



Tennessee Submarine Memorial Association

Perpetuating the memories of Submariners who didn't come home

In the 123 years history of the United States Submarine Force, it has proven to be critical to the defense of America and defeat of her enemies.

The early years of submarine development meant brave men sailed and submerged in vessels that were far from perfected. They often met challenging conditions in the ocean's depths and limitations on the new technology they depended upon. Submarines and brave Submariners were lost.



Among the dozens of Submariners lost in the early years were a number of sailors from Tennessee:

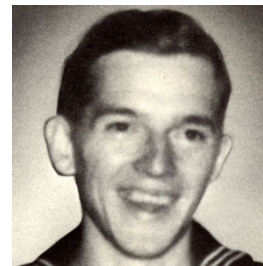
- Elvin Leon Deal, Machinist's Mate 2nd Class, of Copperhill
- Robert Preston Thompson, 2nd Class Cook, of Nashville
- Walter Ross Tolson, Seaman First Class, of Fountain City



*Willie David Thomas of
Cornersville, TN*



*Olin Jacobs of
Elizabethton, TN*



*Virgil Alexander Wright
III of Nashville, TN*

Sailing in harm's way

The devastating attack at Pearl Harbor in 1941 left the Pacific Fleet limited in its ability to strike back against Imperial Japan which was poised to conquer East Asia

and the Pacific basin. Submarines were immediately put to work on war patrols that led America's resolve to crush enemy supply lines and naval forces. By war's end American Submariners put 5.3 million tons of enemy shipping and 1,314 warships on the bottom, 55% of all Axis losses.



American Submariners paid a heavy price for their essential role in winning the war. They had the highest casualty rate of any U.S. forces, about 20%: with 52 submarines lost and 3,506 Submariners never to return. They were lost on combat patrols against enemy aircraft, surface vessels, submarines, and mines. The gallantry exhibited by Submariners who returned to the fight in enemy control waters, patrol after patrol, was in the finest traditions of American fighting men.

Among the thousands of Submariners lost in combat were many Tennesseans including:

- Holly Jackson Howard, Machinist's Mate 2nd Class, from Smithville
- George Donald Hendley, Electrician's Mate 1st Class, from Sewanee
- Maxon Amburgey, Lieutenant Junior Grade, from Athens

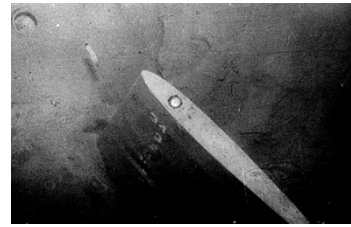
The Cold War again called on American Submariners to defend the nation. The advent of nuclear-powered ships and submarine launched ballistic missiles was a double-edged sword for the U.S. Navy. Our forces' capabilities were increased exponentially. Submarines could remain at sea and submerged for long periods and the new weapons could hold at risk targets in the Soviet Union, America's staunch adversary, and deter war.



Meanwhile the Soviet Navy acquired the same capabilities with their attack submarines posing threats to NATO supply lines in the event of war in Europe and Soviet ballistic missile submarines threatening American cities and military targets.

It was, again, American Submariners who pushed back against potential enemies. U.S. nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSN), with technology far ahead of the Soviet fleet, were ready to counter their adversaries attack submarines in a new battle of the Atlantic, and likewise SSNs were ready to find and destroy Soviet ballistic missile submarines in event of nuclear war.

There was a cost in blood for Submariners, even in peacetime. USS Thresher, a modern nuclear powered attack submarine, sank off the coast of New Hampshire in 1963 killing 129 crew and shipyard personnel while she was on post-overhaul shakedown.



Three years later USS Scorpion was lost in the eastern Atlantic Ocean as she transited from a Mediterranean deployment to her home in Norfolk. Scorpion's wreckage was found but no definitive cause for her sinking was determined.

Both ship's emergencies resulted in them being crushed by the deep-sea depths and they found their final resting place on the ocean floor.

- LCDR Pat Mehaffy Garner of Memphis Tennessee was Executive Officer aboard USS Thresher. Mehaffy was a Vanderbilt University alumnus.
- LCDR Frank Malinski of Memphis Tennessee served aboard USS Thresher.
- Virgil Alexander Wright, III, an Interior Communication Technician, served aboard USS Scorpion when she was lost. Virgil was from Nashville.

There are 87 Tennesseans who were lost on duty, in war and peace, serving the country aboard U.S. submarines.

Never Forgotten

Americans justly take pride in remembering the men and women who died in the Armed Forces. Since 1868 those who made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of the nation were commemorated on Memorial Day, and other ceremonies at other times.

American Submariners are proud of their forerunners in the Silent Service, especially those who have gone on "Eternal Patrol." Across the country there are memorials dedicated to the men who were lost, in cemeteries, public places, military bases and elsewhere. The Submarine Veterans of WWII asked that each state create a memorial to one of the 52 boats lost in the war.



The Tennessee Submarine Memorial

Tennessee lacks a memorial to the 87 lost Tennessean Submariners or to the submarine lost in WWI, USS Darter, that is designated for commemoration in our state. With that in mind, Submarine veterans who are members of the Volunteer Base (Nashville) chapter of the U.S. Submarine Veterans Inc. (USSVI) founded the Tennessee Submarine Memorial Association (TSMA). It is an independent, nonprofit

organization with IRS 501c3 tax exempt status and recognized by the Tennessee Secretary of State as authorized to solicit charitable contributions.

Perpetuating the memories of submariners who didn't come home



The mission of the Tennessee Submarine Memorial Association is to commemorate the service and sacrifice of the American Submarine Force sailors who gave their lives in the line of duty in war and in peace, especially Submariners who called Tennessee their home.

The Tennessee Submarine Memorial Association's purpose is to educate members of the community about the sacrifice of American submariners of the United States Navy who have been lost during wartime and peacetime and to highlight the service of the American men and women of the United States Submarine Force.

The Tennessee Submarine Memorial Association will fulfill its mission of perpetuating the memory of U.S. Submariners through the building of memorials and other suitable projects and through educational programs and media.

Projects

- Plan, design and built a memorial to the 87 Tennesseans lost on submarine duty, the USS Darter, and the 52 American submarines lost in WWII.
 - Memorial plaza with tablets, flagpoles, benches, Navy memorabilia (i.e. torpedo, anchor, etc.)
 - Organize with local jurisdictions and organizations regular ceremonies at the Submarine Memorial.
- Encourage and partner with interested organizations and individuals to promote memorial projects and observances marking the sacrifice of American Submariners.
- Work with government officials to mark appropriate roadways in the State of Tennessee as "Submarine Memorial Highways," to remind travelers of their sacrifice.
- Coordinate with Navy and other officials to acquire the sail of the USS Tennessee (SSBN734), when she completes her service to the nation and is dismantled and add this stunning visual representation of submarine duty to the Tennessee Memorial site.



Our Story

The Nashville-based Volunteer Chapter of U.S. Submarine Veterans Inc (USSVI) launched an independent nonprofit association to raise funds to erect memorials to commemorate the service of fellow Submariners who were lost in the line of duty. To facilitate this goal, they developed the TennSub.org Web site and social media to educate the community about the history of the U.S. Submarine Force and the men and women who served in it to vanquish its enemies and to preserve the peace.



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Association Documents

IRS and Secretary of State of Tennessee documents are on the TennSub.org/about site.