



Sabretache

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF
THE CALGARY MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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February 2013



USS *Barb* (SS-220), a Gato class sub, that compiled one of the outstanding submarine records of WW2. . During the seven war patrols she conducted in the Pacific between March 1944-August 1945, *Barb* is officially credited with sinking 17 enemy vessels totaling 96,628 tons, including the Japanese aircraft carrier *Unyo*. In recognition of one outstanding patrol, Commander Fluckey was awarded the Medal of Honor and *Barb* received a Presidential Unit Citation.



World War II era U.S. Navy submariners commonly fashioned informal battle flags adorned with symbols marking the successes they achieved. Compared to others, the battle flag crafted by the crewmen of the U.S.S. *Barb* stands out as remarkable. Under Commander Eugene B. "Lucky" Fluckey, *Barb* is credited with sinking more than 29.5 Axis vessels totaling an estimated 146,808 gross registered tons—causing severe damage to a number of others. These successes are represented in graphic form around the *Barb* logo of "One Eyed Herman" in the center of the battle flag. Prominently appearing at the top of the battle flag are icons of the notable citations and medals that were earned by the *Barb* officers and crew. During the eleventh war patrol, an attack against Imperial Japanese vessels at anchor in Namkwam Harbor in occupied China found the "mother-lode" . . . **more than 30 enemy ships**. In only 5 fathoms (30 feet) of water his crew had unleashed the sub's forward torpedoes, then turned and fired four from the stern. As he pushed the *Barb* to the full limit of its speed through the dangerous waters in a daring withdrawal to the open sea, he recorded eight direct hits on six enemy ships. Then, on the return home he added yet another Japanese freighter to the tally for the *Barb*'s eleventh

patrol. After that action, Fluckey was designated to wear the Congressional Medal of Honor on behalf of the *Barb* crew for their collective heroism during the eleventh war patrol. Thus, the ribbon for this singularly prestigious medal appears at the top center of the *Barb* battle flag. It was the ship's 12th mission that gained it even more notoriety and allowed the crew to add the image of a **Japanese locomotive** to the flag. The U.S.S. *Barb* became the submarine that "**SANK A TRAIN**".

Upon completion of her 11th patrol, *Barb* was sent to the U.S. for a yard overhaul. The installation of 5 in rocket launchers was done at the Captain's request. Returning to the Pacific, she commenced her 12th and final patrol. This patrol was conducted along the coasts of the Sea of Okhotsk. For the first time in U.S. submarine warfare, *Barb* successfully employed rockets, against the five Japanese towns. The sub also bombarded the town of Kaihyo To with its deck gun, destroying 60% of the town. Finished with that part of the fight, Commander Fluckey was looking at a map and deciding on the move, when he noticed a rail line shown that ran along the enemy coastline. The idea was born and soon his crew was buzzing excitedly about bagging a train.

Continued Page 2

The next CMHS meeting will be held **Tuesday, February 19th, 2013 7:00 pm** At the Petty Officers' Mess
HCMS Tecumseh

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The
CALGARY MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
is a non-profit registered society
which fosters the study of the
military and the police, and the heritage of
Canada, the British Empire, and the world
as well as the preservation of military
artifacts and records.

The CMHS meets once every calendar month
at:

Petty Officers' Mess
HMCS Tecumseh
1820 - 24th Street SW
Calgary AB T2T 0G6

All are welcome to attend

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Notice of Next Meeting

The next CMHS meeting will be held on

Tuesday, February 19th, 2012
19:00 (7:00 pm)

At the Petty Officers' Mess, HMCS Tecumseh.

Members are reminded that an offering of foodstuffs for the Legion Food Bank is considered your unofficial entrance fee to our regular scheduled meetings.

The unofficial agenda of this meeting will be:

- Introduction of guests
- Minutes of last meeting
- Correspondence
- Membership report
- Treasurer's report
- Old business / New business
- Break

The President, David Soltess, would like to invite everyone to remain after the meeting for an informal time of fellowship.

USS Barb



Crew Members and their flag.

The Story of the Sub that Sank a Train

The rail line itself wouldn't be a problem. A shore patrol could go ashore under cover of darkness to plant the explosives... one of the sub's 55-pound scuttling charges. Commander Lucky Fluckey and his officers were puzzling over how they could blow not only the rails, but also one of the frequent trains that shuttled supplies to equip the Japanese war machine. But no matter how crazy the idea might have sounded, the Barb's skipper would not risk the lives of his men. Thus the **problem...** how to detonate the charge at the moment the train passed, without endangering the life of a shore party.

Continued page 4

Minutes of the last meeting

Calgary Military Historical Society
Petty Officers' Mess
HMCS Tecumseh

Minutes of January 15th meeting.

Meeting called to order by Mr. President David S. at 7:14 PM. 21 members in attendance.

Minutes of last meeting accepted with some revisions. Secretary reprimanded for bad spelling. Moved by Bab McP, seconded by Mike C.

Membership report by Brian H. 47 members total

Treasures report by Brian H. Net income and closing balances. Expenses for Legion party explained and discussed.

Motion to accept Treasures report by Brian H. Seconded by Floyd S. All in favour.

Old Business

-Winter Levy report by President David S. Fun and good times reported.

-New website report by President David S. All seems to be proceeding well, Member Dave L is thanked for articles.

Monthly newsletter is available to be downloaded. Discussion on new ideas follows.

Mike C. - discusses pictures on original "Collector" article. Discussion.

Articles for web site needed.

Correspondence. David L discusses emails originating from web site.

Show Report, Barry E states that a good show was held, with new people displaying.

Newsletter Report. David G. talks about Jan. newsletter and stamps used in mailing.

Maurice Harvey Award. Brian H awards the trophy to David S. for his good works. Long acceptance speech ensues.

New Business.

Mike C. reports—that old member has passed away. Also new medals issued for WW2 Bomber Command.

Break

Ticket Raffle by Ticketmeister Neil P. Many happy winners.

Book Auction held for donated book Montgomery of Alamién

Show and Tell

Stuart E.—Postcard purchased on EBay. Show Canadian soldier being awarded M.C. Has found identity of soldier.

Gary M.—Medals purchased from Gun Show Medals and pictures of relatives, Stories of RCN ships.

James B.- Picture of Crescent Heights School wall memorial to WW2 members. Shows member Stuart E. name.

Herb.—Surrender Certificates from Korean War. And pictures.

Bob McP.—US medal ribbons, American Air Force (search and rescue) volunteer ribbons. 1936 Olympic Committee Pin

Mike C.—describes recent visit to Holland and UK. Lots of good finds. Boer War, Sudan Medals, Medal grouping to father and son, sword from the Lord Strathconas Horse.

Darryl K.—rucksack for Special Service 1941.. Badge to 113 WW1 Lethbridge. Old hand saw with Canadian Engineers markings.

Bruce.—Preservation papers, modern collar badge.

Alan Mc.—Black and Tan medals. Price differences and forgeries.

Don S.—Tale of Skinners Horse Books and discussion of old friends.

Merv.—Capsules GI and Royal Irish Rifles plaque.

Barry E. WW1 Knife.

Floyd S.—History on civil war items. Flag pole finial of eagle

Al D.—Korean War Book form Canadian ship.

Dave G.—Moldy WW1 1915 pattern pouches, Ross bayonet, WW1 IXL knife and officers whistle made in Birmingham.

Motion to Adjourn. Floyd S. seconded by all

The story of the USS Barb was
contributed by Member Brian H.

A Sad Ending for the USS Barb

The USS Barb was decommissioned, then recommissioned several times over the next 8 years. In 1954 she was again decommissioned and then loaned to the Italian Navy.

The submarine was renamed *Enrico Tazzoli (S-511)* by the Italian Navy. The submarine was eventually sold for scrap in 1972 for approximately \$100,000. Admiral Fluckey noted that had the crew known of this, they would have bought the sub and brought her back to the United States to serve as a museum ship.



One eyed
Herman

The Solution! Cruising slowly beneath the surface to evade the enemy plane now circling overhead, the monotony is broken with an exciting new idea. Instead of having a crewman on shore to trigger explosives to blow both rail and a passing train, why not let the train BLOW ITSELF up. Crew member Billy Hatfield was excitedly explaining how he had cracked nuts on the railroad tracks as a kid, placing the nuts between two ties so the sagging of the rail under the weight of a train would break them open. "Just like cracking walnuts," he explained. "To complete the circuit (detonating the 55-pound charge) we hook in a micro switch ...between two ties. We don't set it off, the TRAIN does." Not only did Hatfield have the plan, he wanted to be part of the volunteer shore party.

The solution found, there was no shortage of volunteers, all that was needed was the proper weather...a little cloud cover to darken the moon for the mission ashore. Lucky Fluckey established his own criteria for the volunteer party: ...No married men would be included, except for Hatfield, ...The party would include members from each department, ...The opportunity would be split between regular Navy and Navy Reserve sailors, ...At least half of the men had to have been Boy Scouts, experienced in how to handle themselves in medical emergencies and in the woods. When the names of the 8 selected sailors was announced it was greeted with a mixture of excitement and disappointment. In the meantime, there would be no more harassment of Japanese shipping or shore operations by the Barb until the train mission had been accomplished. The crew would "lay low", prepare their equipment, train, and wait for the weather.

July 22, 1945 (Patience Bay) Everything was ready. In the four days the saboteurs had anxiously watched the skies for cloud cover, the inventive crew of the Barb had built their micro switch. When the need was posed for a pick and shovel to bury the explosive charge and batteries, the Barb's engineers had cut up steel plates in the lower flats of an engine room, then bent and welded them to create the needed tools. Anxiously watching the skies, Commander Fluckey noticed plumes of cirrus clouds, then white stratus capping the mountain peaks ashore. A cloud cover was building to hide the moon. This would be the night.

MIDNIGHT, July 23, 1945 The Barb had crept within 950 yards of the shoreline. If it was somehow seen from the shore it would probably be mistaken for a schooner or Japanese patrol boat. No one would suspect an American submarine so close to shore or in such shallow water. Slowly the small boats were lowered to the water and the 8 saboteurs began paddling toward the enemy beach. Twenty-five minutes later they pulled the boats ashore and walked on the surface of the Japanese homeland.

Stumbling through noisy waist-high grasses, crossing a highway and then into a 4-foot drainage ditch, the saboteurs made their way to the railroad tracks. Three men were posted as guards, Crew member Markuson assigned to examine a nearby water tower. The Barb's auxiliary man climbed the ladder, then stopped in shock as he realized it was an enemy lookout tower...an OCCUPIED tower. Fortunately the Japanese sentry was peacefully sleeping and Markuson was able to quietly withdraw and warn his raiding party.

The news from Markuson caused the men digging the placement for the explosive charge to continue their work more slowly and quietly. Twenty minutes later the holes had been dug and the explosives and batteries hidden beneath fresh soil.

During planning for the mission the saboteurs had been told that, with the explosives in place, all would retreat a safe distance while Hatfield made the final connection. If the sailor who had once cracked walnuts on the railroad tracks slipped during this final, dangerous procedure, his would be the only life lost. On this night it was the only order the saboteurs refused to obey, all of them peering anxiously over Hatfield's shoulder to make sure he did it right. The men had come too far to be disappointed by a switch failure.

1:32 A.M. Watching from the deck of the Barb, Commander Fluckey allowed himself a sigh of relief as he noticed the flashlight signal from the beach announcing the departure of the shore party. He had skilfully, and daringly, guided the Barb within 600 yards of the enemy beach. There was less than 6 feet of water beneath the sub's keel, but Fluckey wanted to be close in case trouble arose and a daring rescue of his saboteurs became necessary.

1:45 A.M. The two boats carrying his saboteurs were only halfway back to the Barb when the sub's machine gunner yelled, "CAPTAIN! Another train coming up the tracks!" The Commander grabbed a megaphone and yelled through the night, "Paddle like the devil!", knowing full well that they wouldn't reach the Barb before the train hit the micro switch.

1:47 A.M. The darkness was shattered by brilliant light and the roar of the explosion. The boilers of the locomotive blew, shattered pieces of the engine blowing 200 feet into the air. Behind it the cars began to accordion into each other, bursting into flame and adding to the magnificent fireworks display. Five minutes later the saboteurs were lifted to the deck by their exuberant comrades as the Barb turned to slip back to safer waters. Moving at only two knots, it would be a while before the Barb was into waters deep enough to allow it to submerge. It was a moment to savor, the culmination of teamwork, ingenuity and daring by the Commander and all his crew. "Lucky" Fluckey's voice came over the intercom. "All hands below deck not absolutely needed to manoeuvre the ship have permission to come topside." He didn't have to repeat the invitation. Hatches sprang open as the proud sailors of the Barb gathered on her decks to proudly watch the distant fireworks display. **The USS Barb had "sunk" a Japanese Train!** On August 2, 1945 the Barb arrived at Midway, her twelfth war patrol concluded.

The story of the saboteurs of the U.S.S. Barb is one of those unique, little known stories of World War II. It becomes increasingly important when one realizes that the 8 sailors who blew up the train at near Kashiho, Japan conducted the **ONLY GROUND COMBAT OPERATION on the Japanese "homeland" of World War II.**