

# SEA POACHER ASSOCIATION



**Dedicated to the men who served on this great fighting ship!**

**VOLUME 9, ISSUE 2**

**APRIL 2011**

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Well, the format is different. Jack Merrill has done this for eight years, but has resigned. His remarks in the January 2011 Newsletter were well said. We thank him for the work he has done as the Editor, Vice President and founding father of the Association, and his efforts, as well as Sandra's, behind scenes. In the interim, Lanny Yeske, with little talent for this but receiving vital software assistance from his wife Fran, will pick up the compilation and editing for a while. Bill Dukacz and family will continue doing the major effort of publishing and mailing of hard copies, and Bill Brinkman will continue with the email distribution. The format may change with each issue as experience is gained. I know that we have great talent in our membership to take over this job as a new Editor. Contact us before we call you!

## **DIVING WITH MEN LEFT TOPSIDE**

8 Oct 1949: *"The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in commending Donald Stuart MacPherson, Engineman First Class, for heroic action in saving a shipmate from drowning while serving on board the U.S.S. SEA POACHER . . ."*

Greetings to the crew of SEA POACHER. I am Diane MacPherson, the youngest daughter of Donald Stuart MacPherson, ENCM (SS) and also the keeper of our family's memories. After my father "rested his oars" in 1988 at age 65, I asked for his military records. The Navy was his life, and he proudly served his country for 26 years. I wanted to preserve his heritage. My father enlisted in 1942, shortly after his 19th birthday. After serving on SEA POACHER from 1944-1950, he went to SABLEFISH, QUILLBACK, and then Chief of the Boat on NAUTILUS and JAMES K. POLK. He retired in 1966, when I was eight, and then worked as a technical writer at General Dynamics. I have distinct memories of his retirement ceremony and the respect he commanded as he conducted his last inspection. I was in awe at this fleeting glimpse into my father's "other side."

Recently, while researching our family history I delved into my father's records. He didn't talk much about his military life, but did share his adventure on SEA POACHER with my husband, a fellow Navy man. I came upon it again in his records along with a photo of him receiving the Life Saving Medal. I shared these with a cousin, who decided to look deeper into the event. He led me to the SEA POACHER website where, to my delight, I read yet two more accounts from fellow crew members of the day the boat submerged with my father and a fellow shipmate still on deck. I've received a warm welcome from Lanny Yeske, Jon Nagle, and Bill Brinkman. Perhaps understanding a daughter's heart that her father's legacy live on, they kindly extended an invitation for me to share his story here. I hope you enjoy it.

On July 29, 1949 at 1035, SEA POACHER, having returned from Panama, was conducting degaussing operations off Old Point Comfort, Virginia. "The tests required us to dive, run the test range and then surface. About a 45-minute evolution, I believe," said Peter Amunrud (1949-1952). During the tests, a problem arose in the superstructure forward of the bow plane gears. George Wyse (1948-1952) recalled, "The Officer of the Deck sent a Motor Mac named MacPherson up to check out the problem." Accompanying MacPherson was Chief Fern Christensen. "The Skipper (CDR Ustick) was the OOD at the time," said Amunrud, "and was the one who gave them permission to go out on deck. While they were under the superstructure, the Skipper was relieved to go for lunch, but he did not tell the oncoming OOD about the men under the superstructure . . ."

"The OOD said, Dive Dive," said Wyse. "And down we went." In an affidavit written later, Christensen recalled, "By the time we reached the bridge, the boat was going under fast and we started climbing up the shears. At the speed the boat was making, I knew it would be impossible to hang on to the greased periscopes. I dove from the lookout stand and MacPherson went off the opposite side." They were about 500 yards from shore. Once clear of the screws, Christensen attempted to free himself of his clothing. "I got my shoes off with no trouble," he said, "but my navy web belt had become

water soaked and had expanded in the buckle so I could not get it loose. I was tiring fast when MacPherson swam up.”

“As I caught up with him, I noticed he was having difficulty remaining afloat due to his clothing,” said MacPherson in his own affidavit. “I supported him until he could get his pants off and used the tired swimmer’s carry for a while in order that he might rest.” Christensen was finally able to get his belt undone and remove the rest of his clothing. At first, they attempted to swim to Point Comfort, but could make little headway due to the two knot current and because Christensen was not a strong swimmer. “On at least two other occasions while we were in the water MacPherson supported me while I rested,” said Christensen. “. . . I attempted to attract the attention of the Old Point Comfort ferry which made three different trips, as well as two Army mine laying ships passing at a distance of three hundred yards or better,” said MacPherson. “After about an hour in the water I asked Christensen if he thought he would be alright until I could get back with a boat . . . I started for shore and had gone about 150 yards when I heard screws in the water. This turned out to be the fishing vessel Harry L. White of Seaford, Virginia, which picked us up and returned us to our ship.”

“Unfortunately, he [MacPherson] was swimming in a school full of jellyfish, the kind with stingers,” said Wyse. “He had red bites all over his chest.” “MacPherson was a huge individual (his nickname was Bear Cub) and once on board, he had to be slightly restrained from attacking the Skipper and/or the OOD,” noted Amunrud. “The survivors were taken below and given medicinal spirits to warm them up.” “I believe that MacPherson could have easily made the shore by himself . . .,” said Christensen. “I am positive that without MacPherson’s help, I would have never removed my belt and my clothing would have pulled me down. The rest which he gave me . . . and his words of encouragement kept me from becoming excited and panicky and are the reasons I am alive today.” Said Secretary of the Navy Francis Matthews, MacPherson’s “. . . skill and valiant action in endangering his life to save that of another reflect great credit on MacPherson and the United States Naval Service.” He was given the Life Saving Medal and Commendation.

Included also is a photo of my father as Chief of the Boat on USS Nautilus (SSN-571). He stood 6 - 4, weighed 260 pounds, sported a size 13 EEE shoe, was mostly muscle, and was incredibly agile and athletic. He also attended Brown University and attained nearly a 4.0 grade point average. Lastly, I have provided Jon Nagle with many of my father’s photographs for your website. I also have photos of Nautilus, James K. Polk and a Polaris missile firing, Thresher, Sablefish, Barracuda, Orion, Miramar in Bremerton, Cutlass/Argonaut/Conger together, Hackleback, Worden, Tambor, Tautog, and an unidentified sub in ice. If anyone would like a copy via email, contact me at [dkmacpherson@comcast.net](mailto:dkmacpherson@comcast.net)



CO Ted Ustick presenting Medal to Donald MacPherson



COB Donald MacPherson aboard Nautilus

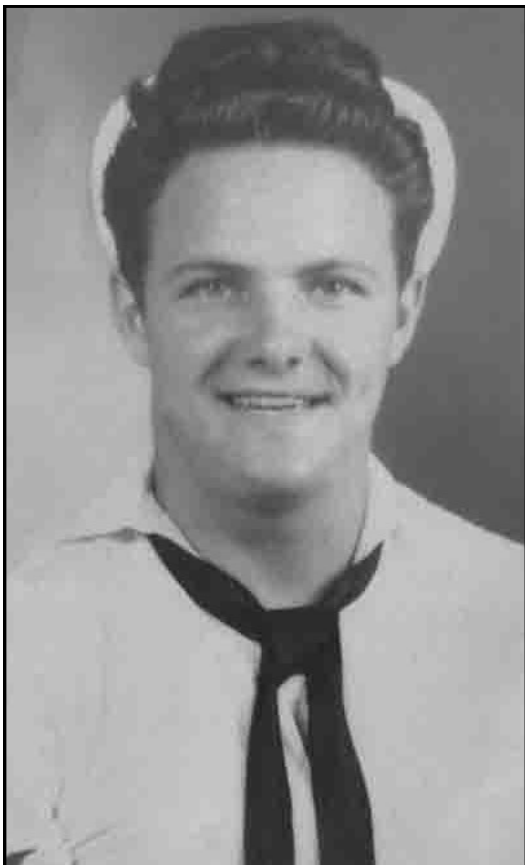
# HEADS UP 406 VETERANS

We received the following from Wanda Brown, daughter of William Vines Brown Jr., a Yeoman on Sea Poacher from 1947 to 1948.

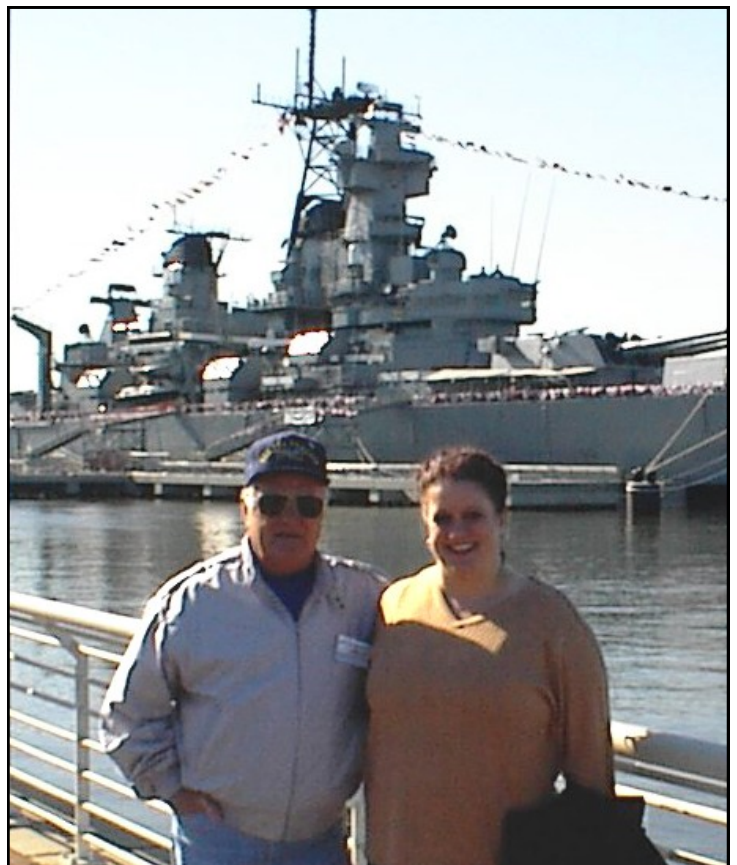
On March 6, 2010, my father passed away from lung cancer. He was 81 years old and his brothers, also Navy veterans and in their 70's, made me aware of a website ([asbestos.com](http://asbestos.com), and <http://www.asbestos.com/navy/submarines/uss-sea-poacher-ss-406.php>) that brings awareness to Navy veterans regarding their exposure to asbestos on submarines and in shipyards, and how it may affect their health today. My message is simple. If any of you have respiratory problems, see a doctor right away, especially if you are or were a smoker. My father ignored warning signs and paid the ultimate price. He may have been 81 years old, but he was a powerhouse who would have otherwise had many more years to spend with his family, but he was struck down a month after he was diagnosed. Just before the verdict he actually drove from New Jersey to Florida with pneumonia (complication of the lung cancer) and two broken ribs (complication of the bone cancer that had spread from the lung), and then loaded and unloaded a full van of stuff saying, "I gotta go to the chiropractor" and drastically minimized his situation.

Regular check-ups and early detection are so important. There is no need for panic, I just want you all to be aware and be proactive. There are a lot of TV commercials about Mesothelioma, but apparently Asbestosis is far, far more common, and both are much more manageable through early detection. Also of note, veterans with these illnesses (or spouses) may be eligible for a VA claim if the cause of their illness. The veterans advocate at [asbestos.com](http://asbestos.com) from the Veteran's Assistance Network/Mesothelioma Canter was very supportive and informative. He is LCDR Carl Jewett, who spent 24 years in submarines, and can be reached at 800-590-1922 or email [cjewett@asbestos.com](mailto:cjewett@asbestos.com). If only one person is helped because he pays attention to warning signs he otherwise may not have known, that would be great and would make my dad proud. Dad wore his Sea Poacher cap all the time, was very proud of his submarine service, and I just wanted to "pay it forward" in his memory. He later was a Technical Writer for General Dynamics and Docent on New Jersey.

Finally, a very sweet Sea Poacher veteran Jack Dubbs visited my mother and presented her with a plaque as a memorial of my father. The family is very grateful for that. Be Well and God Bless You All! Sincerely, Wanda Brown



William Brown, Jr.



William and Daughter Wanda at Battleship New Jersey



# REPORT FROM PRESIDENT BILL BRINKMAN

Hello Shipmates,

**1. Dues:** Currently, we have 217 Life Members and 29 Regular members. If you're a Life Member or have paid your 2011 dues, thank you. If not, then just a reminder to pay \$10 for your 2011 dues, or to become a Life Member for \$100. There are several good reasons for becoming a Life Member:

- a. You'll never again get these annoying letters from me or our Treasurer Hubert Jackson.
- b. You'll receive a free patch.
- c. The Association continues Life Membership status for your widow.

Send your check (made out to Sea Poacher Association) to me at 4500 Tiffany Nicole Street, Round Rock, TX 78665-9466 or email me at [seapoacher@austin.rr.com](mailto:seapoacher@austin.rr.com) if you have questions.

**2. Address and e-mail changes:** Please be sure to send us your latest mailing and e-mail addresses. Remember, it is our Association policy to not show your mailing address and telephone number on our newsletters or on our website. When shipmates request them, we do put them in touch with you.

**3. Preview our next Reunion in San Antonio, Texas April 16-19, 2012:** Our next National reunion will be hosted by Bill and Lin Brinkman and Hubert and Linda Jackson. We've reserved the Holiday Inn Riverwalk hotel for \$109 a night which is a great deal for a riverwalk hotel. San Antonio is served by many airlines including low cost Southwest Airlines. Shuttle service to the Hotel is available. Those driving into San Antonio will be sent information on other places to see in Texas including the *USS Cavalla* (SS-244) at Seawolf Park in Galveston and the *USS Texas* Battleship in San Jacinto.






- a. Plan on arriving by Sunday **April 15** as we have a full plate of activities for the week.
- b. On **Monday, April 16** we'll help you see the Alamo and Alamo Square which are only four blocks from the hotel. At 1600, we'll board the River Boats and see the River Walk from the boats. The boats will pick us up at the hotel and return us to the hotel. We'll have a picnic type dinner and a show at the hotel this evening to officially start the Reunion.
- c. On **Tuesday, April 17**, we'll take a one hour bus trip to visit the Admiral Nimitz National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas. Group photos will be taken in front of the surfacing submarine *USS Pintado* (SS-387) and then we will visit the Museum. Fredericksburg is a tourist town with plenty of shops and restaurants. Lunch is on your own. Later we'll board the busses for dinner at the famous German Restaurant Friedhelms.
- d. On **Wednesday, April 18**, we'll take a two hour bus trip to visit the *USS Lexington* (CV-16) in Corpus Christi. We'll have lunch on board the "Lady Lex" and then a tour. Other activities are in the planning stage for this day.
- e. On **Thursday, April 19**, we'll sight see San Antonio via bus. We plan on conducting our Memorial Services at the San Antonio National Cemetery which is a small cemetery, but it has 13 Medal of Honor servicemen buried there. Lunch will be at the Red Barn Restaurant. We'll also visit the SAS Shoe Store which has classic cars, low cost shoes and women's handbags and plenty of atmosphere. Our Banquet will be held this evening.

You can check out the preview of the 2012 San Antonio Reunion at my Photo Shows at <http://www.photoshow.com/members/wbrinkman>. Also see Nimitz Museum Dec 7, 2009 for more Museum pictures. Also check out "USS Sea Poacher" for our Reunions in 2006 and 2008 and Branson 2010 Reunion for our 2010 Reunion.

**4. Newsletter Via E-mail:** Because of the change to a printing company, our costs per issue have gone up to \$2.50 an issue which is significant as that's the amount of money your dues cover. So, I ask those of you that have computers, or access to them to view and/or print your own newsletter off of our website <http://www.seapoacher.com>. Please **let me know** at [seapoacher@austin.rr.com](mailto:seapoacher@austin.rr.com) that you want to get your newsletter off the computer and to be taken off the mailing list for the newsletter to save the Association over \$10 a year. We'll use the savings for our other activities instead! Then four times a year, I'll e-mail you to inform you that the latest newsletter is on the website for you to view and/or print.

**5. Ship's Stores New Items - Richard DeRossett and Ray Krivascy paintings:** The Renown Marine Artist Richard DeRossett has made us two paintings showing Sea Poacher with the Step Sail and during the Cuban Missile Crises with the North Atlantic Sail. We have prints and high quality canvas reproductions. He has also done a third painting of the WWII Version showing a gun battle with the Japanese in 1945. Our own Ray Krivascy TM 1952-1953 has painted Sea Poacher at the pier in 1952 which he gave to Captain William Gibson at his change of command in 1953. We also have prints and canvas copies. All come unframed and prices include shipping/postage. Fill in the below form, make a copy, do your check payable to Bill Brinkman, and mail to me at 4500 Tiffany Nicole Street, Round Rock, TX 78665-9466

### SEA POACHER SHIP'S STORES

 <p>This beautifully crafted stainglass piece of Sea Poacher created by Annette Snook, wife of John B. Snook QM 59-62. This piece will be a crafted by Annette as we receive orders, so there will be some delay in delivery. Piece measures 17"x10 1/2".</p>	<p><b>New Items : 7 Paintings by Richard DeRossett and our own Ray Krivascy.</b></p> <p><b>DeRossett , WW II 1945 Surface Action 17" X 39"</b></p>  <p><b>DeRossett , Step Sail 10" X 23 " Print</b>  <b>DeRossett , Step Sail 15 " X 28 " Canvas</b></p>  <p><b>DeRossett , North Atlantic Sail 10" X 23 " Print</b>  <b>DeRossett , North Atlantic Sail 15" X 28 " Canvas</b></p>  <p><b>Krivascy , Step Sail 18.5 " X 15 " Print</b>  <b>Krivascy , Step Sail 21.5 " X 18 " Canvas</b></p> 
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Items	Quantity	Price	Total
Key Chain	_____	\$3.00	_____
Ship Patch	_____	5.50	_____
Ball Cap	_____	14.00	_____
Plastic Mugs	_____	12.00	_____
Golf Shirt Sizes M, L, XL & 2XL (w/o pockets)	_____	22.00	_____
Golf Shirt Sizes M, L, XL & 2XL (with pockets)	_____	25.00	_____
Ship's Plaque	_____	50.00	_____
Painting DeRossett 10x23 print Step Sail	_____	20.00	_____
Painting DeRossett 15x28 canvas Step Sail	_____	30.00	_____
Painting DeRossett 10x23 print Cuba	_____	20.00	_____
Painting DeRossett 15x28 canvas Cuba	_____	30.00	_____
Painting DeRossett 17x39 canvas WWII	_____	40.00	_____
Painting Krivascy 15x18 print Step Sail	_____	20.00	_____
Painting Krivascy 18x21.5 canvas Step Sail	_____	35.00	_____
Stained Glass Sea Poacher	_____	110.00	_____
Dolphin Vest chains, gold or silver	_____	25.00	_____
We Remember Sea Poacher Book (on CD)	_____	10.00	_____
<b>TOTAL</b>			=====



SAMEDI 4 MAI 1958

# CHEIROUIN

## Glorieux combattant de la guerre du Pacifique

### Le sous-marin U. S. « Sea Poacher » fait escale en notre port jusqu'à mercredi

Le sous-marin américain U.S.S. Sea Poacher (S. 406) est arrivé hier à l'arsenal de Cherbourg pour une escale de routine qui doit se prolonger jusqu'à mercredi, c'est-à-dire à 17 heures.

Peu avant 10 heures, le Sea Poacher, se présentait devant les passerelles. Une garde formée par l'Asdra et bénéficiant du concours d'un clairon de la Compagnie de Protection, avait été mise en place

quai du Musée naval afin de répondre aux honneurs rendus par le « Sea Poacher » à la marque du vice-amiral d'escadre Rousselot, croisé maritime.

La manœuvre étant commandée

Le « Sea Poacher », le brasseurier de la mer, a été lancé le 20 mai 1944 à Portsmouth, dans le New Hampshire. Vers la fin du mois d'octobre 1944, il arrive dans la zone des combats, dans le Pacifique et remplit plusieurs missions délicates. En peu de temps, il coule le 9 bâtiment de la marine royale japonaise et détruit une station de communications radio. La fin de la guerre le trouve à Pearl Harbor où il repart pour New London dans le Connecticut afin de servir à la flotte de l'Atlantique.

Le 1944, il est en Sea Poacher est basé à Halifax puis en 1945, au chantier naval de Charleston. Il subit des transformations pour devenir le premier « Grupp » de la flotte de l'Atlantique. Depuis cette date, il patrouille dans la mer des Caraïbes, rend d'innombrables services aux unités de la Flotte atlantique. Il fait actuellement parti de la 6e flotte américaine et est intégré dans les forces de l'OTAN en Europe.

Autre détail intéressant, le 10 juillet 1952, alors qu'il était en opération dans les parages du Key West, il se heurta tout porter secours à un avion qui venait de tomber dans l'Océan. Il remorqua même l'avion pendant 40 miles pour le ramener à sa base en Floride.

#### UN PROGRAMME DE VISITES FORT CHARGÉ

Le commandant du « Sea Poacher » a rendu visite hier matin au contre-amiral Le Kunt, major général, au contre-amiral Bellet, député-maire et M. Châteauneuf, sous-préfet de Cherbourg. Puis il a été accueilli par le vice-amiral d'escadre Rousselot, chef d'escadre.

Toutes ces autorités se sont rendues dans l'après-midi à bord du sous-marin américain.

Quant à l'après-midi, il a été consacré à une escale en terre française à profit pour visiter notre cité. Les premiers renseignements qu'il aura eus le bord une heure après l'arrivée du bateau à l'arsenal.

La direction des fêtes organisées à l'initiative des sous-marins américains, deux Utah-Becel, l'après-midi, l'après-midi, l'après-midi.



The American submarine USS Sea Poacher (SS406) arrived yesterday at the armory of [Cherbourg](#) for a routine stopover which will last until Wednesday at 1700 hours. A little before 10 AM, Sea Poacher arrived. She was met by the Company of Protection at the North Pierhead quay where honors were given by Sea Poacher to the Squadron [Vice Admiral](#) Rousselot and the Vice Maritime Prefect. The Sea Poacher was built and launched on 20 May 1944 at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. At the end of October 1944, it arrived in the Pacific zone of combat, and completed several delicate missions. She rapidly destroyed 9 Japanese ships and a radio station. At the end of the war she was in [Pearl Harbor](#) and returned to New London, Connecticut to become again part of the [Atlantic Fleet](#). From 1946 to 1949 Sea Poacher was based in Balboa. In 1951 at the Charleston dockyard she was the first submarine transformed to a Guppy with snorkel. Since that time, she has patrolled primarily in the Caribbean providing services to the Atlantic Fleet. She participates in fleet exercises and is part of the NATO force in [Europe](#). Another interesting detail occurred on 10 July 1952 while operating near [Key West](#), she rescued a blimp floating in the water, and towed it 40 miles back to its base in Florida. **AN EXTREMELY FULL PROGRAM OF VISITS** The Commander of Sea Poacher will visit [Rear Admiral](#) Le Run, General Major Cocteur Hebert, [Deputy Mayor](#) Chasteauneuf, the Prefect of Cherbourg Pius, Squadron Admiral Rousselot, and Vice [Maritime Prefect](#) Quant. There will also be tours of the City and home visits...

# PERU IN JUNE 2011?

From Lanny Yeske. The Peruvian Navy will celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of their Submarine Force on Friday 17 June 2011 with the entire week (13-19) filled with supporting events. While the Association has been cordially invited by Admiral Carlos Zarate, the Submarine Force Commander, via his Chief of Staff in November 2010, despite repeated emails no new information has yet been received. Because of the time frame, some of us are dropping out, but there are others still planning on it.

The Navy schedule has still not yet been released, and I will send out details by email as soon as received. One of OUR major events will also be to visit the final resting site of Sea Poacher/La Pedrera, which is located only three miles north of the Submarine Base in Callao. The January 2011 Newsletter spelled out many options to this travel and need not be repeated here. Please check that newsletter for details. These included staying in Lima, visiting Nazca, Cuzco, Machu Picchu, Lake Titicaca, Amazon, and Galapagos Islands. Costs are quite reasonable. Anyway, too many unknowns now. Any questions? Call me at 434-385-7117 or email [doctoryeske@yahoo.com](mailto:doctoryeske@yahoo.com).

## SEA POACHER MEMORIAL FUND

When a shipmate passes on, the USS Sea Poacher Association presents to their next of kin a Memorial Plaque to commemorate their service to Sea Poacher. The plaque is a framed and matted picture taken from the bridge of Sea Poacher during the Cuban Missile Crisis and superimposed over it is the Final Prayer. It also indicates the years the shipmate served aboard. The Association decided that funding for this project should stand alone, so we are accepting contributions which may be made out to Sea Poacher Association and mailed to President, Bill Brinkman. Please indicate "Memorial Fund" on your check.



Walter Patrick presents Sea Poacher Memorial Plaque to the family of Peter F. (Honey) McCormack (Yeoman 1951) on 26 February 2011 in Uncasville, CT. From left to right Sandi Radford, Peter's Daughter; Walter Patrick, RMCSS (SS), USN Retired; David Radford, Peter's Grandson; and other members of the family.

## **SEA POACHER ASSOCIATION**

William Dukacz, Publisher  
128 Cedar Lane  
New Hartford, CT 06057-2925  
[seapoacher@sbcglobal.net](mailto:seapoacher@sbcglobal.net)

Was it one or two 5 inch deck guns? Now you know for certain! Photo courtesy of Diane MacPherson.

