



# FLAMIN' CAIMAN TALES

[www.flamincaiman.org](http://www.flamincaiman.org)

May 2024

## COMMANDER'S SCUTTLEBUTT

**Subject #1:** Smart Phones: We can't live without them. Over the last month I have been researching the purchase of a digital camera before going on a long trip to Europe. I quickly found that the price of digital cameras has gone up by about 80% since the last time I bought one. Guess why that is. Manufacturers of cameras, GPS navigation systems, alarm clocks and watches have all lost about 80% of their market share to smart phones and smart watches. There are now 4 kinds of digital cameras. In order of price, they are: DSLR, mirrorless, bridge and point and shoot. Some point and shoot cameras go for around \$2K and they are the least expensive...sheesh! Well after watching a bunch of YouTube videos for a few weeks I decided on a cheap \$1300 point and shoot pocket camera. I'll be armed with my phone in one pocket and the camera in the other.

**Subject #2:** I recently found out that CAIMAN was not the longest operational Balao class submarine. It is actually the USS Tusk SS-426 which is still operational as the Hai Pao in the Republic of China Navy in Taiwan.

**Subject #3:** I am working with the PAO of Submarine Squadron 11 at the submarine base at Ballast Point to set up a tour on a boat for Wednesday the 8<sup>th</sup> @ 1500. So far, nine people have signed up. If you would like to join us, please notify me or Smitty that you want to be included in the group. See details at [www.flamincaiman.org](http://www.flamincaiman.org) and click on Reunion.

Greg "Hawkeye" Baer, Commander

## CORRECTION

I made a huge error in the last newsletter. The USS Blueback (SS-581) did not serve in the Turkish Navy. When the Blueback was stricken from Navy records, she went to the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry where she is on display. I copied an article without checking. I regret placing incorrect information in the newsletter. A shipmate informed me of my error.

## REPLYING TO NEWSLETTER

As I have said before – DO NOT USE REPLY ALL ON A CAIMAN NEWSLETTER. I send out the newsletters in five email batches. REPLY ALL will only reach approximately one fifth of the shipmates using email and none of the ones on snail mail. Using REPLY will send your email to me.

## ELECTION

The Vice Commander election will be held at our 2024 reunion. Our current Vice Commander is running. I have not received any other candidate names. This makes voting easy. If you desire to run for Vice Commander of the USS CAIMAN Assn., submit your name to me.

## NEXT REUNION LOCATION

We will be voting on the location for our 2026 reunion on the last night of the 2024 reunion. If you have suggestions on a location you believe the crew would enjoy, submit your idea to a member of the reunion committee. Any suggestion within the lower forty-eight will be considered. According to our bylaws only CAIMANITES may vote on the location. We all know the adult supervisor will decide what the CAIMANITE picks.

## DONATIONS

CAIMAN has a WWII vet that donates to our reunions but is unable to attend. He always sends a letter wishing us a great reunion and regrets he cannot attend. This is another example of the great CAIMAN crew. I rode four submarines during my Naval career, but the CAIMAN crew was and is the best. The USS CAIMAN SS-323 ASSN. is a non-profit association, so all donations are tax deductible.

## CAPTAIN RELIEVED

The Navy fired the commanding officer of the submarine GEORGIA blue crew on Jan. 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The Navy announced that it removed Capt. Geoffrey Patterson, who became the blue crew commanding officer in May 2022, from leading the vessel due to a "loss of confidence" in his ability to command. "Navy commanding officers are held to high standards of personal and professional conduct," the Navy said in a statement. "They are expected to uphold the highest standards of responsibility, reliability, and leadership, and the Navy holds them accountable when they fall short of those standards."

Four days before he was relieved as commanding officer of the submarine GEORGIA blue crew, Capt. Geoffrey Patterson was arrested and charged with driving under the influence of alcohol on January 8 by sheriff's deputies in the county where the submarine is based, according to civilian records. An inmate log at the Camden County Sheriff's Office in Georgia, the same county in which the GEORGIA is stationed at Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay, shows that Patterson, 53, was booked that day on charges of driving under the influence of alcohol, improper lane change/failure to maintain lane and no insurance. Patterson, who is originally from Chicago and first joined the Navy as an enlisted sailor, is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He is the first commanding officer that has been relieved this year.

## USS GRENADIER

Another of our WWII lost submarines has been located. The USS Grenadier, a *Tambor*-class submarine, departed Australia on March 20, 1943, for the Strait of Malacca, in what would be her last patrol. Sailing the

coast of Thailand, the submarine was spotted by Japanese aircraft as she surfaced around dawn. She immediately dived to 130 feet, her crew thinking they should be safe at that depth - they were wrong. The bomb struck the submarine, cutting off power and starting a fire onboard the vessel. The crew attempted to make repairs, and after 13 hours managed to resurface to inspect the damage. *Grenadier's* propulsion system was broken beyond repair. The decision was then made to bring the vessel closer to shore, so she could be scuttled and her crew able to escape into the nearby jungle.

As dawn broke, they could see two Japanese ships headed toward them. Before abandoning the vessel, *the Grenadier's* crew burned all confidential documents. They were once again spotted by a Japanese aircraft, but continued to fight back with machine guns, securing a hit. They then abandoned the ship and watched as the submarine sank below the water to her final resting place.

Meanwhile, the Japanese ships loomed ever closer. One of the Japanese ships picked up the eight officers and 68 crewmen, who were taken prisoner and made to suffer horrific torture. Despite their treatment, they refused to reveal any information. Imprisoned and subjected to inhumane conditions, all but four of *Grenadier's* crew survived their two years as Japanese [prisoners of war](#) (POWs).

Like many of the 52 submarines lost during the World War II, the final resting place of the USS *Grenadier* was unknown for decades. In 2020, however, it was announced the vessel had been [discovered](#), thanks to the efforts of a four-man dive team, which included Ben Reymenants. He'd shot into the spotlight in 2018 as one of the rescuers during the crisis involving the Thai junior association soccer team who'd become [stranded in a cave](#) for several days.

Reymenants asked locals if they had encountered any spots where their fishing nets snagged the ocean floor below. Once a couple of possible targets were identified, sonar technology was used to locate the submarine. The team of divers were able to see the wreck for the first time in over seven decades, sitting upright some 270 feet below the water in the Strait of Malacca.

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## USSVI 2024 CONVENTION

The USSVI 2024 convention is August 19 – 24 2024 in Cleveland, Ohio. Information is available at [USSVI National Convention 2024 \(subvetconvention.org\)](#). Several boats hold their reunions in conjunction with Sub Vets' conventions, CAIMAN voted in 2004 to hold ours separately. If you served on other boats their reunions may be at the convention.

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## BLUE TEXT

The blue texts in the newsletters are links to web pages with additional information on that subject. For the shipmates receiving the newsletter in email, these web pages may be accessed by placing the mouse pointer on the text and pressing CTRL/CLICK. For the shipmates receiving the newsletter via snail mail, your kids can access the web pages for you.

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## SAN DIEGO WEATHER

For those that do not remember, San Diego in May is warm. No parkas will be needed. Those coming from the

East will enjoy the change in the weather while those from the North will enjoy sunshine vice rain. This will make the walks to a restaurant enjoyable.

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## USSVI MAGAZINE ERROR

An article in the latest USSVI magazine contains an error. Our USS CAIMAN (SS-323) Assn. Commander, Greg "Hawkeye" Baer, informed the editor of the USSVI magazine and the editor of the book SUB TALES 4, there was an error in the story A TALE OF TWO ALBACORES. The corrected article will read:

At the platform built for the launch ceremony stood the usual gaggle of dignitaries — Navy officials, company representatives, and the ship's sponsor. By tradition since the mid-nineteenth century, the chosen sponsor was always a woman. Over the decades, several thousand designated women — usually well-connected by politics, business, or circumstances particular to the ship to be launched — had performed the duty nearly identically. The uniform choreography determined by the Society of Sponsors of the United States Navy consisted of a spoken utterance followed by the breaking of bubbly over the ship's bow. On this day, however, a rare twist was added to the old rules governing US Navy ship sponsorship. Doris Jowers would become only the second woman to sponsor a US Navy ship as the spouse of an enlisted Navy sailor. The first wife of an enlisted submariner to break the bubbly over the bow was Mrs. A.E. Bonjour, who christened the USS *Caiman* (SS-323) at Groton, CT, on 30 March 1944.

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## ETERNAL PATROL

I owe the family of Daniel Floyd an apology for not including him in the Eternal Patrol article earlier. His widow sent me a letter informing me of my error. I appreciate her notifying me, so I was able to correct my mistake. CAIMAN'S Eternal Patrol is growing every newsletter. As our crew ages this becomes a reality. The youngest member of CAIMAN'S crew will be 70 this year. The best chance to see and visit with your shipmates is at our reunions.

Boellhoff, Lawrence RM3(SS) (45/46) 22 Sept 2015  
España, Francisco ETC(SS) (62/64) 22 November 2023  
Floyd, Daniel RM2(SS) (63/66) 10 May 2022  
Henson, Earl CDR (70/72) 23 January 2024  
Shaw, Vestes L. SN(SS) (69/70) 1 December 2023

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## SAILING LIST

The only changes to our sailing have been the crew members on Eternal Patrol. I have not had any luck locating a crew member on the lost list.

Located shipmates:	1376
Hopefully at the next reunion:	377
Eternal Patrol:	999
Lost List:	38

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## SUBMARINES

### THE SILENT SERVICE

### WE WEREN'T SEEN

### WE WEREN'T THERE

### IT NEVER HAPPENED

### DON'T ASK