



# HAMPTON ROADS BASE

## ≈ CURRENTS ≈



Website Address: <https://www.HRB-USSVI.org>

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**October / November 2024**

Issue No: 2024-10

***The purpose/creed of USSVI 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 may be a constant source of motivation toward greater accomplishments, and to pledge loyalty and patriotism to the United States of America and its Constitution.***

***In addition to perpetuating the memory of departed shipmates, USSVI shall provide a way for all submariners to gather for their mutual benefit and enjoyment. Our common heritage as Submariners shall be strengthened by camaraderie. The USSVI supports 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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### **Statement from the Newsletter Editor**

I am offering my apologies for the number of issues missed over this year. There have been a number of changes in base organization and communications and I humbly ask that you accept I am

working to get our newsletter back on track to keep you informed of past and future ongoings with our base and its membership. I have recently volunteered to step into the shoes of the base secretary in addition to being the newsletter editor.

There is a learning curve involved with the transition and I am grateful to all who have done the role of base secretary in the past. We as a base are fortunate to have a dedicated slate of officers. Base Commander Gary Galles Sr Vice Adam Kingsley, Junior Vice Ron Odonnel and Treasurer John "Sid" Sidlovski have welcomed me into the base leadership and have been working with me to learn the operations of the Base in a way that as a 12 plus year member I barely knew how much it takes to keep our base a vital operating group within the USSVI and Veteran Community.

I look forward to improving my skills as a secretary and newsletter

editor

Tony Ficca  
Base Secretary/Newsletter Editor  
[Newsletter.hrb@gmail.com](mailto:Newsletter.hrb@gmail.com)

Hampton Roads Base Newsletter  
**"Currents"**

Published Quarterly and distributed on or about the second week of the new quarter

All submissions for publication should be sent to the editor, Tony Ficca, by email: [Newsletter.HRB@gmail.com](mailto:Newsletter.HRB@gmail.com)

NLT the last week of the Quarter

Hampton Roads Base meetings are held at 11:15 hours, on the third Saturday of every month (except March) at Club #60 located at 9601 1<sup>st</sup> View Street, Ocean View, Norfolk, VA



[Statement  
from the  
Base  
Commander](#)



My fellow Bubbleheads and Associates,

I know it's been a while since I have put out a newsletter input. We have been having an exciting year. We have been increasing our membership, we are back to the pre-covid days. We have been very active welcoming our Brothers and Sisters of the Phin home from deployments and sending them off wishing them Fair Winds and Following Seas as they depart for deployments. I need to thank all of you that support this function. Just to remind you, we are meeting with the active-duty folks on the 26<sup>th</sup> of November from 1500 to 1700 for the reunited Khaki Social. This will be held at the Submarine Learning Facility at Norfolk Naval Station. We had a lot of support from the active-duty members in the Veterans Day Parade. Our Junior Vice, Ron O'Donnell, was highlighted for his involvement in the parade. It was thrilling to see the active-duty sailors marching and sounding out "Submarines once, Submarines twice, etc.," We were the Co-Sponsors for the parade. I even had to give a speech.

The Christmas Party is coming up, only a couple weeks away. All the reservations for the hotel have to be made. Please call the hotel itself. The number is on the registration form. Do not call another travel agency or any registration line. Your room nights will not count for us and will not be at our rates. We have to have 30 room nights for the banquet hall to be free, so please participate and make your reservations. The Sandcastle Resorts has offered to you bonus rooms at our rate so you can make a mini-vaca out of this. Thursday and Sunday have been added for you. Rooms are \$99 per night and \$129 for the larger rooms, plus tax. If you have any problems, call Beverly of myself before you commit. Rooms have to be reserved by the 1<sup>st</sup> of December. Please do not wait on your on your registration. We have to let the caterer know how many people are going to attend. Please send your registration in by the 1<sup>st</sup> of December. If you have any problems, please call Beverly at 252 562-3534 or Gary at 757 714-2733.

We have started the organization for the 2028 USSVI National Convention. Please step up and put you name in the hat to support this venue. THANKS to all those who have already done this.

At our last meeting, it was brought up to elicit your help to honor the first Medal of Honor recipient for the Submarine Force, TM2 Henry

Breault, by having a submarine to be named in his honor. Please visit the following link to sign the petition:

<https://www.change.org/p/name-a-virginia-class-submarine-after-medal-of-honor-recipient-henry-recipient-henry-breault>.

I am grateful and proud to be your Base Commander of this organization. Thank you for your help. And we always have a need for others to step up. If you would like to get involved, ASK ME.

V/R

Gary Galles

Your Base Commander



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**The CoB's Corner**

Introducing our new base Cob. David L Johnston. Later in the letter is his official biography for you to get acquainted with him.



DCC(SS/SW) David L. Johnston, USN (Ret.)

[daveyj576@msn.com](mailto:daveyj576@msn.com)

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**From the Base Chaplain**

Introducing our new Base Chaplain Scott Wells, Thank you Scott for Stepping up and taking on this Important role

Any questions should be sent to Scott by email (below).

STSCS(SS) Scott Wells

[Chaplain.HRBase@gmail.com](mailto:Chaplain.HRBase@gmail.com)

Or

[itswells@gmail.com](mailto:itswells@gmail.com)

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**From the Editor**

In upcoming new editions we will return to having input from each of the base officers and committee leaders as well as looking forward to more input from membership on articles and events related to Submarining that would be of interest to the membership



MS2(SS) Tony Ficca U.S.N.

Any questions or contribution to the newsletter should be sent to the following email address

[Newsletter.hrb@gmail.com](mailto:Newsletter.hrb@gmail.com)

**About The Base Website and Social Media**

The web address for the Base website is:

<https://www.hrb-ussvi.org/>.

Note that the 'members only' area is currently being revised for new content. New Base members (or

previous Base members who now wish to gain access to the 'members only' area) should take the following steps for access:"

1. Click on "Login" at the top right of the website pages.
2. Once selected look for blue lettering and
3. Select Sign up to create your account.

**Note:**

**When entering your email address during account creation, please enter the same email address you used when joining the Hampton Roads Base. (If your email address has changed, please contact the Base Secretary, Lynn Merryman, to update your email in the Base roster BEFORE applying for or creating your account.)**

**Also of Note:** The USSVI National website, while still under construction in some areas, is now open. You should have received a member-specific email recently detailing how to gain and maintain access to the site. Check your email for this important information from USSVI National.

The Website may be found at:

<https://www.ussvi.org/>

Any questions should be sent to me by email (below).

STS1(SS) Sam Stevens, U.S.N. (Ret.)

[HRB.USSVI@gmail.com](mailto:HRB.USSVI@gmail.com)

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### **Boats Lost in the Month of October**

#### **USS O-5 (SS-66)**

Lost on October 29, 1923, with the loss of 3 men when rammed and sunk by SS ABABGAREZ off the Panama Canal.

#### **USS S-44 (SS-155)**

Lost on October 7, 1943, with the loss of fifty-six men when it was sunk off Paramushiru, Kuriles. S-44 was on her 5<sup>th</sup> war patrol after attacking a target thought to be a merchant on the surface. S-44 found herself in a losing gun battle with a heavily armed Japanese destroyer. Two men were taken prisoner and survived the war.

#### **USS WAHOO (SS-238)**

Lost on October 11, 1943, with the loss of eighty men near La Perouse Strait. Under command of one of the great sub skippers of World War II, LCDR "Mush" Morton, WAHOO was on her 7<sup>th</sup> war patrol. WAHOO had won a Presidential Unit Citation and ranks 5<sup>th</sup> in the number of enemy ships sunk. She was lost to depth charges dropped by a Japanese patrol aircraft.

#### **USS DORADO (SS-248)**

Lost on October 12, 1943, with the loss of seventy-seven men when she was sunk in the western Atlantic near Cuba. Newly commissioned, she had departed New London and was enroute to Panama. She may have been sunk by a U.S. patrol plane that received faulty instructions regarding bombing restriction areas or a German U-boat that was in the vicinity.

#### **USS SEAWOLF (SS-197)**

Lost on October 3, 1944, with the loss of eighty-three officers and men and seventeen US Army troops when she was sunk just north of Moritai by USS ROWELL, a Destroyer Escort (DE). In this tragic error, ROWELL mistook SEAWOLF for a Japanese

submarine that had just sunk another Destroyer (DD). SEAWOLF ranks 7<sup>th</sup> for enemy ships sunk.

#### **USS ESCOLAR (SS-294)**

Lost on October 17, 1944, with the loss of eighty-two men. She was on her 1<sup>st</sup> war patrol and was most likely lost to a mine somewhere in the Yellow Sea.

#### **USS SHARK II (SS-314)**

Lost on October 24, 1944, with the loss of eighty-seven men when she was sunk near Hainan. The second boat to carry this name during World War II, she was on her 3<sup>rd</sup> war patrol. SHARK was sunk by escorts after attacking and sinking a lone freighter. Compounding the tragedy, it turned out that the freighter had 1,800 U.S. POWs on board.

#### **USS DARTER (SS-227)**

Lost on October 24, 1944, when she became grounded on Bombay Shoal off Palawan and was then destroyed to prevent her from falling into enemy hands intact. The entire crew was rescued by USS DACE. Winner of one Navy Unit Commendation, DARTER had sunk a heavy cruiser and damaged another, and went aground while attempting an "end around" on an enemy formation in hopes of getting in an attack on a battleship.

#### **USS TANG (SS-306)**

Lost on October 25, 1944, with the loss of seventy-eight men in the Formosa Strait. TANG was on her 5<sup>th</sup> war patrol. TANG ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> in the number of ships sunk, 4<sup>th</sup> in tonnage, and had won two Presidential Unit Citations. During a daring night surface attack, TANG was lost to a circular run by one of her own torpedoes. Nine of the crew were taken prisoner, including CDR O'Kane and five who had gained the surface from her final resting place 180 feet below. All survived the war, and CDR O'Kane was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.



## *Boats Lost in the Month of November*

### **USS CORVINA (SS-226)**

Lost on November 16, 1943, with the loss of 82 men when she was sunk just south of Truk. CORVINA was on her 1st war patrol and appears she was lost to the torpedoes of a Japanese submarine.

### **USS SCULPIN (SS-191)**

Lost on November 19, 1943, with the loss of 63 men near Truk. Severely damaged by depth charges after attacking an enemy convoy, SCULPIN continued to fight on the surface. When the captain was killed, the crew abandoned ship and scuttled SCULPIN. 41 men were taken prisoner; only 21 survived the war. Among those not abandoning ship was CAPT Cromwell, aboard as a potential wolfpack commander, he rode the SCULPIN down, fearing that vital information in his possession might be compromised under torture. For this, CAPT Cromwell was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

### **USS ALBACORE (SS-218)**

Lost on November 7, 1944, with the loss of 85 men when she was sunk off northern Hokkaido. Winner of two Presidential Unit Citations, ALBACORE was on her eleventh war patrol and struck a mine while running submerged near a Japanese patrol craft that had detected her.

### **USS GROWLER (SS-215)**

Lost on November 8, 1944, with the loss of 86 men when she was sunk in the South China Sea. Winner of two Navy Unit Commendations, GROWLER was on her 12th war patrol and was lost while attacking a convoy, probably as a result of a depth charge attack or was the victim of a circular run by one of her own torpedoes.

### **USS SCAMP (SS-277)**

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Lost on November 9, 1944, with the loss of 83 men near Tokyo Bay. On her 8th war patrol, she may have been damaged by a mine and was trailing oil, which helped Japanese coast defense vessels locate her and destroy her with depth charges.

## *Party Information*

Hi Everyone,

The Holiday party will be on December 13-15th at the Sandcastle in Virginia Beach

Tickets will be \$35 Members will get a \$5 discount on their ticket

Special room pricing will be available for \$99 per night standard room or \$129 for upgrade/suite. Beverly has even worked out pricing with the hotel to get the special rate on Thursday the 12th .

Please reach out the the Sandcastle directly to make your room reservations

This is a byob and byo mixers event

Friday evening will be a potluck appetizer/snack gathering in the hospitality room

Please contact Beverly Galles with any issues or questions at 252-562-3534 or [bgalles9@yahoo.com](mailto:bgalles9@yahoo.com)

## *Hall of Fame Boat*

Per our bylaws we had the HOF boat nominations this month 5 boats have been nominated for consideration to be HOF boat for 2025

USS Henry Clay SSBN 625 Nominated by Dave Duffié

USS John Adams SSBN 620 Nominated by Bob McClaren



USS Providence SSN 719 Nominated by Sam Stevens

USS Darter SS 576 Nominated by Dave Johnson

As our bylaws state the person who nominated a boat will give a presentation of the merits of the boat at our November base meeting and membership will vote on the winning HOF boat at the base December Meeting

Discussions and presentations for HOF nominees will be held during the November Hampton Roads Base meeting with voting occurring at the December meeting. You must be present to vote at the December meeting. The USS L Mendal Rivers was our 2024 HOF boat.

We look forward to another great event in May 2025 and we look forward to receiving your nominations at the October meeting. If you have any questions, reach out to Ken Swan.

Ken Swan  
413-923-4030  
[Kenneth.A.Swan@gmail.com](mailto:Kenneth.A.Swan@gmail.com)



## **Base Officers & Key Personnel**

(Remember: you must dial all 10 digits when contacting by phone)

### **Base Commander**

Gary Galles  
757-714-2733

[BaseCommander.HRB@gmail.com](mailto:BaseCommander.HRB@gmail.com)

### **Senior Vice Commander Membership Committee Chair & Scholarship Committee Chair:**

Adam Kingsley  
757-535-4179

[Senior.Vice.HRB@gmail.com](mailto:Senior.Vice.HRB@gmail.com)

### **Base Junior Vice Commander & Ways and Means Committee Chair & Events Committee Chair:**

Ron ODonnell  
757-544-0105

[Junior.Vice.HRB@gmail.com](mailto:Junior.Vice.HRB@gmail.com)

### **Base Secretary & Newsletter Editor**

Tony Ficca  
757-646-1152

[Newsletter.hrb@gmail.com](mailto:Newsletter.hrb@gmail.com)

### **Base Treasurer:**

John (Sid) Sidlovsky  
757-328-9796

[Treasurer.USSVI.HRB@gmail.com](mailto:Treasurer.USSVI.HRB@gmail.com)

or [SidofVA@gmail.com](mailto:SidofVA@gmail.com)

### **Base CoB:**

David L Johnston  
361-230-4218

[daveyj576@msn.com](mailto:daveyj576@msn.com)

### **Base Chaplain:**

Scott Wells  
757-912-7395

[Chaplain.HRBase@gmail.com](mailto:Chaplain.HRBase@gmail.com)

Or [itswells@gmail.com](mailto:itswells@gmail.com)

### **Base Storekeeper:**

Wil Layne

[USSVI.HRB.Storekeeper@gmail.com](mailto:USSVI.HRB.Storekeeper@gmail.com)

### **Social Media Coordinator & Webmaster:**

Sam Stevens  
757-814-7976

[SStvns7@gmail.com](mailto:SStvns7@gmail.com) or

[HRB.USSVI@gmail.com](mailto:HRB.USSVI@gmail.com)

### **Holland Club Chairman:**

William (Bill) Heron  
757-886-0913

[Bill.Heron1@Verizon.net](mailto:Bill.Heron1@Verizon.net)

### **Base Historian:**

Paul R. Schmidt  
757-572-2711

[TheBakerPaul@gmail.com](mailto:TheBakerPaul@gmail.com)

### **Submarine Memorial & Hall of Fame Committee Chair**

Ken Swan  
413-923-4030

[Kenneth.A.Swan@gmail.com](mailto:Kenneth.A.Swan@gmail.com)

### **Kap(SS)4Kid(SS) Coordinator:**

John (Sid) Sidlovsky  
757-328-9796

[SidofVA@gmail.com](mailto:SidofVA@gmail.com)

### **Base Emergency Relief Chair:**

HMCS(SS) Jack Ritz (Cell: 757-647-4669),

[ERF.HRB@gmail.com](mailto:ERF.HRB@gmail.com)

### **SCORPION Memorial Committee Chair**

William (Bill) Heron  
757-886-0913

[Bill.Heron1@Verizon.net](mailto:Bill.Heron1@Verizon.net)

### **NORFOLK Sail Committee Chair**

Gary Merryman U.S.N. (Ret.)  
757-274-9322

[Gary2361@Yahoo.com](mailto:Gary2361@Yahoo.com)

### **Nominating Committee Chair:**

Brian Daugherty (Immediate Past Base Commander)  
757-409-8560

[BDaugherty7@Verizon.net](mailto:BDaugherty7@Verizon.net)

### **Hampton Roads Base Snail Mail Address:**

US Submarine Veterans, Inc., Hampton Roads Base  
PO Box 62030  
Virginia Beach, VA 23466-2030.



## Biography for DCC(SS/SW) David L. Johnston, USN (Ret.)



A native of Dexter, MI., Chief Johnston enlisted in the Navy in September 1983. Over the course of a 21-year career Chief Johnston served on the USS *Darter* (SS-576), four Mine Countermeasures ships, and the USS *Forrest Sherman* (DDG-98). He has been on the staffs of Navy Operational Support Centers in Des Moines IA, Brunswick ME, Rochester NY, Battle Creek MI, and on the staff of the Supervisor of Shipbuilding, Bath ME. He has made four overseas deployments to Japan and the western Pacific, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, and the Gulf of Aden. He retired from active duty in August, 2019.

His awards include the Navy Commendation Medal, Navy Achievement Medal, Navy Good Conduct Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary and Service Medals, Armed Forces Reserve Medal w/ "M" device, and a COMSUBGRU 7 Letter of Commendation. Chief Johnston is Qualified in Submarines and Surface Warfare.

During a break in service in the 1990's, he worked in the travel, security, and retail industries.

Chief Johnston is a historian, author, and technical consultant on submarine history for aspiring authors. He is a cofounder and webmaster of PigBoats.COM, a website devoted to the first 41 years of the United States Navy Submarine Service. He volunteers his time as an independent researcher for the Naval History & Heritage Command and was part of the team that identified the wreckage of the USS *Albacore* (SS-218), and has contributed research and analysis to the discoveries of seven other lost USN submarines. He is the research historian for the Lost 52 Project and is a contributor to the project's newsletter. He resides in Norfolk, VA with his wife Theresa. He is a proud father and grandfather.





## **Nomination of USS Henry Clay SSBN 625 as Hall of Fame Boat 2025**

USS *Henry Clay* (SSBN-625), a [Lafayette class ballistic missile submarine](#), was the only ship of the [United States Navy](#) to be named for [Henry Clay](#) (1777–1852), the American statesman and orator.

### **Construction and commissioning**

[\[edit\]](#)

The contract to build *Henry Clay* was awarded to [Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company](#) in [Newport News, Virginia](#) on 3 February 1961 and her keel was laid down there on 23 October 1961. She was [launched](#) on 30 November 1962, sponsored by Mrs. Anna Gratz "Nannie" (Clay) Gibson, and [commissioned](#) on 20 February 1964, with [Commander](#) Thomas A Bryce in command of the Blue Crew and Commander John C. Lewis in command of the Gold Crew.

### **Operational history**

[\[edit\]](#)

*Henry Clay* conducted [shakedown](#) off the coast of [Florida](#) beginning on 28 February 1964. She completed her first submerged [Polaris missile](#) firing on 6 April 1964 and returned to Newport News on 29 May 1964.



April 1964 Polaris missile launch





The *Henry Clay* (SSBN-625) launches a Polaris Missile from the surface of the Atlantic Ocean off Cape Kennedy, Florida on 20 April 1964. The objects flying through the air around the missile are launch adapters designed to detach themselves automatically once the missile left the tube. The sub's slight port list is a standard part of surface launch procedures. The tall mast is a temporary telemetry



antenna installed for operations at the Cape only. This was the first demonstration that Polaris subs can launch missiles from the surface, as well as beneath the surface. Thirty minutes earlier the *Henry Clay* successfully launched a missile while submerged.

She then moved to her new [home port, Charleston, South Carolina](#), and departed for her first deterrent patrol on 17 August 1964.

By January 1967, *Henry Clay* had completed 11 deterrent patrols. As of mid-1967, she was assigned to [Submarine Squadron 14](#).

During December 1986, *Henry Clay* made a port call at [Plymouth, England](#), while being operated by her Gold crew, the only port call the Crew made between April 1985 and October 1987.

In 1987, *Henry Clay's* Gold Crew underwent an unannounced Operational Reactor Safeguards Examination (ORSE). She received an EXCELLENT grade, the only submarine in the [United States Atlantic Fleet](#) other than the [attack submarine USS Hyman G. Rickover \(SSN-709\)](#) up to that date to receive an EXCELLENT on an unannounced ORSE.

RECORD SETTING: In 1989, in preparation for its final deterrent patrol, the *Henry Clay* crew spent just three days in Holy Loch, Scotland for its refit (instead of the normal three week refit period), and unloaded 250,000 pounds of food. *Henry Clay* spent a record 121 days (April–August) beneath the North Atlantic waves on deterrent patrol. It made two, short back to back port calls in Plymouth and Portsmouth, England respectively. After its successful patrol, the *Henry Clay* pulled into Norfolk, VA for a brief rest and to pick up many of the crew's (male) family members for a three-day, fun "Tiger Cruise" to her home port of Charleston, South Carolina.



*Veterans Day Parade Pictures*







VTKR.com

United States Submarine Force

Kalfus & Nachtmann

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