



Clever Boy**

USS Sabalo (SS-302) Newsletter (Inaugural Issue) November 23, 2009

Heard on the UQC:** Any station, any station, this is Clever Boy... Clever Boy: understand there will be another "last Sabalo Reunion"; is this affirm? This is Clever Boy, over. (See last page)



Reunion Committee Report

By Jeff Owens, Reunion Coordinator, etc.

The original response (in March) for our 2009 reunion was 92 men; based on experience, we planned for 125 (including guests) for the banquet and lesser numbers for the other events. Cancellations reached a crescendo in the last month and we ended up with 36 men + 29 guests. Not good, but we managed to survive the challenge, and in fact, all September 2009 Reunion attendees have received a post reunion newsletter with appropriate refunds enclosed if applicable.

At the Main Banquet we had some discussion of data maintenance and communications to stave off further degradation our fraternity. Ron Gorence offered to produce/distribute a newsletter to Sabalo vets. The hat was passed and adequate funds were collected, along with enough for a few beers for me—absolutely unnecessary, but gratefully received. Thank you all.

With this newsletter, Ron has undertaken to determine how we might continue with any future reunions. He is asking for a response with any ideas how another reunion might be organized in light of diminishing numbers of men who could attend.



Notes from the Conning Tower [Ed]

We'll probably never know if Jeff Owens has what it takes to win a medal, but there's another kind of hero who doesn't need to risk his life or personal safety to qualify. That's the guy (lucky enough to have a wife like his) who is so passionate about something that he spends his personal time and money — far beyond the call of duty — for simple love. That's why your editor called Jeff a "hero" at our last dinner, and I am not alone in appreciating what this man has done out of his love of Sabalo for the past few decades.

That said, Jeff and I may have a very different goal regarding this newsletter: he has developed, and continues to improve, the most accurate and complete database of Sabalo sailors in the world. On the other hand, I'm just trying to capture a tiny piece of our old Crew's Mess on paper: relevant news, scuttlebutt, irreverent humor, pinging, making mole hills into mountains, and mountains into mole-hills, etc., so that I can mentally polish my dolphins among those who understand what *that* means; I'd probably settle for a dozen guys—but Jeff won't. He's a worker, I'm just playing.

Sending this Inaugural Issue of "Clever Boy" to all Sabalo Vets is impossible; there simply is not enough time and ready data to accomplish that. Emailing it to 346 guys with (valid?) email addresses is a piece of cake—but we just don't have the info to reach 6-800 regular P.O. addresses; many addresses were collected long ago on 3 X 5 cards.

So... my plan is to send out the emails, plus 69 via regular mail for this initial mailing, and to ask for your help: **If you have some standard postal addresses of Sabalo men, send them to me in any format** (adding them to our list & cross-checking them will be easier if they are on *Excel*, *Word* or are typed). I believe this approach will be of great help to Jeff (and therefore, to all of us who appreciate such things).

My budget will probably cover the costs of a couple of issues (Jeff rejects an annual subscription fee for future issues, a complex problem which we can save for later). I was authorized \$100 from the recent reunion budget, which I deducted in advance from the collection at our dinner, and received a \$70 rebate from Jeff for reduced ball game costs, etc. so I have \$170 (& a couple of left-over cases of beer) for stamps, paper, ink, (& motivation), etc. I will report on the actual costs when finished, as well as the number of any rejected letters or emails. Most USSVI Bases send *email-only* newsletters, but I don't feel that's fair to non-computer members so I will publish EXACTLY the same content on, and off, the internet.

[Ed]: What would happen if some computer whiz volunteered to put copies of Jeff's 3X5 cards on excel?

~~~~ *She was only a whisky maker, but he loved her still.* ~~~~

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### Attendees, '09 Convention in San Diego

|                                                                                       |                            |                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| John/Karen Baker 64-68                                                                | Harold/Shirley Losby 65-70 | John/Maria Savella 52-53        |
| Hal/Dossie Barker 64-66                                                               | Rees Madsen 60-63          | Ron/Carol Scott 62-63;          |
| Brian (Baumruk) Collins 66-69                                                         | Donald McCauley 56-58      | Al/Kathleen/Alexis Steele 66-8  |
| Art/Chrissie Clement 59-62                                                            | Bob/Lisa McKnight 67-71    | Enrile/guest Trinidad 64-66     |
| Larry 'Doc' Davis 65-68                                                               | Jeff Owens 67-69           | Bill Towery 66-69               |
| Mike/Connie Elzinga 59-61                                                             | Roy Owens 66-68            | Dante/Estelita Villa 63-67      |
| Andre/Jean Giacomelli 53-54                                                           | John/Linda Patrick 67-69   | Alan/Chris Volbrecht 68-69      |
| Ron/Mary Ann Gorence 66-70                                                            | James/Laura Potts 58-60    | Jim Wallace 64                  |
| Will Kaefer 68-70                                                                     | Mick/Carol Ray 66-69       | Tom/Jeanne Wilhelm 68-70        |
| Marvin Kurowski 59-61                                                                 | Chris Sanborn 67-68        | Bill/Nancy Weisensee 57-58      |
| Peter/Gail Lary 68-69                                                                 | Ken/Vivian Sanderlin 58-59 |                                 |
| Warrie/Laurine Leeke 67                                                               | George/Gayle Sausman 61    |                                 |
| Two shipmates dropped by the suite only: Dave Thompson 60-62 and Walt Booriakin 69-71 |                            | <b>(Did I miss anybody ???)</b> |

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### 2009 Reunion notes:

- More than a dozen Sabalo Vets (most with their wives) attended USSVI Convention functions, and many more arrived Saturday and Sunday (Sept 12-13) while the National Convention was winding down.
  - Sabalo's Hospitality Room (stocked in advance with beer, wine, booze and geedunks by yours truly) at the excellent Crowne Plaza Hotel, was well-manned during days/evenings of the next two days. In the suite, there were books, photos, albums and video presentations relating to Sabalo's history—constantly in use. The patio outside echoed with many a sea-story (most undergoing major NTINS revision) and offered a great opportunity to find out how our shipmates handled life after leaving SS-302, and to get information on those who weren't able to attend. Thanks to your editor, who unselfishly smoked his pipe outside near the patio door, not a single person suffered from mosquito-attack.
  - Nobody got rich at the gambling excursion to Viejas Indian Casino (or so they said), and there was very little bragging among the golfers who played at Admiral Baker Field, and the fishermen who went to sea (but then, of course, Sabalo sailors are world-famous for their natural modesty). Those who attended the Padres Ballgame were pleased by "Welcome USS Sabalo" in lights on the scoreboard, and enjoyed great seats—at drastically reduced prices in Sabalo's honor.
  - 302's banquet was attended by 60-some people, with good food and priceless conversation. Yours truly stood up and offered to kick off this newsletter, and was enthusiastically-encouraged. Later on, I started a bucket around the room, stating that Jeff Owens probably lost a month's pay every time he organized one of these reunions, so we should help cover his costs. What would you expect Sabalo sailors to do with that simple message—remember they're in the midst of a Sea Stories? By the time the bucket got around to the 3rd or 4th table, it had become 'newsletter donations' and someone handled me a bundle of cash.' As stated elsewhere, I pocketed \$100 for stamps, etc. and gave the rest to a reluctant Jeff.
  - Being responsible for pre-stocking the Hospitality Room, it was my duty to accept responsibility for badly estimating our needs. I have just now finished the leftover potato chips, pretzels and beer, which has more than compensated me for tipping the bellhop to avoid carrying beer cases. I also inherited some gourmet fish from Roy Owens. A tip of the can to all who contributed. [Ed]
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"I dragged my gear down to the shore and saw the submariners, the way they stood aloof and silent, watching their pigboat with loving eyes. They are alone in the Navy.

I admired the PT boys. And I often wondered how the aviators had the courage to go out day after day, and I forgave their boasting. But the submariners! In the entire fleet they stand apart."

*James A. Michener, Tales of the South Pacific – 1946*

#### • First Verse of Taps:

*"Day is done. Gone the sun. From the lakes. From the hills. From the sky. All is well. Safely rest. God is nigh.  
(Expect an Eternal Patrol listing of Sabalo vets in upcoming issues)*

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●**Binnacle List:** What follows is not an accurate list of our ailing shipmates but rather an itemization of men who were unable to attend the last reunion because of illness (theirs or their wife's). Our best wishes and prayers go out to these shipmates: Bulos, Collier, Egan, Miller, Denham, Magnuson, Ruden, Ruybal, Schwichtenberg, Scott, Viduya, Watkins, White, Williams, Wilson, and Robertson. More specifically, Carl Smith and Ron Patterson have suffered strokes and shipmates Gregory and Stiles are receiving Chemo therapy. Floyd Wilson suffered a massive skull fracture (motorcycle shortly after leaving Sabalo) and is still unemployable; Burt Buckle is having his spine rearranged (but never bent) to ease tremendous pain.

●On a lighter note, Kotrla-Chipps couldn't commit to the reunion because, as he says, "I don't even buy green bananas at my age." Other members turned down San Diego to travel on a European tour, to South Africa, Hawaii, Costa Rica, the Middle East, Tahiti, Angola, China, and one had his tag drawn in the Fish and Game lottery; he was busy Moose Hunting. (NTINS\*).

Sadly, Robert G. Magnuson, (Sabalo 10/62-1/64) on Eternal Patrol on 11/20/09 from rural Boone County Mo. Bob, 69, had suffered lengthy respiratory illness.

### Men Who Walk Apart

By: Unknown [edited for space]

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 the harbor occasionally, salt-caked, battered and ugly-looking, black sewer pipes covered with patches of white . . .

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 we 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 boots looked at them with obvious awe, the older men with grave

respect . . . 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 that only the strong survived . . . The crew men, 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.

. . . when they came off patrol they were pallid and 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. If any of them went out and got drunk, which certainly seemed a good and excusable idea, they did it like everything else they did, in their own way and at their own convenience.

They would come ashore and for two or three days disappear from sight . . . 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 corpselike whiteness and with it their grave reserve. You knew, while doubting the evidence of your own eyes, that 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 chill deadliness of the Aleutians

I still wonder at . . . 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 . . . ashore, where they had every opportunity to separate and enjoy a few hours of privacy, were seldom out of one another's company. Where you saw one of them you seldom saw less than half a dozen . . . 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 that they *were* different.



## The submarine warfare device (Dolphins in 2009) [Wikipedia - 2009]

Upon reporting to his first submarine the unqualified submarine sailor, or "nub" (short for "Non Useful Body"), completes a few days of indoctrination and is then assigned a Qualification Card, a qualification due date, and a *Sea Dad* (officially known as a "command sponsor"). The *Sea Dad* monitors the non-qual's progress during the qualification process and his adaptation to life aboard the boat.

No one is exempted from the qualification process and no concessions are made to rank or rate.

Although submarine qualification methodology has changed throughout the decades the basic goal has remained: 1) to provide the submarine sailor with a basic knowledge of all systems on board, their uses, operations, and interrelationships with other systems and 2) to ensure all personnel can operate effectively under pressure in shipboard situations. Submarine damage control techniques are stressed throughout the qualification process.

Progress is tracked by the Chief of the Boat. Each item on the qual card is worth a specified number of points; unqualified sailors must obtain a predetermined number of points per week. Failure to achieve the required number results in placement on a "delinquent list" (also causing the sailor to be referred to as "dink") and the assignment of additional study, *monitored by the*

*Sea Dad*. Each system signature is weighted and each phase has a maximum number of points.

The qualifications process aboard the boat uses publications, *training videos*, *computer programs* and hands-on training with qualified personnel, but the principal focus is on the actual operation of the damage control, atmosphere [phart?] control, weapons, countermeasures, reactor, mechanical, hydraulic, pneumatic, electrical, and electronic systems on that particular submarine. Once the qualifying sailor feels he has the requisite knowledge for the system he will ask a designated Qualification Petty Officer (QPO — an expert on the system in question) for a "checkout". The QPO will ask prepared questions concerning the system. He will also ask the sailor to draw a line diagram and explain the system in various states and configurations. If the QPO feels the sailor has met his expectations, he will sign the sailor's qual card and those points will be included in the sailor's weekly point count. If the

QPO isn't satisfied with the sailor's knowledge level he will require the sailor to study further and return for another checkout.

The qualification structure can be broken down into phases. The example listed below is only a basic guide and is not the rule for all submarines. For most phases of qualification, knowledge of basic rather than elaborate equipment operations is required, with the exception of damage control equipment and procedures. Among the most important goals of submarine qualification is providing each member of the crew - regardless of designated specialty - with the training to combat casualties anywhere on the submarine. In case of fire, flooding, or other casualty, each submarine sailor must be confident that he can trust the man next to him to know the purpose, location, and proper use of each item of damage control equipment, as well as the location and operation of isolations for each electrical/air/hydraulic system.

### ● Indoctrination/Damage Control Phase

This phase emphasizes the construction and support systems for the specific submarine.  
Internal Communication Circuits  
Sound Powered Phone Circuits  
Emergency Alarms  
Damage Control equipment location/ utilization is stressed.

### ● Propulsion Phase

Ship's Propulsion Plant  
Electrical Plant Systems  
Primary and Auxiliary Propulsion Equipment

### ● Auxiliary Systems Phase

Ship's Main, Service and Plane Control Hydraulics Systems  
Potable water systems  
Ship's Air Systems, Including High Pressure, Ship's Service and Salvage Air Systems.  
Air Conditioning and Refrigeration  
*Atmospheric Monitoring Systems*  
Depth Sensing Systems [?]  
Sea Water and Ballasting Systems  
Chemical Holding and Treatment (sanitation and *waste* [?])

water)

### ● **Electronic Equipment and Navigation**

Electronic Sensor Monitoring Systems  
External Communications Systems  
Navigation Systems

### ● **Block Reviews and Walkthroughs**

*Each phase (or "block") of the qualification card has an overall "block review" where the qualifier ties in all the phase's systems and is verbally tested for his level of knowledge.*

After completion of all blocks, the qualifier must complete compartment walkthroughs, where a senior, qualified sailor quizzes the qualifier as they walk through the submarine. If all walkthroughs are completed successfully, the qualifier's chain of command recommends that he be examined by a qualification board.

### ● **The "Qual Board"**

This is the most dreaded part of the New Qualifier's qualification process. The board is made up of a Submarine-qualified Officer, a Chief Petty Officer and a Petty Officer. Submarine Damage Control is the biggest factor discussed during the Board.

● **Post qualification life** After the sailor is designated "Qualified in Submarines", he is now looked upon by the rest of the crew as someone that can, and will, save their lives. He is treated with a greater amount of respect, given more responsibility, and the real learning begins. He is required to continually qualify in areas other than his primary duty. This is to ensure in-depth cross-training is accomplished. This process continues throughout a sub sailor's tour. In addition to the basic sub qualification process and his requirement to qualify in his most senior in-rate watch station, a sub sailor usually will become qualified at numerous in port and at sea watch stations not directly related to his own specific rate. When a submarine sailor ordered to serve a tour ashore returns to sea duty (or whenever ordered from boat to another submarine of a class on which he has not already sailed and earned his qualifications), he is again required to "re-qualify" on the new submarine, but will never again be a NUB [Non-Useful-Body or Non-qualified Useless Body]. This qualification is normally completed by a walkthrough check with a senior qualified member of his Chain of Command or a Submarine-qualified Officer. [*Officers had similar qualifications, however their knowledge requirements were more aligned with driving/fighting the boat— which took a year, vs. the six-month deadline for enlisted men*] ☺

**--Wear your Dolphins - you earned them!--**

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☺If you received a hard copy of this Newsletter through the mail, but have access to the internet, **please send me an email with your current email address**— Printing/Postage is our biggest expense.[Ed] ☺

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## \*NTINS: Growl Tiger

The Sabalo had been on Northern Patrol for 36 days; not a record run, but long enough for Big Ed to develop a hearty thirst to match his size. Upon mooring, the ship' log read; 0800: *Moored starboard side to Berth 1, Yokosuka Naval Facility, Yokosuka, Japan. Present are various units of the U.S. Pacific Fleet and the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force.*

### ● **Combat Systems**

Torpedo and *Tactical Missile* Fire Control Systems  
*Ballistic Missile Fire Control Systems (SSBN's only)*  
Torpedo Tube Systems  
Sonar Systems  
External Countermeasure Systems *and Launchers*

During the Board, the examinee may be asked to draw and explain any of the systems he has learned about during the qualification process. After the Board the examinee is dismissed and evaluated by the members of the board. If the examinee passes the Board, he is then recommended for qualification to the Commanding Officer of the Submarine.

The Commanding Officer reviews the Board's recommendation and upon his concurrence, the newly-qualified individual is presented his "Dolphins" by the Skipper and designated as "Qualified in Submarines". The Dolphins presentation is considered an important event as it means the newly qualified submariner will be treated as a full member of the crew, instead of an object of scorn and ridicule.

Appropriate annotations are made in the new Submariner's service jacket to reflect his qualification. Submarine Qualified Personnel are designated "SS" after the rate, such as FT1(SS) or MM2(SS).

Ed sprinted across the brow and jumped into the first taxi in the long line of base cabs awaiting 302's arrival. He was shouting, "Hiako, hiako," to the driver before the mooring lines were even doubled-up, and was in the Starlight Club by 8:45. It was almost noon before enough men had arrived to fill the barstools.

Soon, everyone but the serious drinkers had a gal on his lap or alongside. These were beautiful women, in western dress like bobby soxers back home, or else in full-dress kimonos. They would have been breathtaking — all of them — even if the crew hadn't spent two months smelling diesel fumes and each other's armpits. Big Ed's regular, Mioko, sat adjacent to the bar on a bench and pouted. He was doing some dead-serious drinking, and she realized that, tonight, her "big teddy bear" would not be promising to marry her and take her back to Podunk. She glared at the Seagram's bottle, which he was stroking with the tenderness that would be hers once he'd drank his fill.



Submariners were eating squid on a stick, drinking Saki, Jack Daniels, San Miguel and anything else available while they smooched, smoked cigars and discussed staying put or moving over to the White Hat Bar (where most men had another bottle on hold). Suddenly, every face turned toward a commotion at the bar. Ed was half standing, with the left cheek of his butt on the bar stool, leaning on his elbows toward Papa San across the bar. It was starting!

"Yeashhh, I'll flip ya fer the juke box..."

Ed slammed a hundred yen piece on the bar, and with the back of his other hand cleared the stool next to him because a shipmate, now on the floor, had pleaded, "No, Babe, no. Please don't do it."

Everyone calmed down though, because Ed flipped Heads and lost the toss. He put a hundred yen in the machine, played She Ain't Got No Yo Yo, and a couple of other tunes.

"All yours." he said to Papa San, and took another swig.

A bottle of beer at the Starlight was about a dollar, or 360 yen, and a bottle of tax-free Ten-High, JW Red, or Smirnoff also cost \$1 at the Navy Enlisted Men's Club. Papa San labeled the bottles with a crewmember's name and stowed them while Sabalo was out on patrol or local ops. He then charged a hundred yen, 28¢, for a glass of mix and ice, and poured a very generous shot. Most men drank hard stuff because of the price difference. Only hard-core drinkers drank beer. The real expense was Cherry Drinks for the girls, usually 400 yen a pop, but when someone had an eye on one of the more popular girls; it could go to five- or six-hundred yen. B-girls could drink a torpedo-tube dry if anyone had the cash, so Ed had an arrangement: he always gave Mioko-San all of his money, and she simply waited around for him to soften up enough for her to mold into a Teddy Bear.

About the time six-hundred yen was starting to look cheap to the crew, and the noise level had gone beyond uproar, just about sunset, Big Ed was back at it again. He'd won the coin toss!

Ed slipped getting off the bar stool but regained his balance; he staggered over to the wall behind the Juke Box and yanked the cord out of the wall.

Dean Martin was singing, "At's amo'raaae . . ." and his voice whined down to dead silence as if he'd suddenly been shoved down #2 periscope well.

Big Ed put his shoulder behind the Wurlitzer and began pushing it toward the door. Papa San vaulted the bar in one jump, and yelling in Japanese, tried to curtail Big Ed's progress. Papa San was about five feet tall, so nobody could see him on the other side of the music box; Ed towered over them both. Ed brushed off shipmates, like flies, while bellowing, "Flipped him for the so-bishh, 'n I wun hit."

Papa San was shouting Japanese profanities, and leaving flip-flop skid marks on the cement threshold. Ed's eyes were glazed over so much that he was navigating in darkness like a sub at three hundred feet, but he had little trouble getting the Juke Box out the Starlight's door and into the alley, which was lined with drinking establishments. He pushed it in Sabalo's direction with vividly colored neon reflections shimmering on its curved glass face, and its little wheels clacking on the cobblestone. Papa San disappeared down

Submarine Alley, screaming bloody murder and apparently looking for help.

Knowing that the police or the Shore Patrol would soon be on the way, several shipmates, like monkeys hopping around a giant organ grinder, tried to talk Big Ed into putting the machine back, but he was concentrating too hard on overcoming the added weight of a couple of guys riding on top of the machine.

The crewmembers were hoping, with snickering desperation, that he would pass out so they could just find a skip loader or something to get him back home, and in fact, he was starting to look a little drowsy when the Shore Patrol showed up. Everyone was relieved to see him submit meekly to the authorities. He even helped them, as best he could, by moving one foot in front of the other now and again, as the four military police dragged him by the armpits to the SP wagon.

"You're in a lot of trouble," one of them said as if Big Ed could understand English any better than Japanese.

"Take my t' me bunk. I'mn tafer 'pedo room," he slurred softly.

"You're goin' to the brig, big fella; you can't get away with that kinda crap around here."

The crew was trying to help: they offered a twenty-five pound can of coffee and a case of steaks for Ed's freedom. Fortunately, Ed was keeping them too busy to contemplate attempted bribery charges. He liked the idea, and started mumbling that they ought to let him go, so the SP's nasty mood got worse, and they roughly manhandled Big Ed into the back of the wagon, slammed the expanded-metal gate shut with a loud clang, and snapped the padlock. Ed sat down, slumped his shoulders, and became a teddy bear again. The crowd was just turning away when they heard the biggest of the SP's banging the side of the metal cage with his nightstick and bellowing, "Now, le'me hear ya' growl, tiger."

That turned out to be a mistake. Big Ed woke up and tried to find the source of the voice through his glazed eyes. He shook his head once and backed up until his butt was against the pick-up's cab. Then he bent down like a spring compressing, and roared as he slammed forward toward the locked door.

The door held . . . but the entire rear wall of the cage—onto which the door was hinged—flew fifteen feet into the street. Ed landed on his knees between the twisted metal and the pick up. He got up very slowly, with the SP's trying to hold him: one was swinging his baton, and another was sprinting for the radio in the truck. Big Ed dragged his knuckles over to the pick up, roared, grabbed it under the driver's door, and heaved it over onto its side. A rear view mirror went flying; little gems of broken window glass spread out in a fan across the asphalt, sparking beautifully in the neon lights; it sounded like a dumpster had fallen out of a third story window.

Shipmates were screaming, the Japanese audience was screaming and the SP's were screaming. Only Ed was quiet. Three of the SP's were hauling the fourth out of the pick-up cab's window; he was holding the radio mike with its frayed cable dangling beneath. The Japanese were shouting louder now, yanking on the SP's sleeves and pointing to the puddle of liquid which was spreading under the truck. Several sailors slipped around a corner bar onto the main street, with Big Ed in tow, and just missed being run over by a cab. He Who looks after stray dogs and drunken sailors had provided a Base Taxi.

Ed was hoisted into his bunk in the After Torpedo Room with very little trouble—since he was getting tired and pretty malleable by that time. There's was the last vehicle to get on base before the gate guards locked up everything and started searching incoming cabs. Phone exchanges were tied up all night with the complaints of those held up at the main gate for hours. Sabalo sailors chuckled, but the rest of the Navy was not amused.

The wrath of the Base Commander and of SubGroup7 homed in on SS-302; the Skipper had to ensure his bosses that the villain would be severely reprimanded and punished.

Captain's Mast was held two days out at sea when Sabalo departed Yokohama for thirty days of local ops; Big Ed was reduced to Engineman 3rd Class—suspended for a month.

Most will say that there was never an engine out of commission when Big Ed was aboard, neither on Sabalo nor any other boat he was assigned to. Some foolishly said that the Fairbanks-Morse Diesels were afraid to make Ed mad, but insiders had seen him actually cuddling the 1600-horsepower monsters, and softly wiping oil from every surface like a mother tending a newborn kid's butt. At sea, he hovered over them, a mother hen, checking for steady heartbeat, whooping cough, or anything that might affect their rhythmic

thunder. In port, before heading ashore for liberty, he always patted them gently on his way to the After Torpedo Room escape hatch.

No one ever actually saw Big Ed kiss an engine, but he had been caught smooching Mioko once, so it's not improbable.

*Sworn to by RonG* Fine Print: *names have been changed to protect the guilty.*

### “When brothers agree, no fortress is so strong as their common life.”

—*Diogenes* (~400 BC: a beggar in streets of Athens, who made a virtue of extreme poverty . . . lived in a large tub . . . walked through the streets carrying a lamp in the daytime, looking for an honest man. He . . . continued to pursue a life which was natural and not dependent upon the luxuries of civilization). [Ed:] **He sounds like submarine material to me!** ☺



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. 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. 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

### THE DBF PIN

By Patrick Meagher TMC(SS) USN RET

diesel boat force, spending seven months onboard learning the boat and earning their dolphins before departing for nuke school. A smaller number of career enlisted electricians, machinist mates, enginemen, and electronic technicians also volunteered for the nuke program. Admiral Hyman Rickover personally interviewed all officers applying for the nuclear power program as well as many of the senior enlisted submariners. Tales of Rickover's interviews consistently reported on his efforts to intimidate and discredit the accomplishments of the officer interviewee's, alienating many who interviewed with him. Disturbing reports from senior enlisted veterans of the nuke boat navy in favorite submarine “watering holes” ashore indicated Rickover's new operating philosophy was at work in the engineering spaces. “Don't trust enlisted engineers.” Nuke trained officers consistently checked, double checked, and triple checked the work and system lineups of the enlisted engineers, a major

change to the long standing professional relationship between enlisted and officer submariners. In addition, “front-enders” the non-nukes, were reporting excessive wardroom focus on the engineering plant at the expense of the historic mission of the submarine. They were also describing the “no-touch” rule from the reactor compartment aft. If you were not a nuke, you couldn't touch any part of the engineering plant-period. You could learn it in theory, identify major components, valves and panels, but that was it. Gone was the traditional submarine qualification program that demanded standing all watches under instruction as well as rigging all compartments for all evolutions. Lost on most submariners was the reason Rickover imposed the new operational Philosophy which is best summarized by Gary E. Weir

“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."

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

More and more Rickover trained officers were appearing on squadron and force staffs bringing with them Rickover's operational philosophy. It was apparent to all that the diesel boat navy were dinosaurs soon to be extinct along with their officer community who were either unwilling to become nukes or passed over by Rickover as unfit to become nuke boat engineers in order to ascend to command of a nuke boat. 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 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 scrapyards. 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."

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 de sign 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 who began to wear them ashore. As the DBF pin grew in popularity within the diesel boat community it continued to be cast and sold in shops around Yokosuka eventually making its way to Pearl Harbor, San Diego, and on to the east coast. Most "smokeboat" sailors assumed a gold star would be placed in the ribbon for each diesel boat served on. However, it was confirmed to the author years later by Capt. John Renard, USN RET. Skipper of Barbel at that time, a star was to be placed on the ribbon for each time a diesel boat you served on had to get underway for a broke-down nuke.

The DBF pin continued to gain in popularity among current and former smokeboat sailors who wore them with pride as either a pin or on a belt buckle, all the while collecting the ire of the senior nuke officer community. As the wholesale decommissioning of the fleet type boats occurred during the early 70's scores of career electricians and 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 continuing to serve today in the Republic of China (Taiwan) navy as training boats. The last

diesel attack boats in US service were USS Darter SS-576, USS Barbel SS-580, USS Blueback SS-581, and USS Bonefish SS-582. They decommissioned between 1988 and 1990. Two Tang class boats, ex-USS Tang SS-563, and ex-USS Gudgeon SS-567, recently decommissioned in the Turkish Navy with ex-Gudgeon slated to be Turkey's museum submarine. The Turkish skipper of ex-Tang when asked about the difference between the German designed and built replacement boats for their retiring ex-US boats is reported to have said, "American submarines are built for war, German submarines are built for export."

It's ironic that 15 years after decommissioning of USS Blueback SS-581 at the Submarine Base in San Diego, a Swedish Navy Type A-19 Gotland Class Air Independent Diesel Boat is conducting weekly ops there to "familiarize" US Navy ASW forces with the operating characteristics of advanced non-nuclear submarines. When the Swedish crew comes ashore on Friday after a week at sea they still look and smell like the smokeboat sailors of old. Our current crop of submariners avoids them. The DBF pin, originally designed by a USS Barbel SS-580 crewmember as an unofficial insignia to recognize the diesel boats ability to fill-in on very short notice for broke-down nuke boats, now resides with pride on the blue vests of Submarine Veterans who qualified and served on smokeboats. Today the DBF pin is the unique symbol of the professionalism, discipline, and camaraderie of American

smokeboat sailors who sailed  
on —unloved, unwashed, and

underpaid—as their era was  
coming to a close. DBF ∞

**Notes:**

**\*\*UQC** –An underwater telephone (AKA *Gertrude*). Sabalo’s voice call-sign was Clever Boy (call sign: NXYO)

**NTINS** –**Now This Is No Sh\*t**. (As opposed to Nursery rhymes, which begin with ‘Once upon a time...’)

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Please note Jeff’s new street address (he hasn’t moved, the P.O. rules changed)

### We Are A Submarine Sailor

by Mike Hemming



We are not the first of them and we will not be the last. Our heritage runs back to the first submarine. This heritage line continues forward into an unseen future. Each generation is trained by the one before. This will remain so until there is no more use for submarines, which will be never.



If one of us goes aboard a new or old submarine, we are comfortable with the men there. For they are us and we are them. Stand us in a line in all our dress uniforms or naked in our coffins, we are the same. We are and forever will be submarine sailors. We are one.

We can have everything taken from us, uniforms, medals, our sanity and our lives, but we will always be recognized by others and ourselves as a submariner. This status can not be removed from us. Our Dolphins worn on our chests then, hung on our walls now, or later pinned on moldering uniforms in our graves mark us forever. We are first, last, and always men that stepped forward and worked long and hard to become what we are. We are unique among sailors for we sail down deep into dark and always dangerous waters. We do this not with foolhardy go-to-hell bravery, but with cool calculation and care. We challenge the dangers with training and practice. We know that the time for bravery will come when two shipmates close themselves in a flooding compartment, knowing that the whole boat and crew depends on them to control the flooding.

We believe in each other, because we must. Alone at sea, the crew and a pressure hull are all we have to reach the surface again. Men with confidence in each other dive and surface submarines countless times. Each man trained by others holds the lives of those shipmates in his hands. Dolphins are the symbol of this tradition.

Submarine hulls have numbers and men have hearts and souls. We carry those numbers in our hearts in life, and they mark our souls in death. Silver or Gold, Dolphins are the symbol of this

To us Dolphins are **it**: no other symbol matters or means anything as important as they do.

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Editor’s comments: I expect the next newsletter to have more info on the events of the SD reunion, and more/better news of our members; this Inaugural issue is intended to get that ball rolling. For instance, I’ve offered up a plan for the next reunion below, but I expect that responses to this issue will generate more and better ideas from the readers. I not only hope that the ‘fillers’ in this issue are of interest to you, but to your significant other; understanding submariners is not an easy thing to do—hope this helps. In addition to informative/interesting, I hope it will also be useful in helping Jeff catalog us—herding cats ain’t easy, so drop us a line.

•**Plans for the next ‘Last’ Time:** Here’s some data on future USSVI Reunions: **Aug 30, 2010; Sept 5, 2011 & Sept 4, 2012** (all Mon-Sat). If we can muster up \$20 from twenty individuals, we can rent a Hospitality Room for one or two nights (\$20 X \$20 = \$400); every additional couple will add \$40 for snacks/booze, more nights, etc. during the convention—regardless of USSVI plans. That’s enough for meetings and a few hours of shooting the bull. That’s minimum participation; if we start building it, they’ll come!

•**So let’s get started with a survey:** Please write to me; I’ll collect and post the results here. Consider all three locations, and send me your intentions by stating that you will Definitely or Maybe, or are Not interested/Not able to attend. For example: “Norfolk-*Definitely*, Cincinnati-*No*, Springfield-*Maybe*. I’ll fill in the matrix below and update it with each quarterly issue of this newsletter. This should give us a good idea of participation early enough to make plans. If you respond with *Definitely*, We’ll assume, for planning purposes, you’re good for a **non-refundable** \$20.

|                                | <u>Definitely</u> | <u>Maybe</u> | <u>Not able</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 2010 Cincinnati/Covington, Ky. | 0                 | 0            | 1               | 1            |
| 2011 Springfield, Mo.          | 0                 | 1            | 0               | 1            |
| 2012 in Norfolk, Va.           | 1                 | 0            | 0               | 1            |
| Total:                         | 1                 | 1            | 1               | 3            |

**USSVI Info:** Participation in National Convention-sponsored events requires membership in USSVI National; dues are \$20/year and optional membership for your local Base is usually about \$20 more, but is not mandatory. To join, go to [ussvi.org](http://ussvi.org) for forms & instructions. Of course, the San Diego Base ([ussvisandiegobase.org](http://ussvisandiegobase.org)) would be happy to have you (contact the editor), but if you want to join a base nearer home, [ussvi.org](http://ussvi.org) will help you locate one. Submariners ought to keep current on national + local submarine news; this will do that. We can discuss alternative times/places, independent of USSVI in later issues; send me your thoughts.

**Letters:** • (This space is reserved for responses to *Clever Boy* or comments posted on [USSSabalo.org](http://USSSabalo.org))

•Don’t hold it in; share your opinions, Sabalo memories, NTINS, Bios—anything of interest to members. If you don’t . . . I’ll just keep pasting \*NTINS ‘till the pages are full. And . . . send me comments about the contents of this newsletter, so I can improve it. Any suggestions for a better name than our call sign? [Ed

~~~~~ Pride Runs Deep ~~~~~

USS Sabalo (SS302)

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