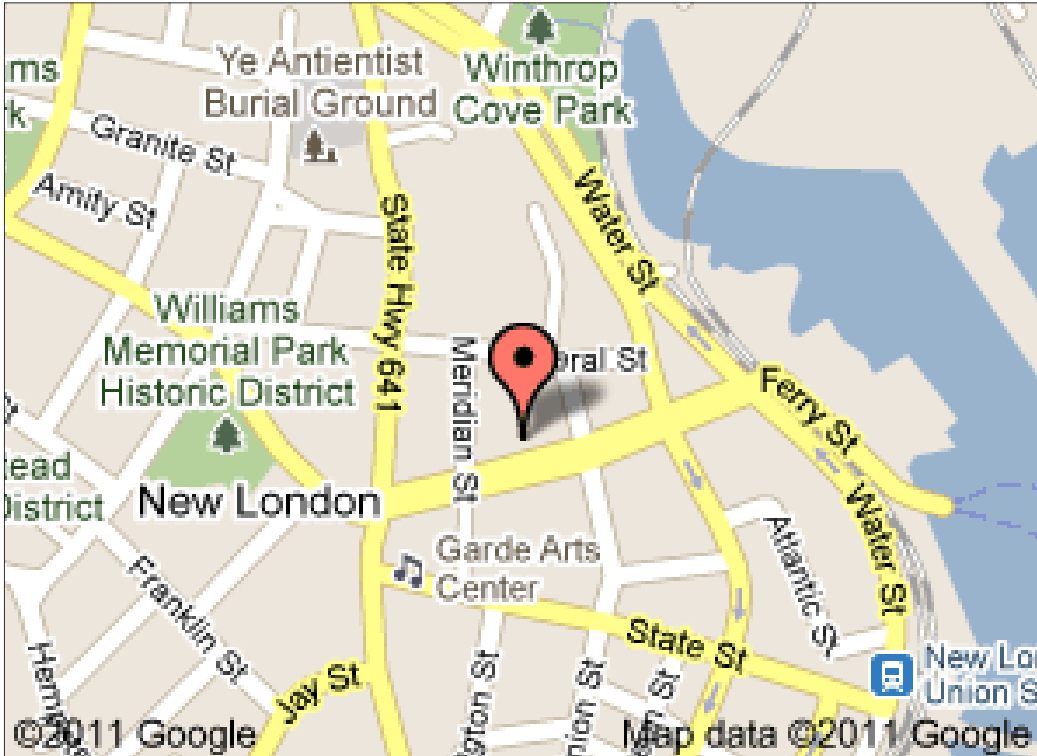
Send this form and payment to:

Michael Hubbard
271 Elm Street
New London, CT 06320

bldgmaint@subvetsgroton.org



USSVI Groton Clubhouse - 40 School Street, Groton, CT



Radisson Hotel - 35 Governor Winthrop Blvd., New London, CT

Eternal Patrol

Jack Brennan passed away on March 28, 2011. Jack served aboard Piper 1953-1957.

Robert Sollenberger passed away on March 31, 2011. Robert was a YN3(SS) aboard Piper 1950-1952.

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
Phone: 631-884-5664

Newsletter Articles Needed

I would like to hear about experiences you've had while you served aboard Piper. Whether a long story, "Sea Story" or a short paragraph, anything that you'd think would bring a smile to a shipmate's face would be great.

Have you recently visited a shipmate? Do you have a photo of the visit? Send a paragraph or more about the visit, or just send a caption for the photo.

What sort of things do you like to read about in the newsletter? Chances are your shipmates enjoy the same thing and they'd like to hear about it from you. So, take a little time to jot something down and send it to me:

Mike Bray
W3821 Waucedah Road
Vulcan, MI 49892

mikebray@chartermi.net

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**

Shipmates,

It is our sad duty to inform you all of the passing of a Shipmate. Robert N. Sollenberger, 81, beloved husband of Marie (Lawrence) Sollenberger, of Kingswood Drive, North Stonington, passed away at Fairview Nursing Home in Groton on Thursday, March 31, 2011. Born in Alabama, he was the son of the late Earl and Harriet Sollenberger.

Robert joined the Navy In 1948 and retired in 1977 as a Commander. He qualified in submarines onboard the USS PIPER (SS 409) in 1950. He also served onboard the USS GROOPER (SS 214), and the USS NAUTILUS (SSN 571).

After retiring from the Navy, he taught mathematics at Choate Rosemary Hall for three years. He also taught mathematics at Wheeler High School. Robert Joined us at USSVI Groton Base in 2002. He was a Life and Holland Club member. He was also a member and past President of the Nautilus Alumni Association Inc. He was a communicant of St. Thomas More Church. Robert enjoyed reading and working with computers.

In addition to his wife, he is survived by his sons, Robert N. Sollenberger, Timothy D. Sollenberger, Christopher T. Sollenberger, Michael L. Sollenberger, and Paul N. Sollenberger; his daughters, Cynthia Ferritto and Theresa Masinter; 13 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

*"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

**CDR Robert N. Sollenberger. . .Rest your
oar.**

Ready Two



Photos of the 2009 Piper Reunion - USSVI Clubhouse
contributed by Frank Whitty

Men Who Walk Apart

(Continued from page 1)

they were ready for sea duty and in another day or two they'd be gone again - once more on their way to Japan or the mid-Pacific Islands or the chilly deadliness of the Aleutians.

None of them talked to us, and since we shared some of the fleet's awe of them, we made no effort to break down their reserve. They were kids, of course, like the average run of American kids, and there was no shyness about them. But they weren't supposed to talk about themselves or their work and they didn't. Whether or not we felt that they might have anything important to say if they had chosen to talk, we somehow respected the delicacy of their position chiefly, because we instinctively respected the men themselves.

One surprising thing about them -- and even now after I have lived with them and eaten in their messes and shared to some small extent their lives aboard the submarines, I still wonder at it--was their mutual tolerance. It had long been my conviction that two of the best friends on earth weather-bound in a lonely cabin, or marooned on a sand bar somewhere, would most likely be at each other's throats in a week. Yet, here were men who lived virtually in each other's laps for months on end saecula saeculorum, and ashore where they had every opportunity to separate and enjoy a few hours of privacy, were seldom out of one another's company. When you saw one of them you seldom saw less than half a dozen. And while they would fight willingly -- individually or collectively -- with members of the lesser service, they seldom so much as raised their voices to any of their own kind.

I heard a correspondent mention to a submarine skipper one time that they were more like a family than a ship's crew and the captain snorted, "A family" he said. "Listen, we couldn't live in one of these pipes if we acted like a family. Brother we're all in here together and we have to get along!" We didn't know much about the submarines in those days but we were certainly learning something about the men who sailed in them and we were beginning, in a vague way, to understand why they thought themselves different. The main reason seemed to be they were different.

Contributed by Piper shipmate Charlie Patch.

Thomas Black Holland Club Induction

June 4, 2011

The US Navy is an Adventure! My "Adventure" began Jan. 7, 1960. I had wanted to be a Sailor as long as I can remember and my desire never wavered. My first duty station was the Great Lakes Training Command where I did "Boot Camp". After which, I attended Interior Communications Electrician 'A' School. Upon graduation, I was ordered to Submarine School, New London, CT, to learn the basics of Submarine.

The training also included boarding a Submarine for the day and sailing down the Thames River to the Long Island Sound where we did 16 Dives and hopefully 16 Surfaces. That first trip was a wondrous and memorable experience. I absolutely loved every part of it. The noise, the intensity of the crew, the power of the engines, the raucous sound of the Klaxon for the first time, the quiet when we submerged and the delicious aromas that came from the Galley. I was enthralled with every aspect of Submarine Duty.

In October, I was assigned to the USS Corsair SS 435 (no Snorkel and 2 Main Inductions). When "She" was decommissioned in 1963 I was transferred to the USS Piper SS 409, the last "Boat" to come back from War Patrol in 1945. There is a familiar phrase that states, "Join the Navy and see the World" and I DID! Just to list a few; Halifax, NS; St. John's, NB; Bermuda; Christmas in Monaco with Princess Grace Kelly; transit the Suez Canal; Thanksgiving in Djibouti, SA; entered the Red Sea; refueled in the Port of Aden and continued on to Karachi, Pakistan. It was at this time that we returned to the Mediterranean Sea to begin our trip home. Let me point out that there was also Liberty Call in Italy, France, Spain and Portugal.

As great as all the sights, sounds and smells were, it was your shipmates and friends that was truly impressive. Besides having to volunteer for the Submarine Service a Sailor is required to pass rigorous mental and physical screening, the failure rate is very high. These men also have to be fearless and brave. I had the distinct honor to serve with Chief Joe Negri, COB on the USS Piper. He was a big man, who was caring and patient with the many sailors that he supervised. It goes without saying that he was a great leader who lead by example. I can recall an incident that typifies the silent courage that he possessed. While we were traveling south in the Suez Canal, I was standing, topside forward of the Sail, next to Chief Negri and off our starboard side, in the distance, was an Egyptian Air Base. At the time the Egyptians had close ties with Russia and we were close enough that we could observe that they had MIG fighter jets on the tarmac. Needless to say, it was a great opportunity to take some pictures through the periscope. As we were doing this, I could hear a roar coming up the Canal. As I looked I saw an Egyptian fighter bomber rapidly approaching and he was only 75 feet off the deck. As he came closer, I could see the Bomb Bay Doors opening. Fighting the urge to jump over the side, I looked to the Chief for guidance and with that I saw this man, who suddenly grew to 10 or 15 feet and had to weigh a muscular 500 lbs, turn his body so that he faced this plane full on. At the same time, I saw what appeared to be a camera being lowered from the bomb bay. Without hesitating in the least, Joe raised his right arm and gave a one finger salute, as they flew over us. He was fearless.

Joining me today are my 8 grandchildren, 3 daughters, 2 son in laws, 2 nieces and their husbands and my wonderful wife of 46 years. Who met the "Boat" upon our return from the "Med".

This prestigious ceremony today gives us an opportunity to say "Thanks" to all Submariners, past and present and God Bless all those on Eternal Patrol.

Piper Reunion 2009

Admiral Fife Recreational Area - Stonington, CT



Here are some photos of the 2009 Piper Reunion
contributed by Phil Lecky

The Piper Report

Piper Stuff

Michael Hubbard
 271 Elm Street
 New London, CT 06320
 1-860-444-7649 bldgmaint@subvetsgroton.org

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City, State, Zip: _____
 Email Address: _____
 Phone: _____

<u>QTY</u>	<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SIZE</u>	<u>@</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
_____	Piper Pin (\$1.00 postage)		\$5.00	_____
_____	2007 Groton Reunion Button (Shipping Included)		\$2.00	_____
_____	Key Chain—One Sided		\$6.00	_____
_____	Key Chain—Two Sided		\$10.00	_____
_____	Soft Ball Cap		\$15.00	_____
_____	Traditional Hard Ball Cap		\$15.00	_____
_____	2007 Groton Reunion T-Shirt (Shipping Included)		\$20.00	_____
_____	Long Sleeve Denim Shirt		\$32.00	_____
	Size: M(1), L(10), XL(3)			
	Short Sleeve Cotton Golf Shirt			
_____	Red: L, XL	_____	\$25.00	_____
_____	White: L, XL	_____	\$25.00	_____
_____	Navy Blue: L, XL	_____	\$25.00	_____
_____	Forest Green: L, XL	_____	\$25.00	_____
	<u>PATCHES</u>			
_____	13,724 Dives		\$6.00	_____
_____	WWII Jap Flag		\$6.00	_____
_____	White Hat Design		\$6.00	_____

Shipping: _____
 Up to 4 items (a bit more for big items) - \$5.
 Golf shirt - \$2.00 per shirt
 Piper pin - \$1.00

Total Enclosed: _____

Please make check payable to Piper Association
 Mail to Mike Hubbard at the address above

Items may also be seen in the Piper Stuff Catalog, which can be accessed from
 a link on the "Piper Store" page of the Piper Association website:

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



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

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

Life Members

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

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!



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

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

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

Piper Association Officers and Staff

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