

Letter: Submariners have a plan to save Clamagore
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The USS Clamagore SS-343 currently sits at a pier near the Patriots Point Maritime Museum in Mount Pleasant. The superstructure has extensive corrosion but the ballast tanks and pressure hull are still intact.

None of the maintenance Patriots Point agreed to perform after signing the donation contract has been performed. The executive director of Patriots Point, Mac Burdette, has been actively pursuing a way to remove the boat from the museum. This action was required by the condition he found the submarine when he took over as executive director.

When a group of Charleston area submarine veterans heard that the submarine was going to be sent to Florida to be sunk as a diving reef we banded together to form the USS Clamagore SS-343 Restoration and Maintenance Association, Inc. (CRAMA).

We are incorporated in South Carolina and are a Section 501(c)(3) non-profit charity under the Internal Revenue Service Code. We hope to move the Clamagore to a land berth in order to reduce the maintenance required to keep it open for the public to visit.

We hope to have it in the vicinity of the H.L. Hunley Museum in North Charleston so that after viewing the Hunley visitors could go on board and see mid-20th century submarine conditions.

We estimate that placing it in a land berth would cost between \$1.6 million and \$2.3 million, depending on what an initial drydocking shows. Part of this cost could be raised by selling materials not required with the sub in a land berth.

Due to actions taken by Patriots Point after receiving the USS Clamagore, removing the deck hatches and main ballast tank blow piping, the ship is not seaworthy. The only way it can leave the Charleston harbor is on a barge or onboard another ship.

The USS Clamagore is the last Balao-class Guppy III submarine afloat. Although she did not see service in World War II she is a representative of submarines that fought so effectively in the Pacific theater in the war. The submarine did participate in many missions during the Cold War period.

She is an example of modern submarine design in that the compartmentation and construction are similar to submarines serving the U.S. Navy today.

Since all current U.S. Navy submarines are nuclear powered the possibility of getting a more modern submarine in Charleston for a memorial is negligible.

But why keep it in the Charleston area? The USS Clamagore can effectively show the development of the modern submarine from the H.L. Hunley, the first submarine to sink a warship. The USS Clamagore was stationed in Charleston and was overhauled at Charleston Naval Shipyard.

Charleston was a very important Navy installation during the Cold War era with the first deterrent patrol of a Fleet Ballistic Submarine, USS George Washington SSBN 598, leaving from the Naval Weapons Station. Many submarines were stationed in the Charleston area and many millions of dollars came into the economy from the families and sailors stationed on those ships and the support commands.

Properly done the USS Clamagore and a museum dedicated to the history of all submarines could be an international attraction bringing much more into the Charleston area economy than the cost of the museum.

More information is available on the CRAMA website, www.ussclamagore.org

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