



Next Prom  
April 5th

Next Cheminot  
March 20th



Voiture 99 Vancouver, WA

# BOXCAR BULLETIN

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[www.voiture-99.com](http://www.voiture-99.com)

April 2021

## Contacts

### Chef de Gare

Annie Beaton  
360-910-4018

v-99ChefDeGare  
@voiture-99.com

### Chef de Train

Todd Boyd  
360-852-6569

v-99Chef DeTrain  
@voiture-99.com

### Correspondant

Frank Falbee  
360-334-2653

v-99correspondant  
@voiture-99.com

### Commissaire

Intendant  
Marc Lacy  
360-254-3283

v-99commissaireintendant  
@voiture-99.com

### Historian

Dixie Hoteling  
360-953-8218

rebel2@comcast.net

## Cheminot

Mike Reynolds 360-695-3923

Walt Smit 360-993-5838

Jerry Jacobus 360-907-9473

Jon Edwards 360-281-1255

Dixie Hoteling 360-953-8224

Ron Fryer 360-608-4443

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

## Chef de Gare's Corner

I want to preface this statement by saying the following: Voiture 99 is a place where its members should feel safe from negative statements about racism, bullying, ethnicity, religion and political preference. We are a diverse membership with varied life experiences and opinions, this is a strength of our organization. But from time to time we each need to be reminded that not everyone shares our

*continued on page 3*

## The Last Cruise of the Halibut

*A crippling Japanese attack put the boat and her crew in peril, leaving them to fight for their sub and their lives.*

By Commander Graham C. Scarbro, U.S. Navy



*The crew of the USS Halibut (SS-232) who were serving on board during her tenth and final war patrol.*

Read the full story starting on page 4.

# Chateau Schedule

Members and guests allowed on Friday for breakfast.

Thursday morning coffee & doughnuts in the Chateau at 7:00am.- 9:30am

Chateau (360)574-3872

Voiture 99 Meeting Reminders  
Prom May 3rd  
Cheminot May 18th

## May 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1  Chateau Lounge open 12pm - 5pm
2	3  <b>PROM</b> Chateau  La Femme Rendezvous	4	5	6  Coffee & Donuts 7:00 -9:30am	7  Member & Guest Breakfast 7:30am-9am	8  Chateau Lounge open 12pm - 5pm
9	10	11	12	13  Coffee & Donuts 7:00 -9:30am	14  Member & Guest Breakfast 7:30am-9am	15  Chateau Lounge open 12pm - 5pm
16  	17	18  <b>CHEMINOT</b> Chateau 6:30pm  La Femme Cheminot	19  KWVA Membership Meeting 10:00am	20  Coffee & Donuts 7:00 -9:30am	21  Member & Guest Breakfast 7:30am-9am	22  Chateau Lounge open 12pm - 5pm
23	24	25	26	27  Coffee & Donuts 7:00 -9:30am	28  Member & Guest Breakfast 7:30am-9am	29  
30	31					

Coffee & Donuts and Friday Breakfasts will be served in the Chateau

# Chef de Gare's Corner

*continued from page 1*

individual viewpoints. We need to be cognizant of this fact at all times. While some comments or conversations may seem harmless it may be offensive to some members. These could be broad sweeping statements about a political party, a government policy or a protest, we need to be aware that for some folks these issues can be deeply personal and while comments may be generalized, people are hurt by the words that were said.

I believe this can be handled one of two ways. The first being, in a civil matter, say that you are not comfortable with the conversation and ask that it stop or be restarted at a different time or place. The second option would be to make it a learning opportunity by asking why he or she feels that way. What facts do you have to support your opinion? Where did you get your information on the subject? At this point you can make up your own mind on how you feel about a topic.

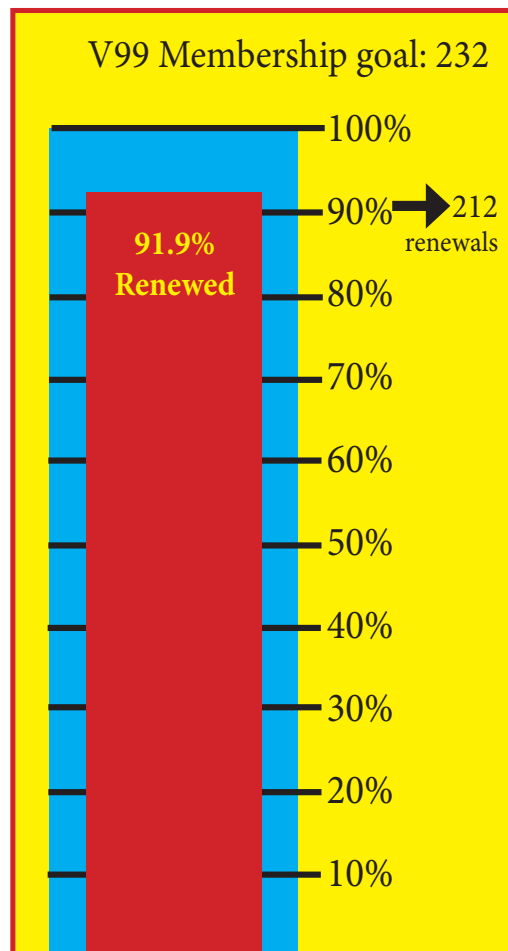
If someone asks you to stop a conversation topic, please do so. What I will not tolerate is someone being badgered for having a differing opinion, that goes for either side. We can civilly say "I disagree" and walk away.

The average age in this room is probably pushing 70 years if not higher. I am not your mother I do not need every little thing

brought to my attention. We are all adults here and have had to deal with things that make us mad, sad, angry or happy. I am reminding you to treat each other with courtesy and respect. If you have doubts about what you are about to say, please refrain from saying it. I am not going to censor your right to have a conversation, I am only asking you to reflect on if this is the right time and venue to have this discussion.

I wish to continue to strive to make Voiture 99 a place where everyone is welcome, and I look forward to your assistance in this matter.

Chef Beaton



# Running for Office

Chef de Gare

Frank Falbee

Chef de Tran

Vacant

Garde de la Porte

Morris Gessler

Commissaire Intendant

Marc Lacy

Correspondent

Annie Beaton

Frank Falbee

Historian

Dixie Hoteling

Avocat

James Mead

Aumonier

Jerry Keen

Medicain

Karla Bean

Conductor

Vacant

Cheminot Board

Walt Smit

Les Lomax

Jon Edwards

Todd Boyd

Commis Voyageur

George Cruz

If you would like to run for any office, please call John Treosti at 360-574-5746. so we can get you on the list.

## QUOTABLE QUOTE:

*"Tyranny is when the population is imprisoned - Freedom is when the politicians are."*

~ Michael Malice (b. 1976), American author, columnist & media personality



## The Last Cruise of the Halibut

The Gato-class submarine USS Halibut (SS-232) slid through the waters of the Luzon Strait, prowling for Japanese surface vessels. As the sun rose over her stern on 14 November 1944, her skipper, Lieutenant Commander Ignatius J. "Pete" Galantin, ordered the boat to dive. Increased aerial traffic observed during the night was a promising sign that the Halibut was in the right place.<sup>1</sup> Galantin had a hunch that Japanese shipping, bound to reinforce or resupply beleaguered enemy troops in the Philippines, would soon pass through the Bashi Channel at the north end of the strait.

The Halibut was on her tenth patrol of the war. Operating alongside the USS Haddock (SS-231) and Tuna (SS-203), she had sunk the Japanese destroyer Akizuki during the Battle of Leyte Gulf three weeks before. Now the crew, a mix of plankowners, veterans, and new recruits, was ready for more.<sup>2</sup> They did not know this would be the Halibut's final cruise.

The boat dove to periscope depth, and for the next five hours, she scanned the seas for enemy traffic. At 1146 Tokyo time, the Halibut spotted her prey: masts on the horizon to the southeast. The ships were northbound, perhaps withdrawing troops and equipment from the Philippines. The Halibut closed at high speed,

ready to kill.

Launched just four days before the attack on Pearl Harbor and commissioned into service in April 1942, the 311-foot Halibut displaced 1,500 tons and could run at 21 knots on the surface.<sup>3</sup> Her first five patrols, under Commander Philip Ross, took her from the Aleutian Islands to Japanese home waters. The boat claimed five enemy vessels under Ross' command.

Galantin, a 1933 U.S. Naval Academy graduate, took command in August 1943 and ranged the Pacific, sinking five Japanese merchant or shipping vessels, bombarding a shore installation, and sinking the minelayer Kamome in the 18 months prior to the Battle of Leyte Gulf.

Joining the crew in mid-1944 was Skeeter, a mutt adopted from the vicinity of San Francisco's Lefty O'Doul's, a famous sailor's haunt near Union Square.<sup>4</sup> Skeeter was the lone dog in a crew of 82.<sup>5</sup>



*Left: The Halibut and her crew returning from their ninth war patrol. Right: Skeeter, the boat's mascot who joined the crew in 1944, was a bit surly at times, but always alert for trouble*

By 1244, the Halibut's conn had made out seven vessels: one large,

one small, and two medium freighters and four escorts, three of which Galantin believed were No. 13-class antisubmarine vessels, with one more that might have been a Type D-class kaikoban patrol vessel.<sup>6</sup>

Torpedoman's Mate Third Class Tudor Davis, on board since the Halibut's fifth patrol in 1943, helped prep her six bow torpedo tubes.<sup>7</sup> The boat was ready to fire as soon as targets came in range.

In the forward engine room, Motor Machinist's Mate First Class Clayton Rantz, a Halibut plankowner who had lied about his age to enlist in 1940, stood by his beloved diesel engines, silent while the Halibut, on battery power, cruised submerged.

Galantin, meanwhile, anxiously surveyed the closing distance to the convoy. The Halibut needed to get close enough to score a hit, but not so close as to give the escorts a fighting chance of catching and sinking the submarine.



Skeeter took a spot near the sonar operator, his canine senses alert

for trouble.

The boat closed to 3,100 yards, just over 1.5 nautical miles—long range for an attack, but the escorts and possible presence of aircraft meant the Halibut had to “fire at long range or not at all.”

“Fire!” commanded Galantin. Four Mk 18 Mod 1 torpedoes leapt from the Halibut’s bow and streaked toward the targets.<sup>9</sup> He estimated the torpedo run would take about three minutes. “Come about!” ordered Galantin. “Prepare to fire with the stern tubes!” The boat began a sharp, 180-degree turn as the aft torpedo room prepared four more fish for sea.

“Mark!” cried the chief quartermaster. The sonarmen’s headsets were silent. A tense minute passed. The range was too long, and the targets slipped the attack.

The bridge clock read 1324:10, and an explosion reverberated through the submarine; black smoke billowed from one of the freighters. Another explosion boomed from the convoy; the fish had missed the nearer target but hit one farther away on the same azimuth. Two hits out of four torpedoes, so far so good. Galantin waited for the firing solution for the stern tubes to settle. Four more torpedoes should finish off the wounded freighter.

Despite having gone to mast twice, once for being rude and

surly and once for soiling a chief petty officer’s trouser leg, Skeeter suddenly sprang into action, acting curiously and growling.<sup>10</sup> The sonar operator heard it, too, a strange buzzing noise in his headset, and thought it was probably an aircraft’s jikitanchiki system, an early magnetic anomaly detector. The Halibut raced for the depths as explosions rocked her port side. The aircraft, likely a Mitsubishi G3M Type 96 “Nell” bomber, was dropping bombs on the submarine.

“Take her deep!” roared Galantin, and the boat dove deeper underwater to escape the attack. As she passed 200 feet, more explosions followed. Galantin held the dive. The Halibut’s test depth, the maximum safe depth for normal operations, was about 300 feet, but she did not stop there; the only thing more dangerous than going deeper was not going deep enough.

The Nell’s bombs bought time for the escorts to close on the Halibut’s position. Depth charges began to rain down around the boat. She continued deeper as the hull creaked under the strain of the building water pressure. The explosions shook the boat, while concussions close aboard forced the sub ever lower “as though a giant hand was pushing a toy boat underwater.” The Halibut rattled as she plunged to 425 feet below the surface. One explosion off

the port bow tossed Torpedoman Davis and his companions into the air. The violence dislodged the deckplates beneath their feet, and a couple of the sailors fell below into the bilge. The torpedoes, in a ready state for easy loading, were similarly thrown about.

The explosions eventually abated, and the Halibut stabilized her depth. Tense seconds ticked by as the crew braced for more attacks. The men worked feverishly to keep the boat seaworthy. The main induction valves, meant to bring in air on the surface, had been damaged and were letting in seawater. Everything in the boat had been rattled. The gyro compasses no longer worked, and the control room’s clock had stopped, reading 1346:24.



However, the Halibut’s recent overhaul in San Francisco seemed to have been worth the time away from the war: Pipes were leaking, bulkheads were warped, gear was strewn, and the conning tower was mangled, but the hull held, and no serious injuries were reported. The Halibut crept along, far below the surface, with as much as 16,000 feet of crushing ocean beneath her keel.

“Chlorine gas!” someone shouted. “Gas in the forward battery well!”

Between the control room and the forward torpedo room was officers' country, beneath which was the battery well, housing the lead and sulfuric acid batteries that powered the boat while submerged. Any exposure of the acid cells to seawater would trigger a release of deadly chlorine gas.

Damage to the air tanks in the vicinity of the wardroom allowed high-pressure air to suddenly flood the space. The men in the compartment scrambled out of the wardroom and into the control room aft or the torpedo room forward. Faced with the prospect of deadly, overpressurized gas, the airtight doors were shut as air pressure built within, sealing the forward torpedo room off from the rest of the boat.

Although the sailors had trained for such a scenario, none of the men had experienced it for real. The inability to accurately simulate a gas leak in training resulted in confusion on board the damaged submarine. Was the wardroom filled with overpressurized chlorine gas at the same moment the rest of the ship fought a seemingly endless number of leaks? How could the boat surface to vent the space with the enemy overhead? When would the next attack rain down? No matter the answers, one thing was clear: The men in the forward torpedo room were trapped.

Galantin had to make a decision. The rising air pressure in the contaminated space threatened

the integrity of the whole boat. It was already at 52 pounds per square inch. If the batteries were letting off more gas, the pressure could continue to build. Someone would have to lower the air pressure in the space by equalizing it with another, adjacent space, potentially exposing themselves to the chlorine. The high-pressure air held the aft control room door closed, but the forward door to the torpedo room could be opened. The men there would have to open the door to the contaminated compartment, potentially sacrificing themselves to save the boat. The skipper ordered Davis and his comrades to open the door to the wardroom.

Still submerged and under threat of further Japanese attacks, Galantin braced for the consequences of exposing the torpedo room to the high-pressure gas. Meanwhile, around the boat, the crew worked in stifling conditions to get her sailing again. Leaks in the forward part of the boat had admitted enough seawater that the Halibut could barely climb, and with no compass, the best she could do was drive slowly with the rudder amidships.

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With the threat of poison gas abated, the crew began to balance the boat's internal air pressure while working on repairs. The process was a noisy one, complicating the sonarmen's work; even Skeeter's keen ears could not make out whether the Japanese were still far above, on the surface.

Three hours after the attack, the wounded Halibut crept upward. Hydraulic failures throughout the boat required manual actuation of numerous systems. Every action took twice as long to accomplish.

In the forward engine room, Petty Officer Rantz gleefully reported that "his" two big diesels were ready to go (the aft engine room was not, he added mischievously).

"Up periscope!" Galantin commanded. It was late afternoon now, and the skipper scanned the sea for the enemy. For reasons unknown, the Japanese had left the area. There was no sign of the convoy, and no evidence that any of the Halibut's targets were sunk. Only after sunset did the submarine finally surface. She had been underwater for 12 hours. The crew was exhausted and rattled, and the boat was severely damaged.

The conning tower and hull were heavily "dished in" from the forward escape trunk aft to the forward engine room. The breech on the deck gun had been pierced by shrapnel. Sheetmetal bulkheads within the sub were warped, and hydraulic fluid was leaking throughout the boat. The gyro compasses were still inoperable, as was the radio. With the air pressure finally equalized within the hull, Galantin and his crew worked slowly and carefully to bleed the high-pressure air out through the tower while surfaced.

The wounded Halibut steamed slowly westward, hoping to make contact with the rest of her scattered wolfpack. At 2120, the boat picked up a radar return, possibly another U.S. submarine. With the radio out of commission,

Galantin used the SJ radar array like a long-range signaling light. The Halibut sent a message to the contact: "Need help." The radar contact turned out to be the USS Pintado (SS-387). The Halibut asked her to close to visual range to help with navigation to Saipan, where the battered sub would rendezvous two days later with the USS Fulton (AS-11), a submarine tender, and effect repairs before setting course for Pearl Harbor.

The boat was badly damaged but seaworthy. Galantin, in his patrol report, declared that "[the] beating our ship took and survived brings our admiration and respect to the men who designed her, the people who built HALIBUT, and those who recently overhauled her at Bethlehem Steel Company."

On reaching Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in early 1945, and with the war in the Pacific winding down, the Navy determined the damage to the Halibut was too extensive to justify repairing the boat, and she was scheduled for decommissioning. Plans to convert her to a school ship did not materialize, and the Halibut was sold for scrap for \$23,123.23

The Halibut effectively became the 53rd U.S. submarine lost in the war.

*Imagine Yourself in this beauty!*

**WIN**



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**Get your tickets from one of the Nobles listed below or at an event at the Shriners' booth. See the car in person at most of the events listed on our website [www.afishriners.org](http://www.afishriners.org)**

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Camas	Will	360-773-6271
Centralia & Chehalis	Richard	360-736-6716
	Jeff	714-261-8182
	Everett	360-520-4894
Federal Way	Howard	610-550-9220
Gig Harbor	Howard	610-550-9220
Grays Harbour	Doug	360-581-1031
Ilwaco	Ron	360-931-3995
Kent	Ashley	206-601-5118
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Long Beach	Ron	360-931-3995
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Mossyrock and West	Don	360-983-3404
Puyallup	Ashley	206-601-5118
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Vancouver	Ron	360-608-4443
Vancouver, East	Will	360-773-6271
Washougal	Will	360-773-6271
Woodland	Ron	360-608-4443
Yelm	Larry	360-790-4436

Need not be present to win. Must be at least 18 years old. Drawing 6:00pm December 11, 2021 at the Scottish Rite Building, 817 S Vassault St, Tacoma, WA 98465. No cash awarded in lieu of or in addition to prizes. Prize must be claimed within 30 days of drawing. Winner is responsible for taxes and license fees. Payments are not deductible as charitable contributions. All Local, State and Federal Laws apply. Proceeds benefit Afifi Shriners activities.