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SUBASE DETROIT (?)

Most of us think of New London, or Groton as the "birthplace" of the U. S. Submarine Force. But for some quirks of fate, this title could have been given to Detroit. Here is "the rest of the story."

By Erica Buell

In 1900, the U.S. Navy officially purchased its first submarine. However, seven years before that, the first full effort to launch a submarine program began with the Great Submarine Contest of 1893. Submarines had been utilized long before this, including during the Civil War. However, these submarines were rarely successful at their missions and posed real threats to their crews. On March 3, 1893, Congress approximated $200,000 for the building of an experimental model submarine. The word was put out to inventors that whoever came up with the best design would be awarded the contract. The Great Submarine Contest of 1893 began the drive for the U.S. Navy to fully dive into beginning their submarine fleet. We will discuss who submitted designs and how these men forever changed the face of the U.S. Navy.

The rules on the competition "required that each design meet certain vital prerequisites including, guaranteed safety, ability to submerge, reliability underwater, reasonable speed, endurance, offensive power, and the ability to view the target."[1] One of the most interesting stipulations in the contest was that each proposal had to be submitted with a check equal to five percent of the bid. This check would he held by the committee if the design failed to meet the specifications. In June of 1893, the official opening of the viewing of these designs was held in Washington,

D.C. Amongst the crowd were the three top contenders- Simon Lake, George Baker and John P. Holland. The first of those to make his name known was George Baker, a Civil War veteran. After the war, George moved to Polk City, Iowa where he established a hardware business. It was in his free time that he pursued the idea of designing a submarine. By 1893, Baker's business was booming with the production of barbed wire, and he moved to Illinois. It was because of the successes of his business that Baker was able to follow through on his love of submarines when the competition opened.

Baker's Submarine in Dry Dock. Image Courtesy of Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

George Baker's design was 46 feet long and weighed around 75 tons. It was able to fit six crew members on board. The hull was made of wood, was around seven inches thick and was powered by a small steam engine while on the surface. A collapsible smokestack would go up when the broiler was operated. When submerged, a 220 volt, 50-horse-powered electric motor with driving dual side propellers powered the boat. Baker went further than just designing a submarine. He built a prototype and ran trials in the

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UPCOMING BASE EVENTS

15 April	1600	Monthly base meeting, Hamlin Pub (22 Mile Rd & Hayes, Shelby Twp)
19 May	1200-1800	Downriver Armed Forces Day Event, PLAV Post 74 (963 Oak St. Wyandotte)
28 May	1000	Saline Memorial Day Parade (Michigan Ave., Saline)
2 June	1100	Wolverine Base Sporting Clays fundraiser Detroit Sportmen's Congress (49800 Dequindre Rd., Utica)
10 June	1600	Monthly base meeting, Hamlin Pub (22 Mile Rd & Hayes, Shelby Twp)

MARGIE SAMUELS and USS REMORA (SS-487)

USS Remora (SS-487) was launched on 12 July, 1945 at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. The sponsor was Mrs. William T. Samuels, III, better known as Margie or Marge Samuels.

It is a great honor to be named the Sponsor of a United States Navy Ship. A “Ship’s Sponsor” is the title given to a prominent citizen, chosen by the Secretary of the Navy, to christen a naval vessel. She bestows the ship’s name while smashing the ceremonial bottle of champagne on the bow.

So how did Mrs. Samuels get to be that prominent citizen? It was due in part to our early American history. Prohibition shut down American distilleries for years. Once they reopened, they did not get a chance to fully reestablish themselves before many were again shut down and retooled to produce industrial alcohol for the war effort during World War II. The Samuels’ distillery efforts in producing alcohol for the war effort probably got her on the navy’s sponsor list. Things were certainly not better in the 'old days' for bourbon makers. The bourbon produced by the Samuels distillery was said to have a ‘rough spirit’. Mrs. Samuels would often say, “That shit will blow your ears off.” Telling it like it is, and using those words, is probably what got her to the top of the submarine’s sponsors list.

At the most recent USS Remora reunion (September 2017, Groton CT) Makers Mark Ambassador Mr. John Vickers-Smith provided a brief history of Mrs. Samuels. The efforts of the Samuels Distillery allowed Mrs. Samuels to launch the submarine Remora. A few years later she launched a new brand of Bourbon Whisky – Marker’s Mark. Using red winter wheat rather than rye as the flavoring grain provided a distinctive and noticeable blend compared to rye-based bourbons. After sampling several of the bourbons provided by the distillery, the reunion attendees overwhelmingly voted to toast Mrs. Samuels with Maker’s Mark 46.

On display: Maker’s 46, Maker’s Mark Cask Strength, Marker’s Mark and Star Hill Whisky (aka Maker’s White), a bottle showing the whisky ingredients by volume and the walnut bung plugs that makes it a bit easier to open the barrel and taste the whisky.

Maker's Mark 46
Proof: 94
Matured in part in barrels containing a 'ladder' of toasted new French oak barrel staves to give more spice, sweetness and vanilla.
Aroma: Hints of wood staves, caramel and sweetness.
Taste: Wood blending perfectly with vanilla and caramel.

Using special Marker's Mark shot glasses that had been dipped in their Red White and Blue sealing wax, the group presented the following **Memorial Toast to Mrs. Margie Mattingly Samuels:**

To Margie Samuels,
Remora's guardian and monarch.
You were with us in sprit,
for what we had to do.
You'll always be with us;
you're part of the crew.
We salute you Mrs. Samuels,
and to those on eternal patrol with you.

SALUTE!

[In the interest of full disclosure, Remora was the qual boat of this newsletter's editor. He attended the reunion and participated in the toast.]

GREENEVILLE DINNER

Wolverine Base "hosted" a special New Year's Day dinner for single crewmembers and geographic bachelors attached to USS Greeneville (SSN-772), homeported at Pearl Harbor, HI.

Base Commander Fred Kinzel made contact with FTC(SS) Joseph Lewis, the Weapons Dept Chief on Greeneville, asking what the Base could do for the boat. The "bachelor party" idea was adopted. Base funds were used to purchase special steaks and other items, which were prepared by the ship's cooks.

HAMLIN PUB

Hamlin Pub, at 22 Mile and Hayes Rd. in Shelby Township, has been the primary meeting site for the Wolverine Base, USSVI. In recognition, Base Commander Fred Kinzel presented a dolphin plaque to Ed Collica, manager of the Pub, at the February 2018 meeting.

SUBASE DETROIT (?) [continued]

Rouge River in Michigan. Initially, the prototype leaked, and the propulsion machinery did not operate correctly. After several experiments, he felt confident that the problems could be fixed and that his design was perfect for the submarine competition. The press would go on to inaccurately describe his work in the papers. Journalists would draw up fanciful designs of a boat topped with a smokestack and smoke billowing across the waves. Baker addressed this when he told a Detroit Free Press reporter, "Even if such a plan were possible, just see what a sure warning it would give an enemy of the approach of the boat. Scores of these things have appeared in print, and they will certainly do me more injury than good."[2]

Baker's Submarine in the Detroit River. Image Courtesy of Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

Baker felt that submarines could serve multiple purposes. He knew that they could be used to plant torpedoes beneath another vessel, but he also believed that they could be used to locate shipwrecks and conduct research at the bottoms of lakes and seas. To go along with this idea of submarine usage, he designed an electric light that could beam 16 feet while underwater. The light would be operated from an iron projection on the conning tower. The idea that the submarine could be used for non-military operations was revolutionary at the time. Baker began sea trials of his boat in 1892, ahead of the submarine competition. Some believe that Baker was the instigator of the competition, convincing Washington that a submarine was needed in the Navy.

Commodore William Folger sent an expert to Detroit in June of 1892 to try Baker's boat. However, at the time of this visit, Baker's boat was being repaired and could not be inspected. This did not stop the expert, W. Scott Simms, from raving about the submarine. Folger believed that a combination of Baker's boat and Simm's torpedo boat would make a perfect destroyer for the Navy. When the competition opened in 1893, Baker had just refined his design and felt like he had a leg up on the competition, including John P. Holland, a better-known inventor at the time. Baker's lawyer and a U.S. Senator convinced the Secretary of the Navy that the Navy perform its own sea trials on the Baker Boat before a final decision was made in the competition. Baker's push for this sea trial was due in part because by July 1893, it was clear that the board was heading towards choosing Holland's boat as the winner. Using his political influence, Baker was able to delay the vote and receive the trial. In fairness to Holland, the committee extended an invitation to Holland to present a boat of his own.

However, Holland refused because naval officers had assured him that his design would be approved. Holland even offered Baker $200,000 worth of his company's stocks, if the latter would assign his patents "free of all encumbrances to the Holland interests."[3] Not surprisingly, Baker turned this offer down. By September, the trials on Baker's boat were completed and they did not live up to Baker's descriptions of the submarine's capabilities. Before a design could be made in the competition, Baker died in 1894 at just 49 years old. George Baker's vision for submarines being used for scientific research and technical purposes is one he unfortunately did not live to see come to fruition. We can thank his forward way of thinking for such works as the Great Lakes Research Center at Michigan Technological University and the NR-1 research submarine.

[1] Wendy Gully Klaxon March 1992
[2] http://www.hsmichigan.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/BakersBoat-ND13.pdf
[3] http://www.hsmichigan.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/BakersBoat-ND13.pdf

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.

Lost Harbor

by Leslie Nelson Jennings

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 an eddy at the mooring place . . .
Gulls, veer no longer. Sailor, rest your oar.
No tangled wreckage will be washed ashore.

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.

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Officers

Base Commander: Frederick J Kinzel
Sr. Vice Commander: Philip G. Klintworth
Secretary: Denise Walsh
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