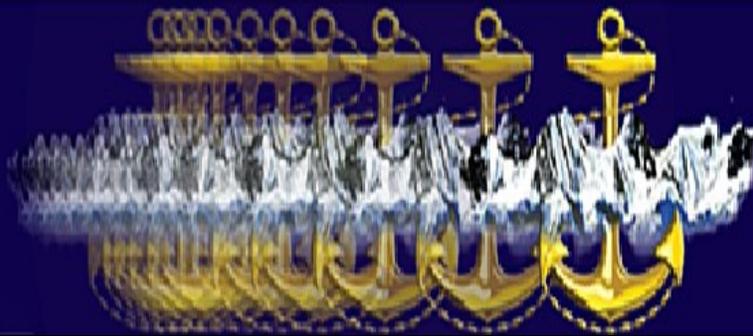




NAVY LEAGUE OF THE UNITED STATES

Citizens in Support of the Sea Services



Denver Council March 20th Spring Dinner Meeting Hosting Commander Gary Francis, USN (Ret.) and Honoring Top Performers of Our Sea Cadet Units and Navy Information Operations Command (NIOC) Colorado

Dear Navy Leaguers,
The Denver Council is Moving!

The meeting place for our scheduled meeting on Friday, March 20th will be the **American Legion Hall Post 161 located at 6230 W 60th Avenue, Arvada, CO 80003-5606**. This move was prompted by an increase in the cost of meals and a new room rental fee at the Hilton Garden Inn (with no advance notice).



We will enjoy a **BUFFET DINNER** at a lower cost of **\$35.00** and the cost of meals for Sea Cadets remains the same at \$25.00. This will be a trial run at the new meeting place. I hope that we have found a new home!

We have also moved up our starting time for the social hour and dinner. The social hour will begin at 5:30 PM and dinner at 6:30 PM.

Please go to the reservation block on page 4 to register for this event. **Online** reservations are due **no later than Sunday, March 15 at 5 PM** or by **ground mail** they must be sent to NLUS Denver Council, c/o Florence Mackin, 2137 Night Sky Lane, Lafayette, CO 80026 (720-292-9772) and **received by Saturday, March 14.**

Guest speaker for our March meeting will be retired Navy Commander Gary Francis. Commander Francis spent his Navy career in the Submarine Force serving in four nuclear submarines including Commanding Officer of USS Baton Rouge (SSN 689). Following his Navy career, Gary held several senior management positions at the former Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant and as a consulting mentor for management at other Dept. of Energy nuclear facilities around the country

Planning has begun for the 2026 Navy Ball which will be held at the Antlers Hotel in Colorado Springs on Friday, October 23rd, 2026. Mark your Calendars!

Collection of our annual local dues for 2026 is still ongoing (\$15.00 for an individual, \$25.00 per couple).

Our online site for payment of local dues will be open to take payments through March 31st, 2026. Please use the link in the reservation block on page 4 to make your payment or send a check made payable to NLUS Denver Council to me at 2137 Night Sky Lane, Lafayette, CO 80026. I hope that all our Denver Council members and supporters will consider making this nominal payment. Your support helps us to keep the cost of our dinners as low as possible while maintaining our financial viability and continuing our support of our Sea Cadet units and local commands.

I hope to see you at our new location in Arvada on the 20th of March. Best Regards!

Florence Mackin, Denver Council President

Commander Gary Francis, USN (Ret)

Gary Francis was born in Pensacola, Florida and raised in Denville, New Jersey. He is a 1968 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. He was awarded an Atomic Energy Commission scholarship for a Masters degree in Nuclear Engineering at Catholic University of America in Washington DC.



Following completion of his Master's Degree, he was accepted into the Navy's Nuclear Propulsion Program, reporting to his first submarine, USS Skipjack (SSN 585) in December 1970. The Skipjack embodied many design changes that were products of new scientific insight into submarine design. The greatest alteration was the new tear-drop hull shape pioneered by the conventionally-powered USS Albacore (AGSS-569), and designed for optimum performance underwater.

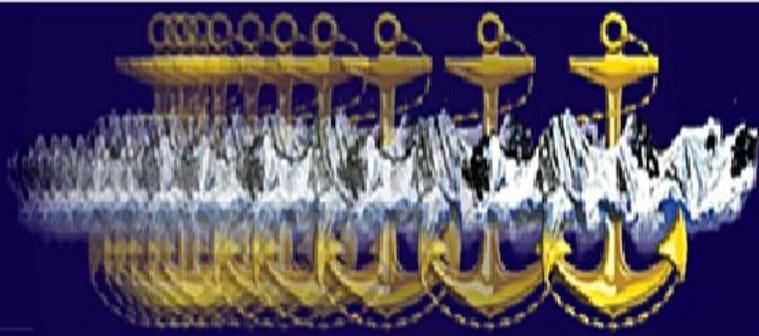
Following Skipjack Gary attended the Submarine Officers Advanced Training course prior to being assigned to USS Tecumseh (SSBN 628) as Chief Engineer Officer during the period December 1973 to December 1976. The submarine was based in Holy Loch, Scotland and completed five 70-day underwater ballistic missile patrols in the North Atlantic. The assignment to the Tecumseh helped to develop the management skills and helped prepare Gary for the Command tour ahead. Gary was then assigned to an instructor position in Idaho after the Engineer tour.

(continued on page 2)



NAVY LEAGUE OF THE UNITED STATES

Citizens in Support of the Sea Services



Denver Council

Page 2

(Commander Francis continued)

There he was involved in training non-nuclear Engineer Officers for senior positions in the newly developed surface ships with sophisticated non-nuclear engineering systems. This position offered contact with peers in the non-nuclear parts of the Navy and proved an important developmental tool in Gary's career both in the Navy and in his career after the Navy.

The next submarine assignment was in USS Flying Fish (SSN 673) as Executive Officer, the second in command. During this tour Gary was responsible for the personnel aspects of the command and completed qualification for Command of Submarines. The tour on Flying Fish included deployments to the North Atlantic and the Mediterranean. During this assignment Gary was responsible for career counseling and retention of the highly trained officers and enlisted on the submarine and, during this time, the Flying Fish was recognized as the best retainer of personnel of all of the ships and submarines in the Atlantic Fleet.

Gary's next assignment was at the Navy Bureau of Personnel as the Enlisted Program Manager. This assignment involved management of the programs that are in place to recruit, train, promote and retain nuclear trained personnel in the surface and submarine Navy Programs.

Gary completed Prospective Commanding Officer's schools in Washington, DC and Norfolk, Virginia and was assigned to command the USS Baton Rouge, SSN 689 in August 1984. Baton Rouge was deployed to the North Atlantic and to the Mediterranean under his command and completed a thirteen-month overhaul during which the entire front of the submarine was updated with a new sonar system and a new digital fire control system. The command tour was highlighted with visits to Halifax, Nova Scotia, Toulon, France, the Naval Academy and exercises with NATO forces in the central and northern Atlantic.

After completing his Baton Rouge Command Tour in 1987, Gary was assigned as the Communications Officer for the Submarine Force in the Atlantic, an interesting assignment since Communications Officer was Gary's first assignment in Skipjack. This tour involved positions as the Submarine Communications Officer for Nato and all of the submarines in the Atlantic. The tour involved travel to Europe to meet with communications specialists from the Nato submarine services including the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Spain.

After Gary retired from the Navy in November 1989, he accepted a position at Rocky Flats where he worked in various positions including Director of Training, Work Planning and Control and as an internal consultant being assigned to facilities having difficulty in complying with the new stricter standards being applied to nuclear facilities. After working to clean up Rocky Flats, Gary embarked on a career as a contractor to assist other Department of Energy sites as they dealt with the same problems that had faced Rocky Flats. Gary has had assignments at Los Alamos, New Mexico, Nevada Test Site near Las Vegas, Idaho National Laboratory near Idaho Falls and Argonne National Laboratory near Chicago, Illinois.

Gary lives in Broomfield with Lynn, his wife of 56 years.

Legislative Affairs

Preparations and training for this year's Anchors Aweigh Fly-in are underway! This year the Fly-in will be held on June 1 - 2 in Washington, D.C. (right before the national convention later in the week at Norfolk, VA). **The Anchors Aweigh Fly-In is the Navy League's flagship activism event.** Every year, Navy League members from around the country gather in Washington, D.C. to educate their lawmakers on the sea services' needs.

Registration for our 2026 Fly-In on June 1-2 is open!

If you would like to participate this year, contact Chris Schutzenberger at teamschutz@yahoo.com.

If you would like to be added to the distribution list for the upcoming training led by the Navy League National office, please contact the Legislative Affairs Associate, Sonia Toloczko, at stoloczko@navyleague.org.

SEE A BOUNTY OF DENVER NAVY LEAGUE PHOTOS!

[Colorado Navy League's albums | Flickr](#)

Other Online Resources: Control + Click to follow link

Navy League National:

<https://www.navyleague.org/>

Denver Council Navy League:

www.navyleague-denvercouncil.org/

Denver Council Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/DenverCouncil/>

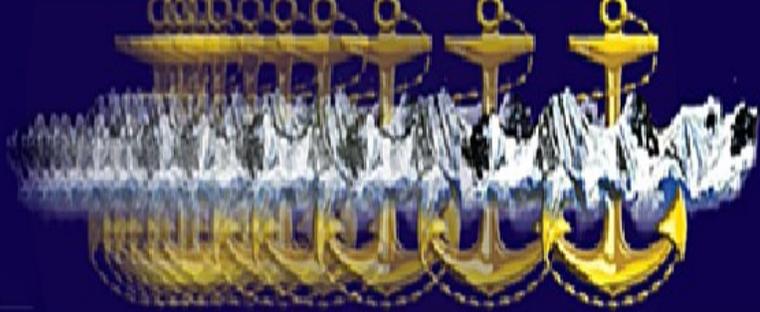
USS Colorado (SSN-788) Submarine Association

<https://usscoloradosubassoc.org>



NAVY LEAGUE OF THE UNITED STATES

Citizens in Support of the Sea Services



January Dinner Meeting Hosted Commander Andrew Gerla, USN Commanding Officer Navy Talent Acquisition Group (NTAG) Rocky Mountain and Honored His Top Sailor

At the January Dinner Meeting, Commander Gerla presented and led a very lively interactive discussion about the importance of the mission and functions of the United States Navy. Awards and Honors are discussed in the following section of the newsletter.

Awards/Honors

During the January Dinner Meeting, the Council honored the Navy Talent Acquisition Group Rocky Mountain's Rookie Recruiter of the Year CE1 Michael Verdin, USN. (See photo)

During the upcoming March Dinner Meeting the Council will honor sea cadets of the year and top performers of Navy Information Operations Command Colorado.

CE1 Michael Verdin, Cmdr. Gerla, Florence, J.J.



Please remember to keep up with your Navy League National and Local Dues (and keep Sea Power magazine coming to you) and our local Council annual dues of \$15 per individual or \$25 per couple. These local dues are a key element in supporting Council initiatives.

Denver Council Navy League Peak Newsletter is an official publication of the Denver Council, serving the members and community of Colorado. This publication does not necessarily reflect the official views of the National Navy League or Department of Defense.

Stories and artwork may be submitted via email to the editor at mahaffey10@aol.com

Electronic versions available upon request.

Find out more on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/DenverCouncil/>



USS Colorado Submarine Association Update

Don Price, President

COLORADO Commanding Officer, Commander Justin Reeves, held a Zoom briefing with Association members on February 5th to update the Association on the status of the overhaul and other items. The boat remains in overhaul in Pearl Harbour Naval Shipyard and is on schedule to complete the availability this summer. The boat's galley has reopened and the duty section lives on-board.

Association members will visit the boat to help celebrate the completion of the availability this summer. In addition to this visit, they plan to visit the boat this coming November to attend the next Change of Command and welcome aboard the new Commanding Officer who has not yet been identified. The boat's homeport has now officially changed from New London to Pearl Harbour. There remains a good chance that they will change again in a few years to Perth, Australia dependent on the Australian Navy's progress towards being able to support the boat at that location.

The boat's Family Readiness Group held a winter party in early February that was well attended and a big success. It was supported in part by the Association including procuring special night lights for the kids which Commander Reeves said were a big hit.

History Colorado has developed an exhibit on the life and legacy of the USS Colorado (BB-45). This exhibit will be open March 6th, 2026 to January 6th, 2027. We have donated pictures of the submarine COLORADO which will be part of the exhibit. More information is available here: <https://www.historycolorado.org/exhibit/all-hands-deck-uss-colorado>. Control + click to follow link

All Navy League members are cordially invited to join the Association as a way of supporting our boat. More information is here: <https://usscoloradosubassoc.org/join-us>.

Control + click to follow link

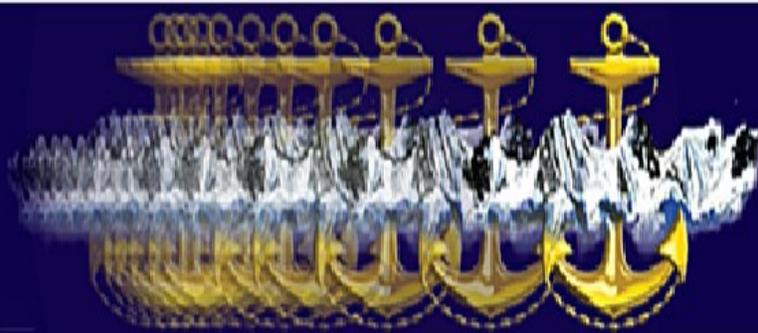


We will have an "album" of sea cadet pictures in the May newsletter. We ran out of time and space and are so sorry to disappoint you. Be sure to take more pictures!



NAVY LEAGUE OF THE UNITED STATES

Citizens in Support of the Sea Services



Denver Council

Page 4

Sea Cadet Update

Lexington Division and Training Ship Colorado (LEX-151) cadets launched into 2026 with discipline, enthusiasm, and a renewed commitment to excellence. Across January and February, both Sea Cadets and League Cadets strengthened their skills through physical readiness, hands-on training, and leadership development that reflect the Navy's core values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment.

In January, cadets returned from Winter Training and immediately re-established their operational tempo. After check-in and muster at the Naval Reserve Center, (NRC) Sea Cadets traveled to the **Bennett Park and Recreation District** pool for annual swim qualifications, reinforcing water confidence and safety fundamentals essential to naval training. Upon returning to the NRC, cadets conducted chow, field day, and structured afternoon training, including Recruit Orientation and Petty Officer leadership meetings. League Cadets completed their own swim qualifications and training evolutions, ensuring readiness for the spring training cycle. The day concluded with a Winter Training debrief and final muster, marking a strong start to the new year.

In February, Lexington Division and Training Ship Colorado executed a full overnight drill that blended ceremony, instruction, and physical development. Saturday began with a staff meeting, cadet check-in, and a formal Chief Petty Officer pinning ceremony, followed by a Dress Blue uniform inspection. Cadets transitioned to NWUs for chow, room-clearing instruction, and Drug Awareness Training. Evening activities included Petty Officer leadership meetings, squad development time, Recruit Orientation, homework, and hygiene before taps. Training Ship Colorado completed their Physical Readiness Test, traveled to Ninja Nation for afternoon physical activity, and returned for a uniform inspection and Scuba introduction. Both units reconvened for Drug Awareness Training and evening routines

Sunday began with reveille and morning PT, followed by chow and a full field day. Sea Cadets completed Scuba familiarization, drill practice, and Color Guard training, while League Cadets conducted team-building activities. The drill wrapped up by midday, allowing cadets to head home in time to enjoy the Super Bowl with

March **Spring** Dinner Meeting

AT A NEW PLACE, COST AND TIME
Friday, March 20th, 2026

NEW PLACE: AMERICAN LEGION HALL
POST 161, 6230 W. 60th Avenue, Arvada, CO
SOCIAL HOUR AT 5:30 PM
DINNER HOUR AT 6:30 PM

A FINE BUFFET FOR ONLY \$35.00 EACH
Your reservations may be made **online NO LATER THAN SUNDAY, March 15th, 5 PM** via our Navy League RSVP Site: <https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/denver-council-dinner-meeting-march--202026>
control+click to follow link

If you prefer to RSVP by **ground mail**, please print this page, complete the form and send it **TO ARRIVE NO LATER THAN SATURDAY March 14th**, with check for \$35.00 per guest payable to **NLUS Denver Council** care of

Mrs. Florence Mackin

2137 Night Sky Lane
Lafayette, CO 80026
(720- 292-9772)

fmackin@mackinweb.net

RESERVATION REQUEST for NLUS Denver Council

March Spring Dinner Meeting Friday, March 20th, 2026
Social Hour 5:30 PM
Dinner Hour 6:30PM

JOIN US FOR A BUFFET DINNER WITH A SOCIAL HOUR AT 5:30 PM And A BUFFET DINNER AT 6:30 PM

NAME(S): _____

GUEST(S): _____

NUMBER OF DINNERS @ \$35.00 _____

LINK FOR LOCAL DUES : <https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/navy-league-denver-council-local-dues--2026>

Control + click to follow link

friends and family.

LEX-151 thanks the Navy League of Denver for their continued support in developing the next generation of leaders.

Ens Jason Chen, Asst. Public Affairs Officer