

REMEMBERING THE MOST FAMOUS VESSEL YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF

The most decorated vessel in the history of the US Navy is...

The USS Enterprise? Excellent guess if we limit our scope to World War II. The Battle Ship New Jersey? Also an informed choice, but it is most decorated only among battleships. The USS Halibut? Now you're getting closer, but this accomplished Cold War-era attack sub doesn't have quite the credentials.

The most decorated vessel in the history of the US Navy is...the USS Parche (SSN-683), launched in 1973 and decommissioned in 2004.

Even naval history buffs may have trouble recognizing this Sturgeon class submarine for its historic accomplishments, largely because it operated in such secrecy. Parche was uniquely equipped as the Navy's top espionage sub, capable of tapping Soviet communications and recovering Soviet weaponry from the ocean floor. All of its missions were highly classified — to this day, none have ever even been confirmed.



But in a new maritime park being built in downtown Bremerton, Wash., visitors will get a sense of the value of Parche to U.S. security. There, the well-adorned sail section of the ship stands, a memorial to its many accomplishments, while the rest of the sub undergoes recycling at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard next door.

Bremerton's maritime park and museum are scheduled to open later in 2007.



The sail section of the USS Parche, the most decorated vessel in US Naval history, will be the centerpiece of a new maritime park in Bremerton, Wash. Coatings for the Parche were donated by the Sherwin-Williams Company.