



1MC



The official newsletter of the Wolverine Base, United States Submarine Veterans, Inc.

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Wolverine Base Installs New Officers



Base officers for 2026 were installed at the March meeting by Central District 6 Commander (and former Wolverine Base Commander) Fred Kinzel. Shown above, left to right, are Kinzel, Base Chaplain Robert Dickinson, COB Jeremy Hale, Base Commander Steve Ritter, Senior Vice Commander Patrick Kelley, Junior Vice Commander Frank Woechan, Treasurer Sam Ritchie, and Secretary Brian Ball.

Congratulations! And thanks for stepping up to serve the organization.

New Holland Club Members

Three new Holland Club members were recognized at the March meeting:

Frank Woechan, qualified in USS Sam Houston (SSBN 609)

Jim Gurney qualified in USS Sturgeon (SSN 637)

Jim Stevenson qualified in USS Grayback (LPSS 574)

..... all in 1976.





The Base also recognized Pat Kelley, who became a Holland Club member last year when he was a Member-at-Large (prior to joining Wolverine Base). Pat qualified in USS Ethan Allen (SSBN-608) in 1975

The Holland Club is named after John P. Holland, designer of the first US Navy submarine. It is an exclusive group within the US Submarine Veterans organization, where the core requirement for eligibility is the designation “qualified in submarines” for a minimum of fifty years.

Wolverine Base now has 23 Holland Club members.

The Trailer Saga, Chapter 2

Recap:

For several years Wolverine Base has participated in parades in St. Clair Shores and Wyandotte with a float having a model of the submarine USS Scorpion (SSN-589). Most members know that the float was constructed under the leadership of now-Base Commander Steve “Tex” Ritter. What many may not know is that the flat-bed trailer used to transport the submarine model was owned by member Jim Thelander, who lent the trailer to the Base for use in the parades. Sadly, Jim departed on Eternal Patrol last August, but his family has donated the trailer to the Base, so our ability to participate in future parades is not diminished.

As with many events associated with submariners, there is more to the story. The trailer was in Maine, where Jim’s oldest son Ed (a former Navy SEAL) lives. So three stalwart Base members, Steve Ritter, Frank Woechan, and Sam Ritchie, drove Sam’s truck to Maine, to pick up the trailer. The first part of the “deployment” was described in the previous issue of the **1MC**.



Frank bought a Lobster Roll for everyone before they hit the road back to the mitten.

The trip back to Michigan included a visit to the USS Albacore (SS-569) museum ship at Portsmouth, NH. There our stalwart gang spent about three hours educating the public about submarine life. They encountered some folks from Bangladesh, who were very excited to meet them.



USS Sam Houston (SSBN-609) Mini-reunion



The mid 70's blue crew Engineering Department had another successful mini reunion in Asheville, NC. We were able to get 10 of us together for almost a week of drinks, eats and lots of memories. Seemed like the stories never ended. In attendance: Don Rairdan (M div), Frank Woechan (M div), Paul Saladin (M div), Rick Gregory (M div), Rick Schirmer (M div), Ray Gillies (M div), Steve Sadler (A div), Gary Jaeger (EOW and M Division Officer), Bruce Long (M div) and Dennis Stearns (RC div).

This was our fourth time getting together in the past nine years. Our first reunion was at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in 2016, second in Kentucky in 2017 and third in Paulsbo, WA in 2019. We've lost a couple brothers who are now on Eternal Patrol that attended previous reunions, but we had a first timer at this one. We hope to have another in a couple years possibly with some new faces that we haven't seen in 50 years.

I would like to give special thanks to Frank Woechan for the laser engraved tumblers and the jams, jellies and cookies made with love by his wife, Carol.

Don (Gabby) Rairdan MM2 (SS)
USS Sam Houston (B) 75-77

[Ed. Note: Thanks to Frank Woechan for this article. Always good to hear about other SubVet groups.]

Eagle Scout Troop 150 Court of Honor

Three Boy Scouts from Troop 150, Bay City, Sawyer Darbee, Elijah Peless, and Josh Sommer, were awarded the Eagle Scout rank at a Court of Honor at Westminster Presbyterian Church on December 6, 2025. Wolverine Base members Frank Woechan and Phil Klintworth presented the Scouts with USSVI certificates. In addition, Base member Bill Long (representing the Bay City Elks) honored the Scouts' achievement. [Ed. Note: Like Frank and Phil, Bill served in USS Sam Houston (SSBN-609). This is probably the first time three Eagle Scouts were honored by three Sam Houston veterans.]



COMING EVENTS

12 April	1500	Monthly base meeting, Buoy 12 (29161 Jefferson Ave, St Clair Shores, MI)
17 May	1500	Monthly base meeting, Buoy 12 (29161 Jefferson Ave, St Clair Shores, MI)
24 May	1100	St. Clair Shores Memorial Day Parade (meet at 11:00 at VFW Bruce Post 1146)
14 June	1500	Monthly base meeting, Buoy 12 (29161 Jefferson Ave, St Clair Shores, MI)
6 -- 11 Sep		USSVI Convention, Omni Hotel, Corpus Christi, TX



LOST BOATS [APRIL – JUNE]

USS Pickerel (SS-177)

Lost on April 3, 1943 with the loss of 74 officers and men, while on her 7th war patrol. She was lost off Honshu. The exact cause of her loss has never been determined, but her OP area contained numerous minefields.

USS Snook (SS-279)

Lost on April 8, 1945 with the loss of 84 officers and men. Snook ranks 10th in total Japanese tonnage sunk, and is tied for 9th in the number of ships sunk. She was lost near Hainan Island, possibly sunk by a Japanese submarine.

USS Thresher (SSN-593)

Lost on April 10, 1963 with the loss of 112 crew members and 17 civilian technicians during deep-diving exercises. 15 minutes after reaching test depth, she communicated with USS Skylark that she was having problems. Skylark heard noises "like air rushing into an air tank" - then, silence. Rescue ship Recovery (ASR-43) subsequently recovered bits of debris, including gloves and bits of internal insulation. Photographs taken by Trieste proved that the submarine had broken up, taking all hands on board to their deaths in 1,400 fathoms of water, some 220 miles east of Boston.

USS Gudgeon (SS-211)

USS Gudgeon (SS-211) was probably lost on April 18, 1944 with the loss of 79 men SE of Iwo Jima, but may have been sunk on May 12, 1944 in another attack on an unidentified submarine and heard by several other submarines in the area. Winner of 5 Presidential Unit Citations, Gudgeon was on her 12th war patrol. Gudgeon was the first US submarine to go on patrol from Pearl Harbor after the Japanese attack. On her first patrol, she became the first US submarine to sink an enemy warship, picking off the submarine I-173.

USS Grenadier (SS-210)

Lost on April 22, 1943 near Penang, with no immediate loss of

life. She was on her 6th war patrol. While stalking a convoy, she was spotted by a plane and dove. While passing 130 feet, Grenadier was bombed, causing severe damage. She was lodged on the bottom 270 feet and the crew spent hours fighting fires and flooding. When she surfaced, she had no propulsion and was attacked by another plane. While she shot down the plane. When enemy ships arrived, the CO abandoned ship and scuttled the boat. Of the 76 crew members taken prisoner, 72 survived the war.

USS Lagarto (SS-371)

Lost on May 3, 1945 with the loss of 86 men near the Gulf of Siam. On her 2nd war patrol, she is believed to have been lost to a radar equipped minelayer. This minelayer was sunk by USS Hawkbill (SS-366) 2 weeks later.

USS Scorpion (SSN-589)

USS Scorpion (SSN-589) was returning to Norfolk, VA. from a Mediterranean deployment. On May 22, 1968 she reported her position to be about 50 miles south of the Azores. Scorpion was never heard from again. The exact cause of her loss has never been determined. 99 officers and men were lost.

USS Squalus (SS-192)

On May 23, 1939 USS Squalus suffered a catastrophic valve failure during a test dive off the Isle of Shoals. Partially flooded, the submarine sank to the bottom and came to rest keel down in 240 feet of water. Commander Charles Momsen and Navy divers on the USS Falcon (ASR-2) rescued 33 survivors use the diving bell he invented. 26 men drowned in the after compartments. Later Squalus was raised and recommissioned as the USS Sailfish. In an ironic turn of fate, Sailfish sank the Japanese aircraft carrier carrying surviving crew members from Sculpin, which had located

Squalus in 1939. Only one survived after spending the rest of the war as a slave laborer in Japan.

USS Stickleback (SS-415)

Lost on May 28, 1958 when it sank off Hawaii while under tow after collision with USS Silverstein (DE-534). The entire crew was taken off prior to sinking.

USS Herring (SS-233)

Lost on June 1, 1944 with the loss of 83 men near Matsuwa Island. Herring was on her 8th war patrol and was conducting a surface attack when a shore battery spotted her and made 2 direct hits on her conning tower and causing her loss. Before being sunk, she had sank a freighter and a passenger-cargoman. Herring was the only US submarine sunk by a land battery.

USS R-12 (SS-89)

Lost on June 12, 1943 with the loss of 42 men near Key West, FL during a practice torpedo approach. The cause was probably due to flooding through a torpedo tube. The CO and 2 other men on the bridge survived, as did 18 crew members on liberty at the time of the accident.

USS Golet (SS-361)

Lost on June 14, 1944 with the loss of 82 men. On her 2nd war patrol, Golet was apparently lost in battle with antisubmarine forces north of Honshu.

USS Bonefish (SS-223)

Lost on June 18, 1945 with the loss of 85 men when sunk near Suzu Misaki. Winner of 3 Navy Unit Citations, Bonefish was on her 8th war patrol. After sinking a passenger-cargoman, Bonefish was subjected to a savage depth charge attack.

USS S-27 (SS-132)

Lost on June 19, 1942 when it grounded off Amchitka Island. She was on the surface in poor visibility, charging batteries and drifted into the shoals. When she could not be freed and started listing, the captain got the entire crew to shore (400 yards away) in relays using a 3-man rubber raft. The entire crew was subsequently rescued.

USS O-9 (SS-70)

Lost on Jun 20, 1941 with the loss of 33 men when it foundered off Isle of Shoals, 15 miles from Portsmouth, NH.

USS Runner (SS-275)

Lost between June 26 & July 4th 1943 with the loss of 78 men. Runner was on her 3rd war patrol probably due to a mine. Prior to her loss, she reported sinking a freighter and a passenger-cargoman off the Kuriles. This boat's last known ship sunk happened on June 26th, so she probably hit that mine on or after that date but before July 4th, when she was scheduled back at Midway.



Eileen Mahoney's poem "In Waters Deep" sums up the loss of sailors at sea. It uses (intentionally) the same meter as "In Flanders Fields" by John McCrae

IN WATERS DEEP

In ocean wastes no poppies blow,
No crosses stand in ordered row,
There young hearts sleep... beneath the wave...
The spirited, the good, the brave,
But stars a constant vigil keep,
For them who lie beneath the deep.

'Tis true you cannot kneel in prayer
On certain spot and think. "He's there."
But you can to the ocean go...
See whitecaps marching row on row;
Know one for him will always ride...
In and out... with every tide.

And when your span of life is passed,
He'll meet you at the "Captain's Mast."
And they who mourn on distant shore
For sailors who'll come home no more,
Can dry their tears and pray for these
Who rest beneath the heaving seas...

For stars that shine and winds that blow
And whitecaps marching row on row.
And they can never lonely be
For when they lived... they chose the sea.

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Our purpose is To perpetuate the memory of our shipmates who gave their lives in the pursuit of their duties while serving their country. That their dedication, deeds and supreme sacrifice be a constant source of motivation toward greater accomplishments. Pledge loyalty and patriotism to the United States of America and its Constitution.

In addition to perpetuating the memory of departed shipmates, we shall provide a way for all Submariners to gather for the mutual benefit and enjoyment. Our common heritage as Submariners shall be strengthened by camaraderie. We support a strong U.S. Submarine Force.

The organization will engage in various projects and deeds that will bring about the perpetual remembrance of those shipmates who have given the supreme sacrifice. The organization will also endeavor to educate all third parties it comes in contact with about the services our submarine brothers performed and how their sacrifices made possible the freedom and lifestyle we enjoy today.



Wolverine Base
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<https://www.ussvimich.org/>

Base Commander: Steve Ritter
Sr. Vice Commander: Patrick Kelley
Jr. Vice Commander: Frank Woechan
Secretary: Brian Ball

Treasurer: Sam Ritchie
Chaplain: Robert Dickinson
Storekeeper: Frank Woechan
Chief of the Boat: Jeremy Hale