

# The Sixth U.S. Navy Ship named USS FLORIDA

by Phil F.

The sixth USS FLORIDA (SSGN-728) is a Nuclear Powered Guided Missile Submarine. FLORIDA is 560 feet long and weighs 18,750 tons while submerged. She was originally launched in 1981 and commissioned on June 18, 1983 as an OHIO Class Fleet Ballistic Missile Submarine.

At that point in her career FLORIDA carried Trident Missiles with nuclear warheads. Even as this submarine was being constructed, her mission was being altered by the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks and the treaties that resulted. In 2004, work was started to remove the Trident Missiles. New equipment was installed to allow the firing of conventional cruise missiles and to allow the departure of special warfare personnel while submerged. Advanced SEAL Delivery Vehicles can also be stored on deck and launched while submerged. The FLORIDA can support 66 Navy SEALs for up to 90 days in clandestine operations.

Since the end of World War II, submarines have not provided postal service on board. Figure(1) is a cover from the 1983 commissioning of USS FLORIDA as SSBN-728, a Trident Missile Boat. The cancel was made up just for this day for philatelic purposes. The cover is autographed by Captain R.D. Rawlins, USN(Ret), who designed the cachet. Captain Rawlins is a career Submarine Officer who served on the USS THRESHER prior to her sinking. He also Commanded the Naval Submarine Base in New London, CT. Figure (2) is a photo of the USS FLORIDA.



Figure 2

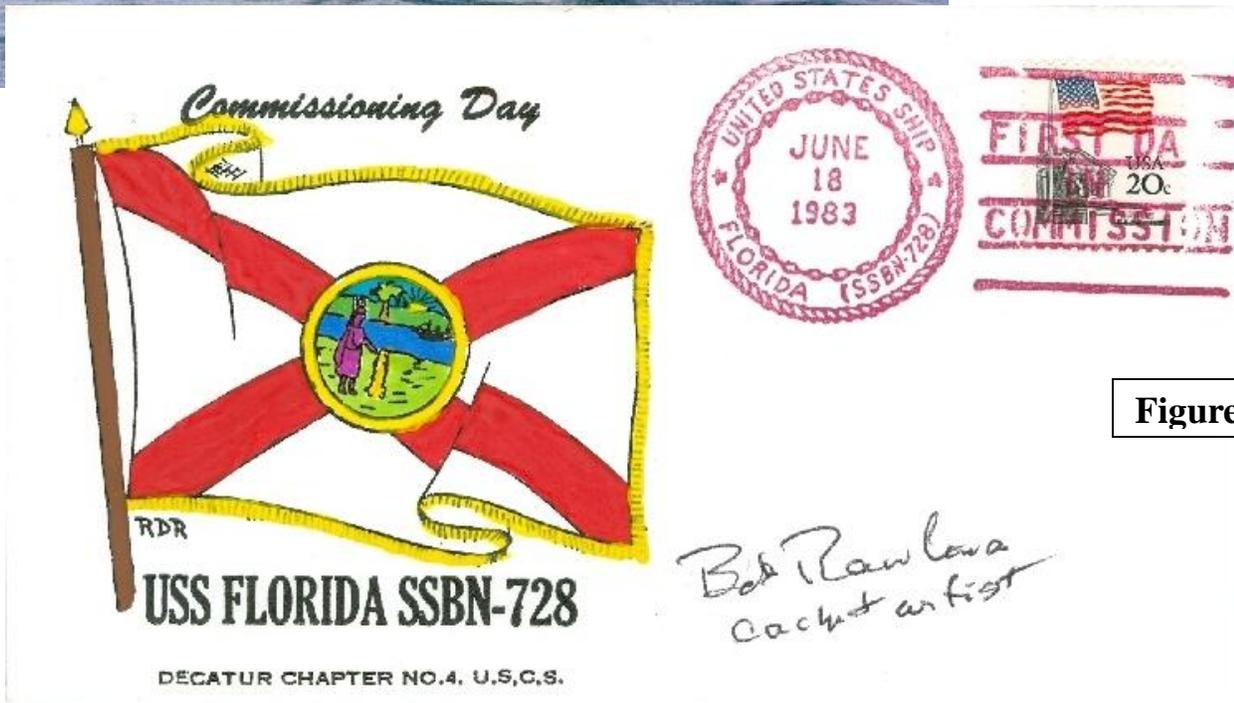


Figure 1

## Phil the Postage Stamp Chapter 4

By Randall P.

The next thing I know, the page that I am attached to is removed from the book. The why is not clear? Just a few hours ago I was asleep and snug and also felt safe. Now I am lying on a table and feeling a little exposed. I notice that there are other pages, from books just like the one I was in. The pages are spread out, but I cannot see all of the other stamps. As I am straining to get a look at the others, the pages are gathered up into a stack. The pages are removed from the stack one at a time. Soon it comes our turn.

The page we are on has been selected and placed on the table face up. The next experience is not one that has happy thoughts associated with it. As I try to get my bearings as to what is going to happen, I notice that each of my friends and me are torn from the page. My friends are lying in different positions because of the flap on their back. As for me I am lying face down, with a pain in my upper back. After a while my friends and I all find ourselves in a tub of water. This time the experience is a reminder that, it can be survived. I also feel better after a while, because my back is not as sore and it is also now clean and free of that flap. Now that I am dry and after some more inspections, I am put in a see-through envelope, with my friends and some new ones. I settle into my new environment getting acquainted with those whom I do not know. Looking for a place to get comfortable I bump into a rather old gentleman. We talked for a long time; however, he seems to be the one, doing most of the talking.

Joe's story is long and..... Well let him tell his own story. "I have traveled to many places, I have been taken care of with great care, and I have been neglected and left to be added to the trash. It was only the last time I was picked up that I found someone who would care for me as I felt I should be.

Let me start at, my first adventure, after arriving at the Post Office. The year is 1932. That is when I discover that I have 11 other friends who are connected to me. You see the 12 of us have 12 different paintings/sculptures of our 1<sup>st</sup> president, George Washington, on our face. Each one is a different color, and a different value. This is where the story gets interesting. A man comes into the Post Office and buys a number of each one of the 12 different types of the stamps. I got picked up with 11 of my friends. When we get to where we are going, we are all placed into a drawer, as the drawer is being closed I get a whiff of something that, if the drawer would stay open a little longer, I would be able to identify the wonderful smells that filled my nose. Yes, yes, it must be a restaurant. After I spent much time with the others in the draw, it seems that each day the man, who brought us from the Post Office, would come to the draw and remove some of the stamps from the stack. When it came my turn, we were taken to the cash register and placed inside. However it was long enough for me to get a good whiff of all the wonderful smells of food. It was just great!

As a customer pays for their food they are also given a stamp. This gives me a chance to travel again. After a short trip, I am added to a small book that it turns out to hold one of each of the 12 different pictures of the president. So for a long time I spent my time in a little book that had just the 12 president stamps in it. Then one day the little book is taken to a new location and my friends and I are removed from the little book. As I have been traveling to many places I am now settled into a new place. Well that is one of my stories. I now am joined by some new friends."

As Joe finished his story we are all waiting for the next adventure.