

# Arizona Sub Vets Perch Base

## Midwatch

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### Arizona Sub Vets, Perch Base Officers

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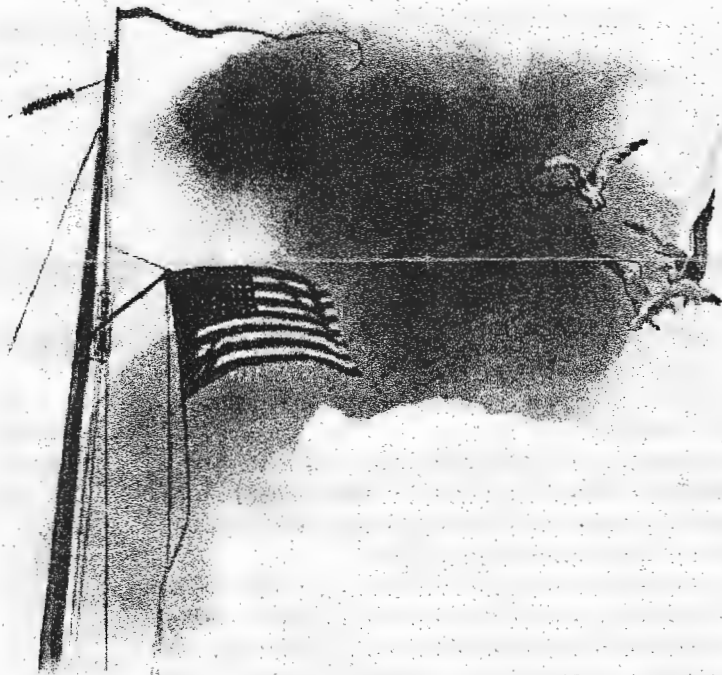
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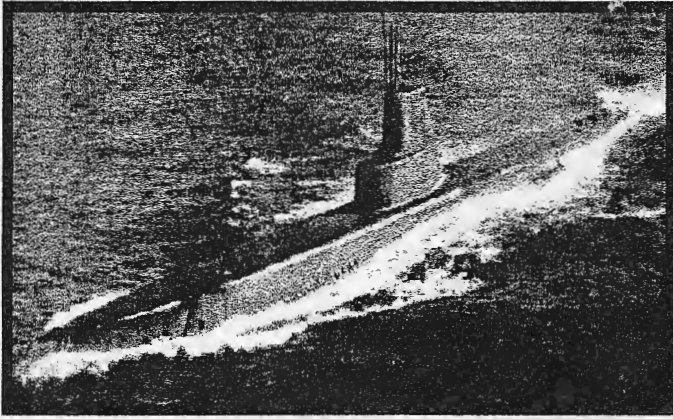
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**In Honor Of All Members Of The  
Submarine Force Lost At Sea**

*Lest We Forget Those Still On Patrol*



**USS Cochino (SS345)**

Displacement - 1870 ton surf. - 1391 tons subm.  
 Speed - 20.25 knots surf. - 8.75 knots subm.  
 Length - 312', Beam 27', test depth 400'.  
 Armament - 6-21" tt. fwd, 4-21" tt. aft.  
 Compliment - 6 Officers, 60 Enlisted Men  
 Class - Balao

Keel laid by the Electric Boat Company,  
 Groton, CT, 13APR44.  
 Launched 20APR45;  
 Sponsored by Mrs. Mortimer E. Serat;  
 Commissioned 25AUG45 with Cdr William A. Stevenson  
 in command.  
 Lost 25AUG49.

Not much can be said about **USS Cochino (SS345)**. Her career was stopped so short. Not by a foreign enemy under combat conditions, but by the ocean she was born to travel through, under simulated combat conditions, to test equipment and train her crew in the North Atlantic.

No member of her Naval crew was lost, but a civilian engineer riding aboard was, but not while aboard. There were six Submariners lost, but from another boat, **USS Tusk (SS426)**, coming to assist.

Everything that happened that August, fifty years ago, could have happened to any other submarine under similar conditions. Everything that could have or should have been done, was done by the Submariners in her and aboard **Tusk**. That's what they train for — that's what they dread.

13 AUGUST 1949 1700: Atlantic Ocean, due West of Ireland.

**Cochino** steams on the surface 600 yards astern of **Tusk**. The bridge area and decks of both GUPPY-conversions are clear as both boats slid beneath the waves, snorkel masts raised. Both boats commence a wide turn to the North with right rudder. With the exception of those two head valves, the cold, grey North Atlantic appears empty once again.

24 AUGUST 1949 1500: 400 miles North of the Arctic

Circle, the weather report comes in ... "POLAR STORMS WITH HIGH WINDS AND SEAS."

The crews of **Cochino** and **Tusk** didn't need a weather report to tell them it was rough on the surface. At snorkel-depth moderate seas were normally ridden out smoothly. Not so at the moment. The crews could feel the seas and the constant heavy motion was beginning to take its toll. The Diving Officers were constantly working along with the planesmen to maintain depth, but the seas were causing both boats to broach one moment and dive below snorkel depth the next.

25 AUGUST 1949 0300: Storm intensifying.

Ventilation poor and hydrogen gas from the battery wells building up as the head valve aboard **Cochino** continues to cycle.

25 AUGUST 1949 0745: Aboard **COCHINO**.

Head valve cycling, ventilation decreasing, hydrogen gas up to 2% concentration with 4% the Danger Point.

25 AUGUST 1949 0801: Aboard **COCHINO**.

Hydrogen gas at 4% — smoking lamp is out — too late — explosion and fire in After Battery!

All vents shuts — ready to surface — "SURFACE, SURFACE, SURFACE!"

"Blow Bow Buoyancy, Blow the Forward Group, Blow the After Group, Planes to Full Rise!"

Message to **TUSK** ... "HAVE FIRE ABOARD ... COMING UP!"

On the surface **Cochino** now has not only explosions and fire to fight, she also has the weather to contend with.

Below decks the problem is a variety of short circuits. The explosion caused fire, there is smoke and the After Battery is generating hydrogen ... the compartment is abandoned. Those forward are passing out or becoming groggy from the gas ... Cdr. Benitez, skipper of **Cochino**, orders all hands forward topside ... quickly!

The bridge is designed for 7 men, there are 60 coming topside. One is unconscious and five are barely able to move on their own as a result of the gas and their injuries. Those that can continue out on the deck and are lashed to the sail of the boat ... 47, some in their underwear, some with life-jackets.

Gas forward — hydrogen continues to buildup — another explosion imminent unless the short-circuit can be found and eliminated — there are 18 men below decks aft of the After Battery.

Those topside won't last but a couple of hours — if left below they wouldn't last a couple of minutes.

A wave drives the stern of **Cochino** under and TMC Rauch disrobes and leaps in the water after CSC Morgan. Ten minutes go by and they are alongside.

... "MAN OVERBOARD!!" He's seen ... no response ... only his life-jacket keeps him afloat.

TMC Rauch disrobes and leaps in the water after CSC Morgan. Ten minutes go by and they are alongside. Rauch is too weak now and is losing his grip on Morgan. "Red Dog" Balthrop goes over the side and takes hold of Morgan while 5 other men pull Rauch aboard.

25 AUGUST 1949 0836: Aboard **COCHINO**.

Massive explosion below aft — 5 of the 18 below badly injured. Balthrop clings to limber holes while holding Morgan between his legs. The next wave brings them both aboard.

25 AUGUST 1949 0841: Aboard **COCHINO**.

EM1 Martinez, working below meanwhile, has located the short circuit — Battery #3 is shorted out to Battery #4. The only way to clear it is to disconnect the batteries — from in the After Battery!

No one is forward to enter the compartment and Lcdr. Wright, the X.O. decides to go in from the Forward Engine Room — another explosion from the After Battery. If this continues, the hull could rupture. With an OBA donned and rubber gloves on his hands he uses his two hundred pounds to muscle the hatch lever and it opens.

White flash turns to orange flame, flinging Wright to the deck of the Engine Room. His clothes were flung somewhere else. Exploding hydrogen gas causes flames to engulf him and the others in the Fire Party. Fires start throughout the Engine Room.

With no skin on his hands, Wright throws himself against the WT door and wrestles it shut and secure. The entire compartment is engulfed in flames.

From the bridge, Cdr. Benitez listens as the engines whine with speed and thudding with explosions. He knows that hydrogen gas has entered the fuel mixture. The runaway diesels are ready to disintegrate at any moment. Enginemen Fedon and Payne, although badly burned, react quickly and shut off the fuel supply.

Wright is the last man out of the Engine Room and secures the hatch behind him, turns and collapses into the arms of ENC Spanne and TM1 Davis in Maneuvering. His skin is gone, muscles are clearly visible where the skin used to be, his arms charred stumps. Only the area behind the OBA is left unseared.

Another "thud!" — "AUXILIARY POWER IS GONE!" The after diesels have shut down, nothing is running now. No electricity, no propulsion, no steerageway — **Cochino** is adrift in the North Atlantic at the whim of winds and waves.

The men remaining aft begin to complain of headaches — gas has travelled aft!! Help has to be gotten to the men aft, especially the injured.

LT(jg) Cushman takes a line aft across 100 feet of open deck. 8 or 10 feet at a time between waves, he reaches the ATR hatch and secures the line. "Doc" Eason can now reach the After Torpedo Room via the lifeline. Just as another explosion can be heard and felt below,

Cdr. Benitez sees **TUSK** approaching. He decides to transfer all the injured to **Tusk** and keep just enough men aboard to get **COCHINO** back to port. But it won't be right away, for over an hour **Tusk** attempts to approach **COCHINO** but the seas won't have it.

"Doc" Eason informs Cdr. Benitez he needs medical supplies as his are in the After Battery. With no power, CT1 Austin, supported by LT(jg) Clifford, Ens. Shelton and ET-striker Sherman, and muscling against the fury of the wind, uses semaphores to get the word to **TUSK**.

A blur of men topside on **TUSK** — a rubber raft being made ready. More scrambling on **TUSK** and a line is sent to **COCHINO**. The raft, with the desperately needed medical supplies is on its way. The line from **TUSK** parts, but the line from **COCHINO** holds and the raft arrives. Seaman Whitman takes the supplies and fights his way aft to the Torpedo Room hatch.

Word has to get back to **TUSK** about conditions aboard **COCHINO**, and semaphores aren't going to do it. Ens. Shelton will be the one to pass the word, taking the raft back to **TUSK**.

Another line from **TUSK** is received and bent on the raft. As Shelton makes his way to the raft, Robert Philo, the civilian engineer, has received permission from the Captain to voluntarily go along. As the raft enters the water it capsizes and both men hang onto the side straps as it is hauled back to **TUSK**. The 100 yard journey takes ten minutes.

Five men aboard **TUSK** attempt to get Shelton and Philo aboard with the raft — not enough. More **TUSK** crew members come down to assist. Ten men form a chain with the one on the end hanging over the side — Philo is grabbed by the wrists, but he's knocked loose by a giant wave — **TUSK** rises, heels over, smashes down on Philo who flops limply into the water, face down.

Although he can't swim, Seaman Walker jumps overboard and puts a line about Philo. It comes loose and Philo bangs against **TUSK's** hull again, but Walker has him between his legs and holds on to limber holes. The human chain grabs them and they are hauled aboard.

Shelton, in the meantime, is swept away from **TUSK** after being knocked out of the raft by the same wave that took Philo.

As **TUSK** comes up on him he gains the raft, still secured by a line. He's thrown a line and hauled aboard after securing it around his waist.

When **TUSK** surfaced at 0803, Cdr. Worthington in command saw **COCHINO** wallowing like a derelict off the port quarter, apparently without power, but not knowing what had happened. Then he saw the crew of **COCHINO** begin to come topside and being lashed to the sail, meaning there was fire or gas or both below!

Preparations are made topside to come alongside **COCHINO**. **TUSK** comes right at ahead two-thirds to approach from windward and aft. **TUSK** comes to within 20 yards of **COCHINO** drifting with the wind. Line handlers are just about to send lines across when **COCHINO** is picked up by the sea and yaws towards **TUSK** ... "ALL

**ENGINES BACK FULL!!!** — Narrow escape from **COCHINO's** stern.

Worthington makes four more attempts to approach with no luck. Squadron Commodore, Benson, tries and does no better and Lcdr. Cook, **TUSK's** XO accomplishes the same thing. So, **TUSK** backs off a few hundred yards and then sees **COCHINO's** signal for medical aid.

When all's ready aboard **TUSK**, Worthington brings her back to within 200 yards. "Doc" Riley is prepared to go with the medical supplies, but Worthington thinks better of the idea when he sees the raft fifteen feet below deck level one moment and 10 feet above the next.

By the time Shelton came aboard from the return trip of the raft, the two boats have drifted about a mile apart. **TUSK** is moving ahead at all ahead standard, her rudder is left 10 degrees to close and — a huge wave breaks over the forward deck and slams fourteen men into the port lifelines that had been rigged earlier. Another wave sweeps the deck leaving only four of those in sight — the stanchions had sheared at the base. RM1 Sonnessa still clung to the one that remained; TMC Costa's foot was wedged into a deck recess and EM1 Andrus and EN3 Olsen held onto the grab-rail with smashed hands. Costa's foot comes loose and there were eleven ... "MEN OVERBOARD!!"

"ALL ENGINES BACK FULL!"

"MAN OVERBOARD, MAN OVERBOARD!"

"MANEUVERING STANDBY TO ANSWER EMERGENCY BELLS!"

They came to the surface one-by-one. They gathered and then dispersed. All, that is, except Philo, who had disappeared.

It wasn't going to be easy maneuvering the boat in these seas while keeping an eye on the men in the water and they weren't going to last long there.

"ALL ENGINES BACK FULL!"

"ALL ENGINES STOP!"

"ALL AHEAD TWO-THIRDS!"

"RIGHT FULL RUDDER!"

"ALL STOP!"

A line over ... caught ... GM3 Ingalsbe back aboard!

**COCHINO** sends semaphore ... "May have to abandon ship!"

"STARBOARD BACK FULL — PORT AHEAD TWO-THIRDS" ... Morgan's next.

A raft is thrown over — Seaman Reardon climbs aboard, the wind carries him away.

Costa, in the water for 20 minutes now, rides

aboard on a life jacket secured to the end of a line .... LT(jg) Pennington aboard not a moment too soon ...

Seaman Reardon to be next ... **TUSK** nudges the raft ... a line goes over ... it's tossed away ... the sea tosses the raft along with Reardon who ends up head down, feet up. EN1 McFarland jumps in but can't reach the raft ... Seaman Shugar leaps in, makes it, secures line to Reardon, Reardon hauled aboard with Shugar close behind.

Seven left ... nowhere in sight ... it's been over two hours since ... "May have to abandon ship!" ... **TUSK** heads for **COCHINO**.

25 AUGUST 1949 1350: Aboard **COCHINO**.

After receiving acknowledgment of her signal **COCHINO** watched as **TUSK** pulled away out of sight. No one aboard knew of the desperate attempts **TUSK** was making to save her own crew. **COCHINO** is without electricity and has no propulsion. Benitez decides the men below the bridge had to be brought up else they'd perish. Forty-seven men had to be squeezed in somewhere — forty-seven men were.

From the stern — "thud, thud" — not hydrogen explosions this time — it was the diesels lighting off — the Electricians had auxiliary power restored and the engines in the After Engine Room were back on-line, but no rudder power. **COCHINO** was alive again, but would have to make her way by steering with the engines — 200 miles to the nearest land. Just then **TUSK** comes into view!!

25 AUGUST 1949 1528: At sea, North Atlantic.

**COCHINO** falls in behind **TUSK** travelling at **COCHINO's** speed. All that was necessary now was to make landfall before the hydrogen explosions tore through **COCHINO's** hull. Every time the wind would take **COCHINO's** bow off course, she'd have to make a wide circle to return. 10 minutes of making way — 20 minutes of turning. Then from Maneuvering — "Hand Power to Rudder!!"

25 AUGUST 1949 2039: Aboard **COCHINO**.

More dull thuds from After Battery. Smoke billowing out of the Snorkel Mast, then ... "AFTER ENGINE ROOM ON FIRE, COMPARTMENT ABANDONED!!"

"ALL HANDS TOPSIDE!"

**TUSK** is turning — **TUSK** approaches — **TUSK** is 50 yards off on an opposite course — **TUSK** stops and secures to **COCHINO**.

25 AUGUST 1949 2155: After Torpedo Room in **COCHINO**.

All hands have moved topside as ordered, except the XO and "Doc" Eason. With incredible effort, the badly burned XO gets halfway up the escape trunk and decides to quit. Then realizing Eason can't get out with him blocking the trunk, he goes with Eason's help and they're both out. **COCHINO** is barren.

A plank has been put over from **TUSK**, but no

one is crossing, too dangerous. Lcdr. Wright moves forward to the plank and crosses. The other wounded are sent across.

Just then **TUSK's** bow line parts and the two boats are held together only by TUSK's stern line. **COCHINO's** stern is rapidly flooding and settling. The entire crew of **COCHINO** is aboard TUSK with the exception of Cdr. Benitez who doesn't want to lose his boat. He reaches down, touches the deck and finally races across to **TUSK** just as the plank disappears between the tanks of the two boats ... the entire crew is safely aboard **TUSK**.

The after line to **COCHINO** is cut and she begins to turn slowly as she stands on her tail with bow pointing skyward.

"ALL ENGINES, BACK EMERGENCY!"

**COCHINO** starts to slide ... **TUSK** pulls clear ... **COCHINO** disappears on her last patrol with a blast of spray.

Compiled by SUBNET from "Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships," Navy Department, and "U.S. NAVAL SUBMARINE FORCE INFORMATION BOOK" — J. Christley; and excerpt from "The Last Cruise" — CDR. W. Lederer USN (Ret).

## Meeting

This year's annual Arizona submarine veterans picnic is being held again at Thumb Butte Park in Prescott on Saturday, August 14, starting at 1000. We have the park reserved until 2200 if anyone decides to stay that late.

The menu will consist of the usual hamburgers, hot dogs, beer, and soda plus southwestern beef & beans, potato salad and a taco casserole. Ladies are encouraged to bring a side dish if they so desire.

The Base Treasury is picking up the bill on this one, so there will be no charge to members and their guests.

We would appreciate a rough count for attendance planning purposes. If you would please take the time to call one of the following depending on your area and let us know how many will be in your party:

### Phoenix/Tucson

Brian Thomason - (602) 331-7365

Roger Cousin - (602) 546-9980

### Prescott/Northern AZ

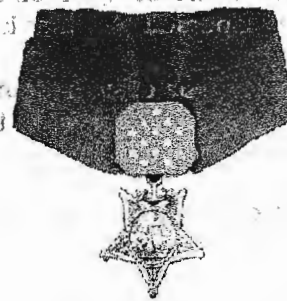
Gary Patterson - (520) 445-1249

Larry Krieger - (520) 771-0093

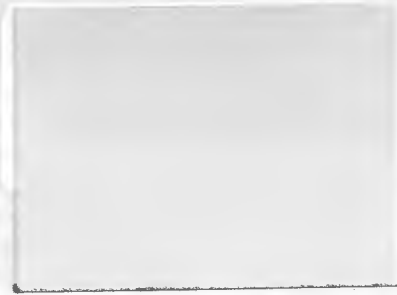


**George Levick Street III**

The bane of the submarine is shallow water. For this reason, Japanese shipping in April of 1945 was using shallow water routes to escape the US submarines even though the routes were longer and slower. This was the hunting ground that **USS Tirante (SS420)** under the command of George L. Street III invaded along the shore of the Yellow Sea. He sank a freighter, a tanker, and troop transport then after undergoing a severe depth charging sank a patrol vessel. Figuring then, that the ships were using a sheltered anchorage nearby he decided to transit the restricted shallow waters which were most likely mined to get at the ships. With Tirante's crew at battle stations and guns crews at the ready, Street maneuvered into the harbor, then into the inner harbor. Once there he blew up a 10,000 ton tanker. Two frigates had spotted him and were maneuvering to close the escape path to Tirante. The crew cranked on maximum turns and Street fired his last two fish at the frigates. Both hit, clearing the path for Tirante's escape. Street got the Congressional Medal of Honor and the crew got a Presidential Unit Citation.



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