

Thank you XO, and thank you Admiral Perry. Good afternoon Admiral Hahn, former Commanding Officers, submarine officers and sailors, families, distinguished guests and supporters of the USS PITTSBURGH, and welcome to the final ceremony in the remarkable 35 year history of the USS PITTSBURGH. A special thank you is extended to those that traveled far to be here for this celebration. I am Commander Jason Deichler, the 14<sup>th</sup> Commanding Officer of this mighty warship and a native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

I have the distinct honor today of signing the final deck logs and securing the watch for the 32<sup>nd</sup> Los Angeles Class submarine and first second flight, vertical launch system equipped 688. Before those logbooks are signed and transferred to the National Archives, I want to take some time today, with all of you present, to recognize the families, crew and supporters of the HEART OF STEEL. My most sincere thank you to Rear Admiral Doug Perry for speaking today - his presence and influence on my career truly defines the brotherhood and bond between submariners that can't ever be broken - he sincerely embodies the concept of FAITH - a topic I will touch upon today.

Although it is a magnificent honor to inactivate a ship, it is not a task I wished for. I was surprised with a phone call one week into my command tour that PITTSBURGH would be

decommissioned in 2020. For 18 months, I fought to maintain PITTSBURGH an active ship of line. The material condition, crew, and warfighting capability of this 35 year old vessel were still as strong our next submarine, USS VERMONT (SSN 792) soon to be delivered. But it was not to be. The old must be replaced by the new. As for this ceremony, I truly wish I could have sailed into the confluence of the Monongahela, Ohio, and Allegheny and landed 720 at the point. I would have had a Pittsburgh-yinzer fest not seen since the Regatta of 1995. That not being a real possibility, my crew truly desired to remain in Groton for this grand ceremony. But we had missions to conduct - we had fight left in us, and our orders carried us here. We had to prepare for operations never conducted on PITTSBURGH. But the brotherhood of all PITTSBURGH crew members transcends location, it transcends the machinery and steel tube that forged those bonds. So you can lament not touring the heart of steel one last time, or you can celebrate the accomplishments of the crew and the families over the past 35 years. I ask you do the latter.

The backbone of any crew, of any service member, is the family that supports them at home. To the families of current and crewmembers here today, thank you. Sincerely. The power of your faces, smiles, family grams, small tokens, and love enable the strength required for the impossible tasks we ask the crew

to perform. It is what sets us apart in many ways from the armed services of other nations. We know the faces of our family, and we work to truly honor them.

Honoring me today, is my wife, confidant, and closest friend Michelle. At our wedding 21 years ago, we read the oft used passage from Corinthians 13, more famously known as "Love is patient" Michelle and I were kids, not much older than our daughter Hannah is now. We did not know what the future held for us, and we could have never predicted this amazing ride. Reading that passage now gives me such perspective on the beautiful, strong woman that chose me. "Love does not delight in evil, it always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." Michelle, through, my career, and through this tour, you have in turn and, at times, simultaneously protected, trusted, hoped, and persevered. I don't know why, or how I earned this, but I promise once again, as I did on December 19, 1998, in front of Jeff, Lesa, Karen and Jimmy, to honor you until death do us part. Until the end of time, it will always be you and I. Please accept these flowers, and a promise from me to come back home soon. The orders are written, so if I know detailing, there is a better than 50% chance it will happen! I love you, and soon our family will be whole again.

Psalm 107 tells us that: "Some went out on the sea in ships, they went down to the depths; they reeled and staggered like drunkards; they were at their wit's ends. But they have a present and powerful help in that and every other time of need, so that when they are at their wits' end they are not at their faith's end."

There is a faith in submarining that is a challenge to explain. Faith in the unknown, faith in a brotherhood, faith in our families. Faith that goes beyond a steel encased tube.

Faith is truly a unique concept. Humans have searched for the meaning, a true understanding. Throughout my Command tour, I searched and found some of the essence of this faith. This journey however, started, well before my Command tour.

My grandfather, James B. Deichler, affectionately known Big Jim and Pappy, was a Pacific Theater World War II veteran. He served onboard LST 938, USS Maricopa County, and was a member of the Greatest Generation. He made a difference. Enlisting at 16, he hid his age, and set out to complete a Pacific theater tour that included the landing at Mindanao, occupation of the Philippines Islands, and mainland China. Returning from the war, he served the rest of his life as a professional Firefighter in Carnegie, Pennsylvania. Growing up, I remember

weekends he and my Grandmother, Margaret, would travel to visit crewmembers from LST 938.

What I remember vividly were the sea stories about his shipmates. Interested in this brotherhood, and his heroic career, I once asked him his rating. He chuckled and said, "Jason, back then we didn't have ratings. I manned a gun when I was told, I cooked meals when told, I swabbed decks when told. I fought for our country. That was my rating." He was my example of patriotism, one of my first examples for faith. Believe in your shipmates, and your purpose. We defend our country and the world against evil. I hoped and prayed for that opportunity when I joined the Navy. I hoped and prayed for that opportunity when I volunteered for the submarine force in 1998. I hoped and prayed for that opportunity when I was blessed with command of PITTSBURGH.

In January of 2018, I was given that opportunity, as I relieved Neil Colston as the Captain of PITTSBURGH. But this journey didn't begin nor was it tread alone. My four children, Hannah, James, Matthew and Ian lived and supported me in so many small ways these past two years, each providing me strength, comfort and wisdom. Each provided me a deeper understanding of my role as father and Commanding Officer - each help me shaped my understanding of faith.

My youngest son, Ian, told me simply that faith is believing in what you can't see. Smart beyond his years, he summarized submarining and Command in one short sentence. Believe in what you can't see. Submariners and Captains do this every day - we chase submarines we can't see; we operate equipment behind lead shielding; we have faith in our team beyond the bulkheads of our stateroom. Believe in what you can't see.

My daughter Hannah will tell you that faith is believing in home. Hannah has moved with Michelle and I since she was born in January of 2000, nine times in total. She will tell that strangers in a new town raise you up to cut you down, but that with the love of your family and your Navy family, you will always belong.

Exemplifying this, USS PITTSBURGH and her families had the honor of bringing our submarine safely to her new town to be as a final resting place. Bremerton is a long way from Groton. A daunting task for sure. This crew was asked, less than 45 days after returning from deployment, to conduct an under-ice transit from the only homeport they have ever known. Families were asked to uproot and move cross-country without their husbands. Aided by my wonderful OMBUDSMAN, Michelle Waters, each and every crewmember moved their families cross-country while conducting a

first-of under-ice transit - winning the Squadron NINETEEN Navigation "N" in the process. Michelle accepted the role of OMBUDSMAN in March 2019, and then proceeded to move each and every family, cross-country, in April. I am not sure that this task can be truly understood by anyone that has never served as an OMBUDSMAN. Michelle has been the lighthouse that has withstood erosion as each and every wave crashed across her shoreline. She has been an amazing advisor to me on the crew's needs. Michelle, please accept this small token as a thank you from me and a grateful crew.

Back to this concept of faith. My son James, a burgeoning collegiate lacrosse player, will tell you that faith is having the knowledge that your training, ability and confidence will win the day. When I waiver in my confidence, he always quotes to me the famous Wayne Gretzky line, "You miss 100% of the shots you don't take." The current and past crews of PITTSBURGH never faltered when asked to take those shots, and I promise to detail those stories soon.

My last son, Matthew, well, he will stay quiet on faith. Such is his way. He has a calm and understanding that his father will always return home and bring his crew with him. Much like his father, this weighs heavily and silently on him. But if you dig a little deeper, his namesake, Saint Matthew,

once famously scripted that faith, no matter if it is as small as a mustard seed, can move a mountain. Inside the brotherhood of submariners, it is the accumulation of those small "mustard seed" events that gives us a strong belief in each other.

It is the belief in one another that has filled this auditorium today. So many past crewmembers, supporters, and families traveled today to be here for this event. Thank you for the weather, distance and time you have endured to be here at this event.

Ten of the fourteen Commanding Officers or their spouses are present here today. None of these officers reside in the Pacific Northwest, and most traveled cross-country and thousands of miles to recapture or revisit that feeling of brotherhood. None traveled to walk inside the USS PITTSBURGH, and all understood the impossibility of this. All too understood that the inside of the USS PITTSBURGH is lifeless - no longer is there a a smell of amine and lube oil mist, or the growl of the Diesel Generator, or the voices of dripping sarcasm from the crew's mess, or a Chief's size 11 boot stomping through the bilge or the deafening silence of a nuclear propulsion plant or the smell of freshly minted steam. The essential inside of the submarine is gone.



But what remains are the stories, the memories and moments. I am sure as I listed all of the missing components, each submariner's nose had an olfactory response, ears heard ghosts and hands felt valves, sticks, periscopes. These senses, these moments - that is where the PITTSBURGH will eternally reside. Hidden in the corners of our minds, possibly recessed behind one too many beverages or a haze of gray smoke exists those special relationships. I consider myself truly blessed to close the final chapter and draft those final memories onboard PITTSBURGH.

My first Captain, Paul Siegrist, is in the crowd today. He pinned on my dolphins in 2002 and has been a constant presence during my Naval career. He was present when I took command, and he is here today as we secure the watch on PITTSBURGH. He made an indelible mark on how I navigated both the depths of each nautical mile steamed and my career. He also provided me a vision that has lived onto PITTSBURGH. He taught me three simple rules: Do it right, do it by procedure, and everyone comes home safe. I believe he is proud to know that I accomplished those goals. PITTSBURGH did it right, did it by procedure, and my crew all came home safe. This is not always a guarantee in our line of work - Captain Siegrist knew this well, as do all men and women that don a uniform. The complex tasks, duties and responsibilities each submariner carries are extraordinary. Submariners, PITTSBURGH submariners, make this

extraordinary look pedestrian. Four-time super bowl champion coach of the Pittsburgh Steelers, Chuck Noll, when asked about how his professionals excel, how they make it look easy, once quipped, "Champions are champions not because they do anything extraordinary, they just do the ordinary better than anyone else."

My crew, like those of Captain Ray Setser, CDR Neil Walsh, CDR Charles Griffiths, CDR Steve Wolff, CDR Jim Adams, CDR Chris Sullivan, CDR Paul Bushong, CDR Jeff Currer, CDR Dave Hahn, CDR Mike Savageaux, CDR Bill Solomon, and CDR Neil Colston made the extraordinary appear ordinary because of their ability to get the tasks done - to excel at the day-to-day minutiae of submarining.

Over the last 24 months of PITTSBURGH's active duty service, we humbly accomplished a multitude of the highest priority Chief of Naval Operations tasking. During my first full month in Command, PITTSBURGH completed a surfaced, at-sea engineering inspection. I am sure there are many submariners in the crowd that are grunting, or groaning at the thought of that inspection, or they are asking, so what, hasn't everybody done THAT inspection? We all have, with varying results (and corrective actions) But it is not normal for a submarine to remain surfaced during an engineering inspection of this

magnitude. It surely isn't normal during the largest east coast blizzard of 2018. Due to a material failure in our tank level circuitry, my team made the recommendation to me to remain surfaced and finish the inspection. After a discussion with the senior board member, and my Commodore (and former PITTSBURGH Engineer) Ollie Lewis, I was given the go ahead. So for 72 hours, in sea state 2, driving snow, ice and wind, my crew and engineering department, led by Master Chief Ed Oskorep and CDR Lee Keller, finished an grueling inspection while driving racetracks in Long Island Sound. Superior performance - by doing the ordinary, day-to-day tasks better than anyone else.

Not to be outdone, LCDR Craig Potthast and Senior Chief ANAV Dave Jackson planned and executed flawless navigation across an eight month deployment, and over 39,000 nautical miles. Their Navigation Department earned the Navigation "N" award twice in three years, across two squadrons and two fleets, and an under ice transit, that after twenty days without a fix, navigated PITTSBURGH within 1000 yards of its estimated position. Truly extraordinary - made to look easy to the untrained eye.

An eight month EUCOM deployment, a 34 year old LA class submarine. One mission vital to national security, three theater anti-submarine warfare missions, and three foreign port

calls. An impressive stat sheet brought to you by Weapons Department. LT Matt Bouwense, Senior Chief Chris Helms, Chief Grimes and Chief Jobses deployed maximum lethality to the combatant commander AT ALL TIMES. Although no kinetic weapons were fired, this group maintained a consistent and persistent tier 1 status as a ready tomahawk shooter - not a small feat. During an extended stretch, PITTSBURGH was the single American kinetic asset in theater. Had our Commander in Chief called for fire - PITTSBURGH was the submerged asset he would have called upon. Talk about quietly making the extraordinary look ordinary.

A crew of 150 hungry submariners. A crew of 150 opinionated critics, a surplus of Pollock, a shortage of chicken nuggets. Chief Steve Green, CHOP Sheridan Rucker and CHOP Ethan Stanley were the emcees in a gameshow where the only prize is the occasional positive comment card from Petty Officer "Big Homie" Nelson. I guess that isn't completely true. There was this other small prize called the COMSUBDEVRON TWELVE Supply Blue "E". Along with the FINEST Logisitics Specialist division I have ever SEEN, led by LSC Michael Gray, the PITTSBURGH supply department kept the submarine stocked with fine food, parts while deployed, and set land speed records for the accurate offload of parts in Puget Sound. An army marches on its

stomach. A Navy wins wars only if supplied. Five star service made to look ordinary.

For the crew and Chiefs - let me enumerate what you accomplished following deployment in front of your families and shipmates. Sadly, because WE WERE EXCELLENT at the ordinary, you tended to get overlooked for the EXTRAORDINARY feats you accomplished. Less than 45 days after returning from an eight month EUCOM deployment, with a 40% crew changeout, WE certified for arctic operations and set sail for an under-ice, change of homeport transit. 150 sailors and families had to arrive in Bremerton before June 1<sup>st</sup>, with the starting line of April 15<sup>th</sup>. CMC Dave Lewis handed over a fine Chief's quarters and Diving Officer of the Watch program for COB Dave Pope to lead into the precise shiphandling environment required for an under-ice transit. But more importantly, CMC Lewis and COB Pope led their sailors with a passion and compassion. If a sailor needed a minute, they took it. If a sailor needed to take care of his family, they stood beside them. I was blessed with two of the great ones, and so was the crew of USS PITTSBURGH. Thank you, CMC. Thank you COB.

As mentioned, we were under-ice and out of communication with no one rely upon except each other. No one to provide "off-hull" guidance or technical assistance. This is where

auxiliary division, led by Chief Navarro-Diaz and Petty Officer Patterson shined brightly - they mustered their division to fix an emergent hole and inboard leak of the sanitary waste overboard discharge piping. Although there is usually "smell-driven" motivation in these types of situations, their efforts ensured extraordinary SMELLS remained ordinary. At the ready, had those sanitation nightmares spilled over, was HM1 Austin Lenzi.

The DOC is an essential part of any close-knit military unit. He is a close advisor to the Captain, and I have been wowed by his knowledge and compassion, and appreciated the times when DOC closed my door, sat down, and asked "How are you Captain?" There are few people underway that a CAPTAIN can lean upon. DOC, thank you.

Captains are assigned Executive Officers that in the purest personnel assignment vacuum, should complement their strengths. Either by will of character, or luck of detailing, I was assigned three of the best. Jeremy Garcia prepared the crew of PITTSBURGH for our EUCOM deployment and under-ice transit. His knowledge of navigation and operations truly made him a second-in-command. I have full confidence that Jeremy will lead his own submarine on many successful missions. A special thank you to Joe Fontenot, my "second" XO. Joe stepped in and served as

Command Duty Officer during one mission vital to national security. His influence on my wardroom cannot be understated. Another future Commanding Officer that will win the day. And to Pete Gaal, my current XO - a sincere thank you and Bravo Zulu. Managing the unenviable task of leading a crew through an inactivation, he provided sound advice and calm during the storm. He fought to reduce pay and personnel issues from 150 to less than ten in under four months. Not a small feat, and a true testament to a man who cares for his people. Thank you, and thank you for suffering through my eccentricities over the past eight months.

As we stand now, we are 30 days ahead of the schedule for the decommissioning and inactivation of PITTSBURGH. Not only have we done this, but we have done it at a multi-million cost savings to the government. Frequently lauded by Puget Sound as the most efficient inactivation they have experienced, PITTSBURGH, as it always has, is setting the NEW STANDARD for inactivation completion. Sonar sphere hydrophones removed by Sonarmen, Fire Control Technicians, and Navigation Electronics Technicians were recapitulated and given to other ship's in record times and at a record cost savings. The efficiency of this decommissioning is because of the hard work of these sailors and the PSNS PITTSBURGH project team led by project superintendent, Dustin Butler. Dustin, thank you. A special

thank you to Mr. Josh Fleming as well. Josh is my project's Nuclear APS, and has the honor of being the first man to inform me of the PITTSBURGH inactivation. Josh will always have a special place in my heart for that phone call. He is a TRUE PROFESSIONAL and EXPERT - thank you Josh for taking my limited rage with grace.

I would like to express gratitude for three officers and families here today. Thank you to CDRE Lincoln Reifsteck, CDRE Todd Figanbaum, and CAPT Shawn and Tara Huey. These three officers are mentors and friends. Each has given me guidance throughout my tour that has shaped who I am today. Speaking of faith - of forces beyond what we know - these three officers landed in the Pacific Northwest during my geo-bachelor tour onboard PITTSBURGH, and in turn, each keep me sane, and provided much needed guidance and relief. To Tara, thank you. A home-cooked meal means much more than sustenance - it means getting through another week from those that you love the most.

Now, before I finish, I want to personally thank, in front of our CREW, past and present, several supporters of the USS PITTSBURGH and her crew. Men and women that are the essence of what has made this submarine, and our country, GREAT, over these past 35 years.



Dr. Carol Sawyer. What else can be said? A unique person, a unique personality, and a true leader. Very few Captains talk about their relationship with the ship's sponsor. It isn't something we discuss in Submarine Command Course or leadership school. It isn't one of those lessons learned that we pass from Captain to Captain. Why? Because it is rare. Carol has been a blessing to all of the PITTSBURGH crews and Captains, and the lives she has touched. 35 years of dedicated service - a longer career than most Admirals. I cannot express in words the role you played in the sailor's lives, both before and during my Command tour. I can simply say thank you and pray our relationship remains forever forward. I will miss the phone calls, the postcards, the greetings and stories. This good and great America owes you a debt of gratitude.

Mr. Bob MacPherson - the crusty submarine warrant officer that has served his entire life. Bob had the helm of the Pittsburgh Navy League for nearly, if not all of my command tour. He has been a quiet and trusted advisor, a steady hand in when the sea state seemed unmanageable. Again, a rarity. I speak with other Captains often about my relationship with the Pittsburgh Navy League. None have nearly what I am blessed to have, and most definitely do not have such an amazing friend. Separated by thousands of miles, Bob always, always knew how and when to reach for support to the crew, and support to me. One

particular morning during some challenging operations, Bob reminded of the power of belief, and strength in holding a true course. He, and the Pittsburgh Navy League, have been a constant presence throughout the years. Each submariner and sailor in this room should shake his hand, and live our lives asking what Bob so casually asks on a daily basis, "How may I serve?"

Retired Captain John Caspero. John leads the Pittsburgh Relief Crew, a truly unique organization. Let me accumulate a few of their accomplishments.

- 154 scholarships totaling \$142,750.
- 33 years of providing Christmas gifts for children of ship's personnel.
- 15 visits of over 350 ship's personnel, many of whom stayed in the homes of Pittsburgh host families.
- Support for 14 changes of command.

And one morning coffee with Jason and Michelle Deichler at a Pittsburgh Diner. That is what I selfishly take away - the hometown support and love for the crew. Amongst all of the monetary donations and blessings they have bestowed, it is John, and members of the Relief Crew's, love for their sailors that is most valuable and should be treasured forever.

Huey Dietrich and the REQUIN BASE PITTSBURGH SUBVETS. I told Huey and the boys once that when I see their brotherhood, I can see my future, my time when I depart the Navy, and I am happy. These fine patriots serve the city of Pittsburgh, veteran's and crew of USS PITTSBURGH. During my tour, they made THREE unsolicited and unfunded trips to Groton to see our crew. To sit down with the men. They didn't ask the PAO for a tour of the base, didn't ask for parties, they simply came, took care of the men, and celebrated being brothers. They were there the day before the USS PITTSBURGH left Groton for the last time. And I am always at your service, and always ready to raise and Iron with you boys at the GERMAN club.

As the sunsets on the PITTSBURGH, remember the moments. Have faith in those moments. Fiercely covet our brotherhood. Treasure and celebrate what the crews and families of this submarine accomplished. We ended the Cold War. We dominated every competitor that dared enter the water. We answered the call after the cowardly attacks on September 11, 2001. We drove a precise tomahawk dagger deep into the heart of evil during Operations Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom. We combatted and participated in what will be the end of terrorism. We threatened all those that would so feebly attempt to end of way of life. We maintained the scales tipped towards the United States Navy in the Great Power Competition. WE DISPLAYED TO THE

WORLD THE MEANINING OF A GREAT AND GOOD AMERICA. WE REMAINED  
THE EXAMPLE OF WHAT IS RIGHT. Be proud, gentlemen.

For one last time, crew of the USS PITTSBURGH, on your feet!

Raise your TERRIBLE TOWELS HIGH, and for one final time: HERE

WE GO PITTSBURGH