

## **Nomination for USS Henry Clay (SSBN 625) as 2020 Hall of Fame Boat Hampton Roads Base U.S. Submarine Veterans Inc.**

USS Henry Clay (SSGN 625) was a Lafayette Class ballistic missile submarine. She was the only ship of the United States Navy to be named for Henry Clay (1777 – 1852) the American statesman and orator. With her keel laid on 23 October 1961 she was commissioned on 20 February 1964, with Commander Tom Bryce and John C. Lewis in command of the Blue and Gold Crews respectfully. She departed for her first deterrent patrol on 17 Aug 1964.

Henry Clay was optimized to carry Ballistic Nuclear Missiles and conducted strategic deterrent patrols to support the deterrent missions of Ballistic Missile Submarines during the cold war with Russia. Additionally, she was optimized for ASW (anti-submarine warfare) and was certified to carry a complement of weapons including the Mark 48 ADCAP torpedo. The main weapon of U.S. Navy submarines.

The boat's propulsion system comprised an S5W pressurized-water reactor based, one of the most common reactors of her day for Lafayette class ballistic missile submarines and many fast attack submarines. Heat produced from the reactor converted water into steam, powering turbines, the propulsion shaft, and generating water and air conditioning for crew consumption.

The ship was equipped with state-of-the-art navigation and communication systems to fulfill her role in being able to launch Ballistic missiles on very short notice if required by the President and Nuclear Command Authority. Her record for maintaining communications during her strategic patrols was unparalleled.

### **Construction and Commissioning**

The contract to build Henry Clay was awarded to Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock company of Newport News, Virginia on 3 February 1961. Her keel was laid on 23 October 1961. Henry Clay was launched on 30 November 1962 in the presence of Mrs. Green B. Gibson, great granddaughter of Henry Clay. Henry Clay was commissioned on 20 February 1964, with Commander Tom Bryce and John C. Lewis in command of the Blue and Gold Crews respectfully. The first two commanding officers of Henry Clay.

### **Operational History**

Based in Charleston South Carolina and assigned to Submarine Squadron 14 Henry Clay had completed 11 deterrent patrols by January of 1967. She completed a Blue Nose deployment in December of 1966, a regular Overhaul in 1969, Middle Pacific patrols from 1969- 1975, a refueling overhaul at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in July of 1977. She conducted numerous

north Atlantic deterrent patrols from Jan 1978 to Jun 1981. She deployed to the Mediterranean in September to December 1985.

### **RECORD SETTING:**

In 1987, Henry Clay's Gold Crew underwent an unannounced Operational Reactor Safeguards Examination (ORSE). She received an EXCELLENT grade, the only submarine in the United States Atlantic Fleet other than the attack submarine USS Hyman G. Rickover (SSN-709) up to that date to receive an EXCELLENT on an unannounced ORSE.

In 1989, in preparation for its final deterrent patrol, the Henry Clay crew spent just three **days** in Holy Loch, Scotland for its refit (instead of the normal three-**week** refit period), and unloaded 250,000 pounds of food. Henry Clay spent a record **121 days** (April–August) beneath the North Atlantic waves on deterrent patrol. It made two, short back to back port calls in Plymouth and Portsmouth, England respectively. After its successful patrol, the Henry Clay pulled into Norfolk, VA for a brief rest and to pick up many of the crew's (male) family members for a three-day, fun "Tiger Cruise" to her home port of Charleston, South Carolina.

### **Decommissioning**

Henry Clay was decommissioned on 5 November 1990 and stricken from the Naval Vessel Register the same day. She entered the Nuclear Powered Ship and Submarine Recycling Program in Bremerton, Washington, for scrapping, which was completed on 30 September 1997.