

(May 19, 2006) Honoring the Crew of USS Lagarto

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MR. SPEAKER, I wish to pay tribute to 86 brave men who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country and for freedom – the crew of the submarine USS Lagarto – as well as their loved ones - their wives and sweethearts, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers - who have all kept them in their hearts for more than 60 years.

The story of the Lagarto represents the sacrifices made by sailors in the “Silent Service,” the most dangerous of all the missions, as submariners suffered the highest percentage of combat deaths of any service in any branch of the armed forces during World War II.

The Lagarto, built in the shipyards of Manitowoc, Wisconsin, had a short but distinguished career. The submarine joined the assault on Imperial Japan in early 1945, and was credited with sinking a Japanese submarine and other enemy vessels.

However, on May 3, 1945, the Lagarto and its sister submarine, the USS Baya, were coordinating an attack on a Japanese convoy off the coast of Thailand. The Japanese escort minelayer Hatsutaka was able to drive off the Baya in the early hours of May 4. But the Lagarto was never heard from again. Evidence pointed to a depth charge from the Hatsutaka that may have sunk the Lagarto, and the submarine was presumed lost with all hands on board.

For the next 60 years, many of the loved ones of the Lagarto crew continued to wonder where their final resting place might be. Then, in the Spring of 2005, a fishing boat snagged a large object off the Thai coast. Eventually, renowned wreck diver Jamie McLeod investigated and helped confirm that the wreckage in about 180 feet of water was the Lagarto.

On Saturday, May 6, 2006, the crew of the Lagarto was honored by the Navy during a special annual USS Lagarto Remembrance Day Memorial Ceremony at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum in Manitowoc. This event was attended by more than 150 family members of the crew of the Lagarto.

As Nancy Mabin Kenney, who was a toddler when her father, Seaman 1st Class William T. Mabin, was lost on the Lagarto, said: "This ceremony will be our way of saying goodbye that we never had."

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me honoring the brave men of USS Lagarto and to express our sincere gratitude to their families and friends upon the ultimate sacrifice these sailors gave for our great nation.