

# USS *Georgia's* Bulldog

Story and photos by MC2(SW) David Beyea

**I**t's 11:32 p.m., and as USS *Georgia* (SSGN 729) approaches another day beneath the waves, Command Master Chief (SS) Brent Prince is embarked on his own patrol around the boat. From top to bottom, he stops on every deck, talking to the watchstanders.

How's the watch going? How's their day going? He checks not just on how his boat's doing - that the watches are being stood correctly - he's also seeing his crew, and making sure they're in as good a shape as the boat.

Just behind of the seemingly endless missile tubes that pass through the sub's decks, each painted a slightly different shade of orange, Prince runs across a Sailor at a weight bench. They talk, about the boat, about work and about the

plusses and minuses of one MP-3 player vs. another.

"He's very into his guys' lives," said Fire Control Technician 1st Class (SS) Derek Green, as he returned to his workout. "He's not one to stay back. If he feels that you need something, he'll come to you and try to help you out."

Eventually, Prince finishes his rounds of *Georgia* and hits his rack. He'll be up again in four hours, starting another day as the chief of the boat (COB).

"You've got to want to do it," explained Prince, of his position as *Georgia's* COB. "You got to want to give up the sleep and time and give the effort it takes, to do this job right. And to do this job and be successful, you have to have passion."

Predating the command master chief program by approximately 70 years, the chief of the boat is an all-together different animal. There have always been COBs on submarines, and their job only begins at being the senior enlisted advisor.



▲ CMC(SS) Brent Prince must keep an eye on his people and the process during operations – surfaced and submerged.



▲ **USS Georgia's Chief of the Boat, CMC(SS) Brent Prince and Commanding Officer Cmdr. Rob Hutton, discuss plans to pull into the sub's new homeport. Prince and Hutton share ideas on everything, including what to do about command cell phones, and how to stay in contact with the crew.**

"He has all the same responsibilities as a command master chief at larger commands or on surface ships," said Cmdr. Rob Hutton, *Georgia's* commanding officer. "But with a submarine the chief of the boat gets deeply involved with the operations of the ship. There's very little that we do that I don't have the chief of the boat involved in."

Prince touches and affects virtually everything on the boat. He trains damage control parties and teaches the conning party how to properly dive and surface the sub. The COB is responsible for everything from writing the watch bill, to teaching basic sub handling to the crew, to deciding who sleeps in each berth.

"The captain's job is to pick where the boat goes, it's my job to get it there," said Prince.

On the top of the list of Prince's responsibilities, is teaching his crew how to be Sailors aboard a submarine. Currently on his second tour as the chief of the boat, Prince is uniquely qualified for this.

"The chief of the boat, he's the salty one," said Missile Technician 1st Class (SS) Harry Jadick, *Georgia's* first lieutenant. "You don't just fulfill wickets and become the chief of the boat. You go through a lot of trials. You are already experienced.

You already know the answers. I would challenge anybody to find somebody that knows more about a *Trident* sub than [Prince] does."

According to Hutton, Prince knows *Georgia* from bow to stern and understands everything on the sub without being the technical expert. He is on the front line of the sub, not only leading, but helping to troubleshoot equipment.

When a small broken pin was preventing a hatch from closing, thus stopping *Georgia* from being secure to dive, Prince was with his men, balancing over a three-deck drop, in the tunnel that led to the bridge. Seeing by nothing more than a dim red light, he quickly showed the two crew members with him how to safely fix the problem.

"At some point in his career, the chief of the boat has done everything. The challenges we see every day, he's seen before," explained Hutton. "When the chief of the boat tells me 'Captain, I got it,' I can put my focus elsewhere."



▲ **While attached to USS Georgia by safety lines, the crew prepares to bring a tug boat along side as they pull into Kings Bay, Ga.**

With everything from training the chief of the watch and diving officer, to line handlers, the COB is there, getting his hands dirty and making sure his Sailors receive the hands-on training they need.

"The most enjoyable part of my job is when you see a young crew member show up and he's wet behind the ears, and a year later he's qualified, moving up in rank - one, maybe two places - he's standing a watch and he's a good submariner," said Prince.

As the COB, Prince performs a balancing act, measuring what the ship and mission need against what the crew needs.



▲ **Once in Kings Bay, Ga., CMC(SS) Brent Prince watches as the brow is put in place and his crew secures their sub.**

► **USS Georgia pulls into Norfolk to on-load supplies before their trip to Kings Bay, Ga. Georgia just completed a three-year conversion to a guided missile submarine.**

"If every decision I make has the best interest of the boat and the Sailors in mind, then it's never a wrong decision," said Prince. "That's the way I weigh all the decisions I make. Sometimes the mission outweighs the Sailor, and sometimes the Sailor's needs outweigh the mission.

"That's really what the COB is good at, taking that big picture and keeping us focused and balancing what the boat needs and what the crew needs," said Chief Hospital Corpsman (SS) Mark Sizemore, a corpsman aboard *Georgia*.

Whether Prince is telling a watch stander why a task is important, or explaining to the executive officer why the crew needs

something, he keeps the crew focused on the whole picture.

"If the crew knows and is informed about what they're doing, you will get to where you want to go, because the crew will get you there," said Prince. "It's not the COB that drives the ship, it's not the captain - it's the crew. They're the ones who operate the equipment and stand the watches."

The chief of the boat also spends his



time looking out for the crew, making sure they're being taken care of, both professionally and personally.

"The COB is the guy who stops as he's walking down the passageway to see what a Sailor needs. Or when a Sailor say's, 'Hey COB, do you have a minute?' That has



▲ CMC(SS) Brent Prince guides watch teams. As Chief of the Boat, Prince is responsible for making sure the crew is trained on all things submarine.

to be the most important thing for him,” said CMC(SS/DV) Tim Pew, command master chief, Submarine Group 10, as he accompanied *Georgia* to her new home port of Kings Bay, Ga. “The crew has to know they can turn to the COB for anything from professional Navy matters to personal matters.”

On the professional side, Prince makes sure that none of his crew is left behind. If a Sailor is falling behind on his job or qualifications, he refuses to give up on him, but instead gives that Sailor the push

needed – whether being as an example or working with the Sailor - to make him a success.

“He’s always challenged me. He’s given me the opportunity to excel,” explained Jadick, who is on his second tour with Prince as his COB. “He’s given me a kick when I need it and praised me when I’ve done something good. He’s demonstrated how to be a better Sailor.”

But Prince doesn’t stop at giving a Sailor the kick that he needs. After chewing out one of his Sailors for doing something



▲ When a Sailor boards a submarine he has one year to earn his Submarine Warfare Pin. If not qualified by the end of the year, a Sailor can no longer serve in the submarine force.

wrong or dangerous, or not meeting the standards of a submarine Sailor, he continues to teach them.

“The minute he finishes, he doesn’t just send that individual away,” said Hutton. “He’ll put his arm around the guy’s shoulder, sit him down and talk to him and make sure that they understand. ‘Here’s why you didn’t make the standards.’”

According to Jadick, Prince does more than set the standard and lead by example. He insists that Sailors realize their full potential.

“But the one thing he won’t do, is let one of his Sailors fall below those standards,” said Jadick.

Prince added, “For a ship to be successful, the whole crew needs to be successful, and that’s every crew member. If I help that crew member to be successful, then the ship is successful.”

On the personal side, Prince always has an eye on the crew making sure they and their families are taken care of.

“He’s one that will take a guy aside if he sees that he’s having a rough time,” said Sizemore. “It’s one of the things I’ve appreciated about Master Chief Prince. I’ve seen him take a guy and say, ‘Hey, you’re not quite yourself.’”

In this way Prince watches out for his guys, making sure that they have as little to worry about as possible, and can concentrate on what needs to be done.

It’s 4:30 a.m., and Prince is already awake and in ship control. You can just catch his profile in the pitch-black room when a watch stander clicks on his red-tinted flash light to mark a sonar contact on his charts. Prince is standing beside the diving officer, watching and making corrections, using this early morning surface as another opportunity to train and grow – and making sure that *USS Georgia* is ready to go where she needs to go, and do what she needs to do. ⚓

*Beyea is a photojournalist assigned to Naval Media Center, Washington, D.C.*

**“The captain’s job is to pick where the boat goes, it’s my job to get it there.”**

— CMC(SS) Brent Prince, COB  
*USS Georgia (SSGN 729)*



▲ *Georgia* attracts the attention of a pod of dolphins upon surfacing as they head toward their new homeport of Kings Bay Ga.

A man in a dark blue uniform and black goggles is looking through a periscope. The background is a dimly lit interior of a submarine, with another person in a similar uniform and goggles visible in the background.

# A Different World

Story and photos by MC2(SW) David Beyea

## Life on a Sub

**L**ife under the sea is a different world. You know this, because you've seen the proof when you pick up a magazine or watch documentaries on television. You see pictures and footage of bizarre creatures swimming through the techno-color forest of a coral reef, and the deeper you go, the more alien it seems, from stories of giant squid to pictures of a predator fish with a light bulb hanging from its forehead.

▲ FTSN Anthony Tavarez stands watch on USS *Georgia* (SSBN 729). With his eyes glued to the periscope, Tavarez constantly scans the surface for any contacts.



▲ Routinely submerged for long periods with infrequent opportunities to engage the world above the surface, a sub Sailor eyes the shoreline as they pull-in.

What's true about the strange creatures you find beneath the waves is also true about those Sailors who live and work in those same depths: it's a very different world.

"If you're looking for something different, this is as different as it gets, other than being an astronaut," said Electronics Technician 3rd Class (SS) Librado Maruez, a Sailor aboard USS *Georgia* (SSBN 729).

Because of the limited space, many spaces serve more than one purpose on a submarine. A space isn't just a wardroom - it can also be an operating room.

Sailors aboard a sub don't even breathe the same type of air as those aboard a surface ship. Sub air is created and recycled by the very Sailors who breathe it. A submarine's air is even produced with a reduced oxygen level - to help control fires, by providing less oxygen to burn.

"A submarine Sailor is different, because it involves a lot of isolation," said Command Master Chief (SS) Gary Aston, chief of the boat (COB) for *Georgia's* gold crew. "You don't have e-mail all the time, you don't have [regular] TV, you don't get fresh stores weekly, you don't get mail . . . All that stuff, you are isolated from the outside."

A submariner is even more separated from the world than his shipmates aboard surface ships. Where surface Sailors can

expect regular e-mail, care packages full of cookies and in some cases live news casts via satellite, a sub Sailor only has part-time e-mail. It's only when their mission allows them to surface and then download pending e-mail, do they hear from family and friends.

"We don't have mail. We only recently got e-mail. For the longest time you would only get a family gram," explained Missile Technician 1st Class (SS) Harry Jadick, *Georgia's* 1st Lieutenant. "Forty words from home, once a week, for the duration of a

patrol. You wouldn't send it, you would just receive it. And sometimes you wouldn't get that, depending on message traffic."

According to Command Master Chief (SS) Tim Pew, Command Master Chief Submarine Group 10, a sub crew deals with this isolation by keeping busy on the job at hand.

"It's a blessing and a curse," said Pew. "From the standpoint of mission accomplishment, the crew is focused on the mission. But from the other standpoint, everybody wants to know how their family is."



▲ USS *Georgia's* (SSBN 729) Jack of the Dust, CS3(SS) Peter Story gets supplies out of storage for dinner. Food stores are packed so tight on the sub that only one person at a time can fit in the spaces to get the food.

Part of the blessing is there is plenty for a submariner to do to keep his mind off the outside world. In the submariner's universe there are 18 hours in a day, not 24.

For six hours a day a sub Sailor is on watch. Whether you're the fireman in the engine room, or the chief engineer on lookout watch on the bridge, you're doing your time to help run the boat.

"You'll see things on a submarine that you might not see surface side, as far as work load," said Chief Hospital Corpsman (SS) Mark Sizemore, *Georgia's* independent duty corpsman. "You'll see E-6s and E-7s doing jobs that you might not see people of their rank doing on a surface ship. There are fewer of us, so we all have to pitch in and carry the load a little more evenly."

After his watch, a submariner has another six hours to work on maintenance, qualifications or any jobs that need to get done.

Then, at the end of the day, the sub Sailor has another six hours, to get some sleep before his next day starts.

When not on watch and there's no maintenance to be done, a sub Sailor's time

▲ While pierside in Norfolk for less than two hours, USS *Georgia* (SSGN 729) on-loads food and supplies before their trip to Kings Bay, Georgia. Kings Bay will be the boat's new homeport, now that their conversion to a guided-missile submarine is complete.



▲ FT1(SS) Derreck Green takes a moment to catch a nap, while waiting for USS *Georgia* (SSBN 729) to pull into port.



▲ ETSN Joshua Washington studies for his submarine warfare pin. Sub sailors have a year to get their "Dolphins," if they want to stay on the sub.

is his own. He can watch a movie in the crew lounge, study, work out, get some extra sleep, or, more often than not, help out his fellow crew members.

"We help each other, no matter what it is," said Jadick, as he described the task of painting *Georgia*, from bow to stern, before they got underway. They had to do the job in three days... with four people ... in the rain.

Although they were still in port and had the day off, most of the crew not working in the sub, were outside, pitching in.

The focus on a sub is getting what needs to be done, done, and everybody pitches in, because for a submariner, you're not just helping your crew, you're building a team.

"When the captain says all hands, he means all hands," said Jadick. "If you're not on watch, not on some maintenance that you can't get out of, you are up topside loading food. The COB is up



▲ MT3 Matthew Chin and MT1(SS) Linsy Miller lean back from a 30-degree dive.

topside, the captain is up topside, the officers, all the way down. It's not just a seaman or low-ranking petty officer's job – it's everybody's job."

Life on a submarine, with its small crew and confined spaces, creates a closer knit crew than you'd find on most surface ships. It would be hard to find a submariner that wouldn't describe his crew as like his family.

"One of the unique things about a submarine is that we take this boat out to sea with anywhere from 150 to 185 personnel," said Cmdr. Rob Hutton, *Georgia's* commanding officer. "It's not a large crew. You know every man onboard. I can look at them all and know their names, know their faces and know what they do aboard this boat. So it really becomes a large family."

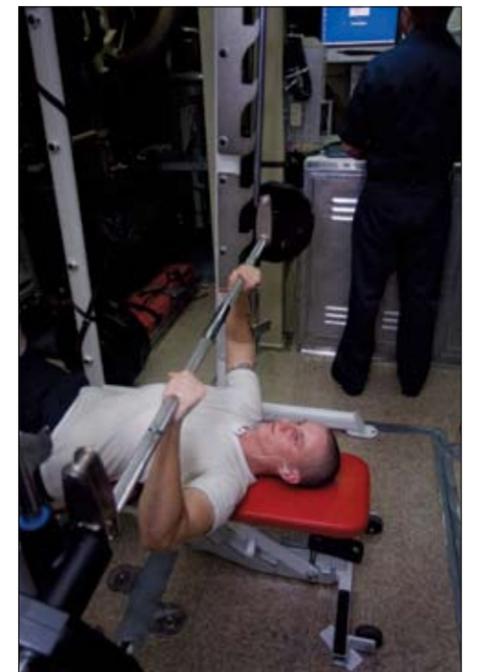
The familiar ties between the crew, doesn't just stop at being there to support each other. Submariners act like they're a large family, right down to good-natured ribbing of one another.

"It's definitely a good time. You're going to definitely have some fun with people. They're going to mess with you, you're going to mess with them. It's like a family at sea, you get to know everybody and everybody knows you," said Maruez.

They are the unseen Navy, spending their time where other ships can't go. They quietly and efficiently fulfill a mission as unique as the people who chose to do it.

"Life on a submarine, it is what it is," said Command Master Chief (SS) Brent Prince, COB for *Georgia's* blue crew. "On your first enlistment, you really have no idea what you're getting into. A lot of guys don't make it through their first tour on a submarine. Guys who do make it through and come back usually stay for the long haul, because it's not just a job – it's a calling." ■

*Beyea is a photojournalist assigned to Naval Media Center, Washington, D.C.*



▲ MM3 Steven Lowery takes some time to work out during his off hours. Due to space limitations weights and other PT equipment are secured wherever there is room, including right next to work stations.