

# BENEATH THE WAVES

## VINEY '70 EMBRACED THE UNIQUE MISSION CAPABILITIES AND PERILS OF SUBMARINE SERVICE

**I**t didn't take long for Bob Viney '70 to experience the vulnerabilities of the Silent Service firsthand.

In the summer of 1972, President Richard Nixon sent two carrier groups off the coast of North Vietnam, near the Gulf of Tonkin, to support mining and bombing operations. The Russians countered by deploying submarines with subsurface to surface antiship missile capability about 100 miles east of U.S. carrier groups, Viney said.

During his first special operations patrol aboard nuclear fast-attack submarine TAUTOG, Viney served as junior officer of the deck. U.S. antisubmarine P-3 Orions detected a Russian sub. TAUTOG was ordered to covertly track its adversary. For three weeks, TAUTOG did just that.

It was a perilous but effective operation. While a sub's greatest risks patrolling the waters off Vietnam might've been running aground or colliding with surface ships, tracking a Russian sub came with serious implications.

"Trailing is a very dangerous situation because you are so close," Viney said. "You don't know with 100% certainty that you have depth separation.

"You're listening by sound and trying to decide if they are in attack mode or cruise mode. Any time they would go to the surface, we would go to battle stations and be ready if the captain thought they were preparing to launch at our ships. We would be prepared to launch first."

Viney's experience was just one example of the Cold War cat-and-mouse game played between the Russians and United States beneath the waves. The high-stakes operations were critical with the all-too-real threat of nuclear war looming.

Submarine service was a calling to Viney, whose father Commander Irwin John Viney '47, USN (Ret.), served aboard four World War II-era submarines, before

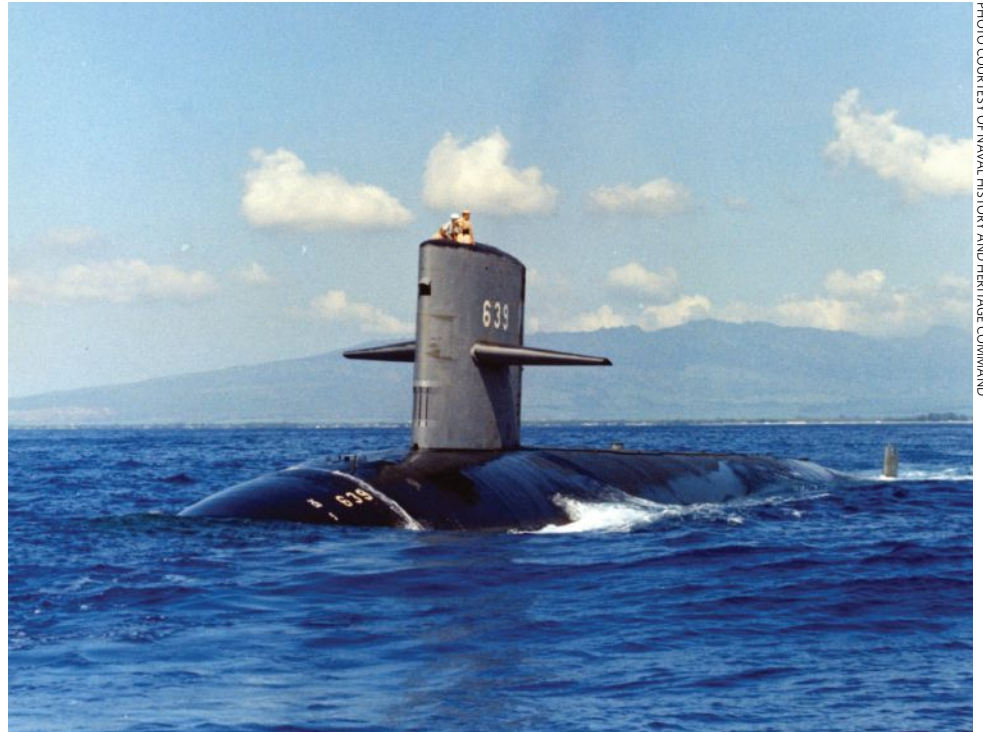


PHOTO COURTESY OF NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND

a tour at the Naval War College and a final assignment as academic director of the Submarine School in Groton, CT. Life below the seas intrigued Viney from the time he was 5 years old. Viney's goal in attending the U.S. Naval Academy was to eventually serve in the submarine force, and that motivation only grew stronger during his time at the Academy. While submariners did not face the battleground hazards of surface warfare officers or infantry Marines, their service during the Vietnam-era was crucial for future deterrence missions throughout the Cold War.

### LIKE A WORLD WAR II MOVIE

Following some R&R in the Philippines, TAUTOG's crew spent a month off the North Vietnamese coast on a special operations patrol related to the identification of commercial ships going in and out of Haiphong. He said the shallow water off the continental shelf of Asia, made the mission more challenging and dangerous.

Instead of operating in depths of more than 600 feet, 290-foot TAUTOG operated at depths between 200-400 feet. The crew

**TAUTOG is a STURGEON-class attack nuclear submarine. Bob Viney '70 served aboard the sub in 1972 and participated in missions in the shallow waters off the North Vietnamese coast near Haiphong. The operation included cataloging ships and their cargo as they entered and exited the port.**

worked at periscope depth (65 feet), cataloging ships by flag, cargo and draft.

"It was a nerve-racking period because we would spend almost the entire time there at periscope depth looking for surface ships," Viney said. "When we would pick up something on sonar, it would be like a World War II movie. You'd go racing off to try to get close enough to take pictures of what flag they were flying, what was the name of the ship, what was the home port that was on the stern.

"Could we tell what was on deck? What type of cargo were they bringing in? Were they arriving full or empty based on where the water line was?"

## FORWARDING THE LEGACY

Viney said the Silent Service might not have seen the same types of combat as members of other service communities, but the significance of the submarine force's role should not be underestimated. Following the critical contributions submarines made in World War II, submariners have continued to be an invaluable asset to national security—through the strength of deterrence and by monitoring maritime activities from below.

Viney's father was the executive officer aboard *STERLET* in 1956-58 and commanded *MENHADEN* in 1958-60. He made multiple six-month deployments to the Western Pacific conducting special operations missions off the coast of

Russia in a diesel boat, without the stealth advantages afforded in nuclear submarines.

Father and son would eventually compare notes about their common experiences. Despite many differences in operational and technical capabilities and "creature comforts," the purpose of the operations was essentially unchanged.

"We had much more sophisticated electronic information gathering systems than they did," Bob Viney said. "And while we could control the temperature in the submarine when the sea water temperature was below freezing, World War II era submarines lived for weeks in a cold atmosphere with condensation constantly forming throughout the boat."

A life of service is just as meaningful now, Viney said, particularly as the percentage of Americans who have served continues to decrease.

"The further we get away from the times when most of our citizens and the majority of our legislators in Congress have served and have a real understanding of what service and sacrifice is about, the greater is the risk that we might not make the right national security decisions," he said. "If we don't have citizens understanding the importance of service and sacrifice for the country, then our whole way of life is at risk."

## EARLY INGENUITY

Even before he earned his dolphins, Viney demonstrated a knack for innovation. Following graduation in 1970, while awaiting the start of nuclear power school, he sought temporary duty at the Naval Ordnance Laboratory in White Oak, MD. There, he took the initiative to develop a novel approach to submarine torpedo storage.

Inspired by the mechanics of a six-shooter, he proposed a rotating-cylinder concept for preloaded torpedo stowage. His analysis and technical papers earned commendation for "considerable initiative ... well beyond those expected of [his] rank and experience."

Though he downplays a direct link, when four ballistic missile submarines were converted to carry cruise missiles, and the latest version of the *VIRGINIA*-class submarines debuted, they had vertical launch tubes with six cruise missiles preloaded in a cylinder inserted into the missile tubes.

"I don't know if my idea was part of that, but it was a really rewarding experience to be treated seriously and not as a new graduate," Viney said. "I was really lucky to be given the freedom to explore the whole topic."

At the Naval Academy, Viney pursued that ambition with purpose. On his first-class summer cruise, he qualified as diving officer and stood watch aboard the submarine *PARGO*, even listening at periscope depth as Neil Armstrong walked on the moon.

"I came back just as motivated," he said, "and a sit-down with Admiral Rickover confirmed everything. I loved the time at sea. The challenges of understanding all the systems and eventually earning qualification as diving officer, officer of the deck and engineering officer of the watch, culminating with certification as a submarine warfare officer and wearing dolphins,

**Bob Viney '70 served as junior officer of the deck aboard *TAUTOG* in 1972. For three weeks, the submarine tracked a Russian sub.**



PHOTO COURTESY OF BOB VINEY '70

represented the realization of a long-term goal for me.”

Admiral Hyman G. Rickover, USN (Ret.), Class of 1922, the father of the nuclear Navy, personally interviewed all officer candidates for the U.S. nuclear power program. Rickover questioned candidates’ academic prowess and dedication.

He also had a reputation for purposely putting candidates under stress. His tactics included having candidates wait hours outside his office and sit in chairs with shortened front legs.

Viney’s experience included a test of his academic commitment during his three-minute interview. During his first-class year, Viney was a company commander, which held little weight to the admiral.

“He asked me if I could commit 20 hours a week to studying,” Viney said. “The whole time he was speaking with me, he was thumbing through my file. He never really looked at me.

“But, when he asked me that question, I said, ‘No sir.’ That got him to look at me and he asked, ‘why not?’ I said, ‘I have responsibilities as company commander and I don’t think I can honestly commit to that number of hours.’”

A prospective commanding officer stood behind him in civilian clothes, Viney said. He “was really there to keep you from charging the admiral if you got upset at him,” Viney said. Rickover asked the captain behind Viney to tell him what being a company commander is going to matter once he gets on a ship.

The captain agreed it wasn’t important and that focusing on academics was the priority, Viney said.

“He looked down at my file again and asked me to commit to 15 hours a week,” Viney said. “I replied that I could comply with that request. The admiral’s response was a curt, ‘that’s all.’

“You never know whether you’ve been accepted or not until the list comes out.”

Viney received the admiral’s blessing and answered his calling for service under the sea. ⚓

## CINCINNATI MEMORIAL HONORS COLD WAR SERVICE

**A** Cold War memorial under construction in Ohio will honor submarine service, teach youngsters STEM topics related to nuclear submarine capabilities and aim to inspire future generations to pursue STEM-related careers, as operators or as builders.

The USS CINCINNATI Cold War Memorial Peace Pavilion commemorates the peaceful conclusion to the Cold War. It is a tribute to military veterans and celebrates the contributions of Cincinnatians toward national defense during the Cold War.

The memorial, slated to open in May 2026, is being built at the site of the Voice of America (VOA) Park and VOA National Broadcast Museum in West Chester, OH. Voice of America broadcasts emanated from the Bethany power station in West Chester and were broadcast into Europe and Germany during World War II and behind the Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe during the Cold War. CINCINNATI (SSN-693), a LOS ANGELES-class fast-attack submarine launched in February 1977 and decommissioned in July 1996, completed many special operations during the Cold War years.

The partnership of two Cold War veterans who served in the Naval Nuclear Power program is a natural fit, according to Bob Viney ’70. Joe Jaap, a local Cincinnati and Purdue University NROTC graduate, is president, and Viney is vice president and program executive of the Submarine CINCINNATI Memorial Association. Viney is a second-generation Naval Academy alumnus who followed his father’s path into the Silent Service.

The USS CINCINNATI Cold War Memorial Peace Pavilion is an homage to the submariners who served under the sea and VOA, which broadcast pro-democracy messages through the airwaves.

“We’re going to be telling the story of the Cold War and the role submarines and VOA played in preserving global peace,” Viney said.

The memorial will include components from CINCINNATI that will serve as learning aids as well as the heart of a full-size replica submarine. CINCINNATI’s conning tower, forward diving planes, upper rudder and emergency diesel generator will be placed in their appropriate spaces in the memorial.



**Construction of the USS CINCINNATI Cold War Memorial Peace Pavilion is underway on property owned by fellow Cold War veteran, the Voice of America.**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BOB VINEY '70





The emergency diesel generator for CINCINNATI (SSN-693) is nicknamed “The Big Red Machine” in honor of the 1970s Cincinnati Reds teams. The generator will be included in the full-size replica sub at the USS CINCINNATI Cold War Memorial Peace Pavilion being built in West Chester, OH.



Construction of the USS CINCINNATI Cold War Memorial Peace Pavilion in August 2025.



The submarine sail was placed in late October at the USS CINCINNATI Cold War Memorial Peace Pavilion in West Chester, OH.

The generator is affectionately known as “The Big Red Machine” for its color and to honor Cincinnati’s World Series championship teams in 1975 and 1976. The Reds, led by Pete Rose, Johnny Bench and Joe Morgan, also won six division titles in the 1970s and were nicknamed “The Big Red Machine.”

“(CINCINNATI’s) diesel generator was not painted Navy gray when the ship was built,” Viney said. “They painted it red in the shipyard. The whole time it was on active service, it was referred to by the crew as the Big Red Machine.”

Many of the generator’s access covers will be replaced with plexiglass to show visitors the internal mechanics of the machine. Displays in each compartment area throughout the replica sub will detail the capabilities, the major equipment and the science behind the operations of the 362-foot vessel, and will describe the tasks and skills of the crew members on watch in each compartment.

“Visitors will get a sense as to what compartment they’re in,” Viney said. “The experience will be a virtual walking tour of a nuclear submarine, which does not exist anywhere else in the country. We also wanted to specifically highlight the roles and skills of the crew.”

Memorial organizers will employ Artificial Intelligence (AI) to help formulate answers to school-aged children’s technical questions in grade relevant language, Viney said. That could include how a nuclear power plant operates with answers differing for a fourth grader and high school senior. AI avatars will serve as crew members who will have conversations with students through interactive kiosks.

Another display will show how subs are built.

“We hope we’re going to excite kids about pursuing science, technology, engineering and math in school,” Viney said. “We hope the kids who aren’t interested in college when they come, will be interested in being skilled tradesmen. We need to increase our shipbuilding capabilities.”

Memorial organizers originally planned to develop a park along the Ohio River between Cincinnati’s pro football and pro baseball stadiums. However, after nearly 10 years working with the city, county and parks officials, an arrangement for space never materialized and the Voice of America property made a perfect match to the mission about three years ago.

In the summer of 2025, Viney said the memorial had about 80% of its construction budget in hand. Fundraising is still ongoing with about \$1.9 million needed to finish the construction, build the STEM education center, develop the STEM education program and fund an endowment for upkeep and maintenance of the memorial.

“The goal is to use only private funding,” said Viney.

No local taxpayer funding is being used to build or maintain the Memorial.

“It’s a gift from the veteran community and the public who supports us with contributions,” Viney said. 🚢

To learn more about the USS CINCINNATI Peace Pavilion, visit [www.subcincy.org](http://www.subcincy.org).