

## HISTORY OF SHIPS NAMED STURGEON

USS STURGEON (SS(N)-637) is the third ship of the Fleet named for a tough-skinned family of large fishes that are an important source of caviar and isinglass. The Sturgeon has a bony-plated elongate body, a shark-like tail, and adapts itself to either salt or fresh water. It is widely distributed through the North Temperate Zone. In the United States, it is found on both the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts, in the Mississippi Valley and in the Great Lakes regions.

The first STURGEON (SS-25) was built by the Fore River Shipbuilding Company, Quincy, Massachusetts. Her keel was laid 22 December 1909. She launched 15 June 1911, under the sponsorship of Miss Margaret Nelson Little, daughter of Captain W. H. Little, U.S. Navy. The submarine was renamed E-2, 17 November 1911 and commissioned in the Boston Navy Yard 14 February 1912, Ensign Clarence N. Hinkamp, USN, in command.

E-2 (SS-25), had a length overall of 135 feet, 3 inches; extreme beam, 14 feet, 7 inches; normal displacement, 287 tons; mean draft, 11 feet, 8 inches; submerged displacement of 342 tons; and a designed complement of 1 officer and 19 men. She was designed for a speed of 13.5 knots on the surface and 11.5 knots submerged. Her designed depth was 200 feet and she was armed with four 18-inch torpedo tubes.

A unit of the Atlantic Submarine Flotilla, E-2 based at Newport, Rhode Island, and spent much time in training cruises, tactics, and torpedo practice in Block Island Sound, Long Island Sound, and the Coddington Cove Torpedo Range. Her repairs and upkeep were usually accomplished in the New York or Norfolk Navy Yards. On 5 January 1914, she sailed from Norfolk for torpedo practice, tactics and maneuvers with the Submarine Flotilla in waters ranging to ports of South Carolina, Florida, Texas, Louisiana, and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

E-2 returned north to Norfolk 21 April 1914, again serving at Newport before steaming southward for torpedo practice in Pensacola Bay, Florida (4 March-25 April 1915). After taking part in war games off Nantucket Shoal, in Great Salt Pond and Block Island Sound, she entered the New York Navy Yard, 19 June 1915. She was still in upkeep there 15 January 1916 when a spark from an undetermined source ignited hydrogen gas to cause a violent explosion which killed four men and injured seven others. The submarine decommissioned 12 March 1916 and was turned over to the Commandant of the New York Navy Yard for use as an experimental laboratory in conducting exhaustive tests of the Edison storage battery.

E-2 recommissioned 25 March 1918, Lieutenant Lawrence S. Riefsnyder, USN, commanding. The next two months were filled with training and some experimental work at New London, Newport, and briefly at Nahant, Massachusetts. She arrived in Hampton Roads, Virginia from New London, 18 May 1918. Before the signing of the Armistice of World War I, she had completed four war patrols off Cape Hatteras to help guard the entrance of the Chesapeake Bay. She maintained special lookout for possible enemy submarine penetration as she tracked ships movements in the approaches to the Virginia Capes. During her fourth patrol, 17 August 1918, she made a 4½-hour submerged search for a large submarine sighted by her off Cape Hatteras. She was commended by the Chief of Naval Operations for two of her antisubmarine war patrols, described as exceptionally long for a submarine of her size.

E-2 departed Norfolk 28 August 1918 for patrol out of New London, Connecticut, where she later joined units of Submarine Division Two in training student officers and qualifying men for Submarine Torpedo Boat Service. This duty terminated 19 April 1920 when she sailed for service in Hampton Roads, Virginia. She was placed "in ordinary" 18 July 1921 and entered the Philadelphia Navy Yard 19 September for inactivation. The submarine decommissioned there 20 October 1921 and was sold for scrapping 19 April 1922 to Joseph G. Hitner of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The second STURGEON (SS-187) was built by the Mare Island Navy Yard, Vallejo, California. Her keel was laid 27 October 1936. She launched 15 March 1938, under the sponsorship of Mrs. Charles S. Freeman, wife of Vice Admiral Freeman, then Commander Submarine Force, U.S. Fleet. The fleet submarine commissioned in the Mare Island Navy Yard 25 June 1938, Lieutenant Arthur D. Barnes, USN, commanding.

STURGEON (SS-187) had a length overall of 308 feet; extreme beam, 26 feet, 1 inch; standard displacement, 1,449 tons; mean draft, 14 feet, 2 inches; submerged displacement of 2,198 tons; designed depth, 250 feet; and a designed complement of 5 officers and 50 men. Her designed speed on the surface was 21 knots and her designed submerged speed was 9 knots. She was armed with eight 21-inch torpedo tubes; one 3-inch .50 caliber gun; two .50 caliber machine guns; two .30 caliber machine guns, and was designed to carry 24 torpedoes.

Following builder's trials and tests in Monterey Bay, STURGEON departed San Francisco Bay 13 October 1938 on shakedown training cruises to ports of Mexico, Honduras, Panama, Peru, Ecuador and Costa Rica. She returned north to San Diego 12 December 1938, joining Submarine Squadron 6 in operations out of that base reaching north to the coast of Washington. Two squadron cruises to Hawaii and return were conducted with the Fleet 1 July-16 August 1939 and 1 April-12 July 1940. During the latter cruise, 2 June 1940, Lieutenant Commander Arthur D. Barnes was relieved as commanding officer by Lieutenant Commander William L. Wright, U.S. Navy. On 5 November 1940, she again left San Diego astern for Fleet tactics conducted in the Hawaiian area out of Pearl Harbor.

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She made one brief return to San Diego (23 July-6 August 1941), then resumed operations out of Pearl Harbor which included practice patrols to the Midway area. On 10 November she put to sea for Manila in the Philippine Islands where she arrived 22 November 1941 to serve as a unit of Submarine Division 22, Squadron Two, U.S. Asiatic Fleet.

STURGEON was moored in Marvilles Bay when the Japanese made their infamous raid on Pearl Harbor. At that time, she was still under Commander Wright. Her Ordnance and Gunnery Officer was Lieutenant Chester W. Nimitz, Jr., son of that great American and peerless naval leader who would brilliantly direct the Fleet to victory in the Pacific.

Before the dawn of 8 December 1941, tender CANOPUS who would win fame for her heroic stand in the Philippines, flashed the grim message: "From Commander Asiatic Fleet. . . To Asiatic Fleet... Urgent... Break... Japan has commenced hostilities... govern yourselves accordingly." Previously planned defensives were set in motion, loading and repair work raced to completion, and Asiatic Fleet submarines set out to patrol the north Philippine Waters and specified areas off Japanese bases. STURGEON departed Marvilles Harbor that afternoon to patrol shipping lanes running from the port of Takao, Formosa, towards the Pescadores Islands. Already she had received the unrestricted warfare directive: "You will sink or destroy enemy shipping wherever encountered."

A small tanker sighted 9 December 1941 passed far out of torpedo range. But on the afternoon of the 18th, the submarine closed to attack range of a cruiser on the port bow of five merchantmen who were accompanied by several destroyers. Just as STURGEON raised her periscope for a shot at the cruiser, an enemy destroyer charged in from 250 yards and the fighting submarine clawed for the depths. She was only 65 feet down as the first exploding depth charges gave her a mighty jar. Silent running took her clear of the antagonist. She was under the lee of Formosa the night of 21 December 1941 when she let go with a four-torpedo spread which missed ahead large cargo carrier. Throughout this first patrol she found the shipping lanes filled with destroyers, submarine chasers, and literally scores of small power fishing boats. She terminated her first war patrol 25 December 1941 when she returned to Marvilles Bay. In her absence, Japanese bombers had turned the Cavite Navy Yard into a molten furnace. But practically all Asiatic submarines escaped by running submerged in Manila Bay or were out on War Patrol. The Japanese also failed to destroy the submarine tenders including HOLLAND and OTUS who remained on duty to support the submarine forces through the hardest phase of the war. CANOPUS would even join the embattled defenders who fought to the last at Bataan.

STURGEON and her sister submarines of the Asiatic Fleet were now left to protect an ocean area where there was not a single allied

capital ship, no formidable bases for air cover, and practically no real means of re-supply. Less than thirty undersea warriors were deployed to fight delaying actions against the Japanese hordes, sweeping down on Luzon. At the outset, Japanese propagandist, "Tokyo Rose" taunted that the American Fleet lay at the bottom of Pearl Harbor. But she failed to reckon with the pioneering submarines of the Asiatic Fleet whose undersea battles against tremendous odds would set the pattern in courage and resourcefulness to be followed throughout a war of attrition which would strangle the lifelines to Japan herself.

STURGEON departed Marvilles Bay 28 December 1941 to conduct her second war patrol in the Dutch East Indies. She was one of three submarines dispatched to intercept Japanese convoys passing through Makassar Strait from Japanese-held Tarakan and Kema, to the rich oil port of Balikpapan.

Commander William L. Wright had a fine reputation of inspiring confidence and a sense of responsibility in his men. Enroute to the area his talents along this line were directed in one instance toward a mess attendant who was new to the submarine service. The mess attendant was to be properly impressed with the unique responsibility which every man on board STURGEON had to bear. Taken topside for his first go at night lookout duty, the young lad was told to look sharp and remember that a six million-dollar submarine, all her fine equipment, and the lives of all those below were dependent upon him. He was to keep his eyes peeled as the enemy might suddenly appear on a night like this. The safety of all depended upon the watch. The mess attendant nodded in agreement as he peered solemnly ahead. He was admonished once again as Commander Wright, looking back from the conning tower hatch, called out: "Don't forget, you're responsible for six million bucks worth of sub--everything in it--the lives of all of us down below." "Yes, sir, Captain," the boy assured. "An' then there's me, too!" A new sobriquet was born. From that day forward, there was "Me Too" along with Commander "Bull" Wright and all the rest on board STURGEON as she sought out the enemy.

The night of 17 January 1942, STURGEON closed a tanker off Tarakan but was spotted on the surface as she fired three torpedoes towards the target. This enemy increased speed, made a frantic zig to miss the torpedoes, and sped away into the night. The night of 22 January the submarine received a contact report from PICKEREL of a large convoy headed her way in Makassar Strait. Four minutes later, her sound gear picked up the enemy. Men raced to battle stations, and STURGEON prepared to attack a heavy ship directly astern. A quick dive hid her from a target which was screened by at least five destroyers. At 2300, the submarine fired four torpedoes and was rewarded by loud shaking explosions. The hard and heavy turning of screws could no longer be heard and it was apparent a heavy enemy ship had gone to the bottom. After playing hide-and-seek with marauding destroyers for more than two hours, the

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wiley submarine surfaced and Commander Wright radioed fleet headquarters: "Sturgeon No Longer Virgin!" The submarine had become one of the first submarines to conduct a sound attack from deep submergence. The results were inconclusive as a sinking could only be judged by "breaking up noises" and the fade-out of the enemy's screws on sound gear. Japanese records, far from complete, did not identify a victim lost in this vicinity on the date in question.

The morning of 26 January 1942, STURGEON sighted a transport under escort of four minesweepers in the vicinity of Balikpapan. Four torpedoes unleashed on a sound bearing caused an explosive roar in her sound gear on the target but the outcome was uncertain. The following day, she encountered four destroyers south in Makassar Strait, passing submerged directly between the two center destroyers to get at the convoy which must surely be following. But when she came to periscope depth some 3,000 yards behind the destroyer screen, not a target was in sight. Attacking in the bright moonlight, she scored a hit on a tanker the morning of 31 January 1942.

The morning of 8 February 1942 STURGEON found herself directly in the track of a Japanese invasion armada headed for Makassar City. Making a quick dive, she escaped detection by several destroyers and a cruiser as they passed almost directly overhead.

STURGEON got off a contact report of the enemy task force and departed her area near midnight of 10 February when she received orders to Soerabaja, Java, Netherlands, East Indies. She reached that port 13 February 1942, clearing the repair docks each dawn to wait out the Japanese air attacks on the bottom throughout the day, then moved in to the docks at sundown to work all night on maintenance and repairs. As the Japanese moved in upon that Dutch Base, she proceeded to Tjilatjap, where she embarked a part of the Asiatic Fleet Submarine Force Staff. She became a unit of the escort for the valiant submarine tender HOLLAND who carried Asiatic Fleet Submarine Force Commander, Rear Admiral Charles A. Lockwood, Jr., to Fremantle, Australia. That port became STURGEON's new base of operations.

STURGEON stood out of Fremantle 15 March 1942 on her Third war patrol. Off the entrance to Makassar City 30 March 1942, she sank the 842-ton Japanese cargo ship CHOKO MARU. She added another victim to her score near midnight of 3 April when one of her torpedoes caught a patrol frigate directly under the bridge. She next devoted her attention to a merchantman, missing with three torpedoes. One torpedo remained in the forward tubes and this reared toward the enemy to hit abreast the foremast. The target listed heavily to port as she made for the Celebes shore. Whether she was successful in beaching or not is not known.

STURGEON attacked a tanker about mid-day of 6 April 1942 but torpedoes bounced off the enemy's side, having been launched from so close a range that they had failed to arm. The submarine received exploding depth charges for her effort but eluded the enemy destroyers to trek back southward on the Tarakan-Davao shipping lanes, thence into the Makassar Strait and off Cape Mandar, Celebes. As she patrolled off Cape Mandar, the night of 22 April, searchlights of a destroyer blinked towards the surfaced submarine and she went deep to evade two hours of depth charge attacks. She left her patrol area 28 April, bound for home.

STURGEON diverted from her homeward-bound passage the night of 30 April 1942 to attempt the rescue of Royal Air Force personnel reported on an island at the entrance of the harbor to Tjilatjap, Java. The submarine lay a little more than a mile off, while a boat landing party under Lieutenant Chester W. Nimitz, Jr., entered the cove to examine the beach by spotlight beam. Only a deserted lean-to was found and there was no response to repeated megaphone calls. The boat returned to the submarine before daylight of 1 May and STURGEON set course for return to Fremantle. She was on the surface in the morning daylight of 5 May when a silver-colored plane made a vertical dive from some 10,000 feet and pulled out before the conning tower hatch could be closed. No bombs were dropped and the submarine safely entered Fremantle 7 May 1942.

STURGEON left Fremantle 5 June 1942 on her Fourth War Patrol which soon found her on station west of Manila in the Philippine Islands. After a six-hour aggressive moonlit pursuit, she caught up with a convoy of nine merchantmen before daylight of 25 June. The largest merchantman was selected as target and three torpedoes launched to cause exploding hits. Enemy destroyers rained down some 21 exploding depth charges but STURGEON escaped with only a few gauge glasses and lamps shattered. She was still on the west coast of Luzon 1 July when she sent the unescorted transport MONTEVIDEO MARU (7,267 tons) to the bottom. She attacked another convoy bound north from Manila the 5th, scoring hits on a tanker. She returned to Fremantle 22 July 1942. During refit, 13 August 1942, Commander William L. "Bull" Wright, was relieved as her commanding officer by Lieutenant Commander Herman A. Pieczentkowski, U.S. Navy.

STURGEON's fifth war patrol was spent in the "hot area" of the Solomons. She made a daring daylight attack 14 September, launching torpedoes at a large cargo ship which was escorted by two destroyers. Her torpedoes missed astern the target whose speed had been underestimated. Undiscouraged, the submarine prowled south of Cape St. George where she expended torpedoes against a large tanker the night of 16 September. She tried the west side of the St. George Channel the night of 24 September and spent many hours dodging pinging destroyers and fast submarine chasers. The morning of 1 October 1942, she penetrated a destroyer screen to sink the 8,033-ton aircraft ferry KATSURAGI MARU. A fierce counter-attack of the enemy brought

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down depth charges whose explosion moved the whole submarine bodily, cracked the lubricating oil return line to the starboard main motor, and broke two gauges. In two instances, screws of the enemy overhead could be heard by men in her after-torpedo room. But STURGEON again outwitted the hunters above and made her way off Rabaul where she had the satisfaction of witnessing the American carrier air strikes 8-9 October. After patrol south of Tetipari Island, she returned to Brisbane, 25 October 1942.

STURGEON's Sixth War Patrol, conducted off Truk in the Carolines, brought her nine contacts but only three could be developed into attacks. She departed Brisbane 15 November 1942 for Truk where she scored a torpedo hit on a cargo ship the 6th of December. Her torpedoes missed in the other two attacks and she departed the Truk area 25 December to terminate her Sixth War Patrol at Pearl Harbor, 4 January 1943. Routed on to the west coast, she was overhauled in the Hunter's Point Navy Yard, California (14 January-11 May 1943). She returned to base at Pearl Harbor 18 May 1943.

STURGEON's Seventh War Patrol (12 June-2 August 1943) was conducted off Kii Suido, Honshu, Japan. Antisubmarine warfare tactics frustrated six of the possible attacks among seven worthwhile contacts developed. In daring daylight attacks, 1 July 1943, she scored two torpedo hits on a coastwise cargo ship guarded by aircraft and fast antisubmarine patrol craft. The submarine returned to Midway 2 August for refit by submarine tender SPERRY. During this refit, 6 August 1943, Lieutenant Commander Pieczentkowski was relieved as commanding officer by Lieutenant Commander Charlton L. Murphy, Jr., USN.

STURGEON departed Midway 29 August 1943 on her Eighth War Patrol which was conducted in the East China Sea, on the north coast of Taiwan (Formosa), and in the sea lanes running south to the Nansei Shoto Island Group. Hampered by bad weather throughout this patrol, her single attack on a steamer 2 October, was frustrated when heavy seas brought erratic depth performance to torpedoes launched at a steamer. She returned to Pearl Harbor 23 October 1944. Her Ninth War Patrol (13 December-1943-6 February 1944) took her south of Buingo Suido. She attacked a 7-ship convoy 11 January 1944 and sent the 5,493-ton cargo ship ERIE MARU to the bottom. Timed hits were heard on a freighter the 16th, but a counter-attacking destroyer kept her pinned down all afternoon until this enemy had made good her escape. Another convoy was attacked 24 January 1944 when STURGEON sank the 3,110-ton cargo ship CHOSEN MARU. Timed hits were heard on a second ship whose identity was never learned. Rough seas hampered an attack made 26 January on two medium sized cargo ships and her torpedoes missed. She returned to Pearl Harbor 6 February 1944.

STURGEON departed Pearl Harbor 8 April 1944 to conduct her Tenth War Patrol. Off the Bonins, 10 May, she attacked a convoy of 5 merchant ships guarded by two escorts. Two hits were made on a

freighter but depth charges held her down for nearly two hours, then a series of patrolling aircraft forced her under the surface as she commenced a heckled chase. After nightfall she made an "end-around" gaining ahead for another try. In the early morning darkness of 11 May, she moved in for a stern shot that sank the 1,904-ton cargo ship SEIRYU MARU. Another freighter was left dead in the water and smoking heavily before escorts forced the submarine to take evasive action. The 18th of April she picked up two survivors of Japanese patrol craft which had been sunk by another American submarine.

STURGEON was but a few miles off Marcus Islands 20 May 1944, acting as lifeguard ship for carrier air strikes. She had "a ringside seat." At one time, she observed the entire island smothered in smoke and dust but anti-aircraft fire continued undiminished. Shells whistled overhead near high noon as she maneuvered to pick up two downed airmen from Fighter-Bomber Squadron 15. Shrapnel hit the water around her as she went under. That afternoon, she picked up another airman from a rubber raft about 12 miles northeast of Marcus Island. She again found herself under fire from enemy shore batteries the morning of 21 May as she searched some 16,000 yards of Marcus Island. She returned to Midway 26 May 1944 and landed her two Japanese prisoners-of-war.

STURGEON commenced her Eleventh and last war patrol 10 June 1944 when she set course for the Nansei Shoto Islands. Only two contacts worthy of torpedo fire were encountered. Both were heavily escorted convoys aggressively penetrated in daring daylight periscope attacks by the fighting submarine. The first attack was carried out on 29 June 1944 against an 8-ship convoy guarded by aircraft and high-speed escorts. Four torpedoes spun through a smooth and glassy sea and four-timed hits were heard. Up in smoke and down to sea went the 7,089-ton passenger-cargo ship TOYAMA MARU. Enemy escorts and aircraft attacked the submarine but she suffered only minor damage from 77 explosions counted. A 9-ship convoy with air cover and many small escorts appeared the afternoon of 3 July 1944. The submarine gained three hits that blew the bow off the 6,862-ton cargo ship TAIRIN MARU and stove in her side. That enemy rolled to starboard, a complete wreck, and sank to the bottom. More depth charges and aircraft bombs were the penalty for this daring attack. In all, the submarine counted 273 depth charges and aircraft bombs meant for her in the counter-attacks of 29 June and 3 July. All went for naught, for she was as tough-skinned as the fish whose name she bore. She evaded the enemy above, trailed the convoy into the following day, and put into Pearl Harbor 5 August 1944.

STURGEON was routed onward to the West Coast for overhaul. She reached San Francisco 15 August 1944 and entered the yard of the Bethlehem Steel Company. There, 18 August 1944, Lieutenant Commander Charlton L. Murphy, Jr., was relieved as commanding officer by Lieutenant Commander Morton H. Lytle, U.S. Navy. On 31 December 1944 the submarine shifted to San Diego, departing there 5 January 1945



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for the Submarine Base at New London, Connecticut. She reached her destination 26 January 1945, joining Submarine Division 13, Squadron One, Submarine Flotilla, U.S. Atlantic Fleet. She served as a training ship for students of the submarine school, operating chiefly in Block Island Sound until 25 October. On that day, she shifted to Providence, Rhode Island, to be visited by the public during Navy Day celebrations which lasted through 30 October 1945.

STURGEON entered the Boston Navy Yard 30 October 1945 and decommissioned there 15 November 1945. Towed to the Portsmouth Navy Yard, she remained inactive until her name was struck from the Navy List 30 April 1948. STURGEON was sold for scrapping 12 June 1948 to Interstate Metals Corporation, New York, New York. Seven of her war patrols were designated successful for the award of the Submarine Combat Insignia: Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Ninth, Tenth, and Eleventh. She received ten battle stars for the operations listed below:

- 1 Star/PHILIPPINE ISLANDS OPERATION: 8-25 Dec 1941
- 1 Star/NETHERLANDS EAST INDIES ENGAGEMENTS: 23 Jan-13 Feb 1942
- 1 Star/THIRD WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 15 Mar-7 May 1942
- 1 Star/FOURTH WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 5 Jun-22 Jul 1942
- 1 Star/CAPTURE AND DEFENSE OF GUADALCANAL: 4 Sep-25 Oct 1942
- 1 Star/SIXTH WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 16 Nov 1942-4 Jan 1943
- 1 Star/SEVENTH WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 12 Jun-2 Aug 1943
- 1 Star/NINTH WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 13 Dec 1943-6 Feb 1944
- 1 Star/TENTH WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 8 Apr-26 May 1944
- 1 Star/ELEVENTH WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 10 Jun-5 Aug 1944

-LIST OF COMMANDING OFFICERS- USS STURGEON (SS-187)-

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|--|-------------------------|
| Lieutenant Arthur D. Barnes, USN:              | 25 Jun 1938- 2 Jun 1940 |
| Lieutenant Commander William L. Wright:        | 2 Jun 1940-13 Aug 1942  |
| Lieutenant Commander Herman A. Fiecsentkowski: | 13 Aug 1942- 6 Aug 1943 |
| Lieutenant Commander Charlton L. Murphy:       | 6 Aug 1943-16 Aug 1944  |
| Lieutenant Commander Morton H. Lytle, USN:     | 16 Aug 1944-15 Dec 1944 |
| Lieutenant Commander William J. Ruhe, USN:     | 15 Dec 1944-20 Oct 1945 |
| Lieutenant Commander Frederick C. Wyse, Jr.:   | 20 Oct 1945-15 Nov 1945 |

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The third STURGEON (SS(N)-637), a nuclear-powered attack submarine is under construction by the General Dynamics Corporation, Electric Boat Company Division, Groton, Connecticut. Her keel was laid 5 January 1963. She is scheduled to launch in the fall of 1965, under the sponsorship of Mrs. Everett M. Dirksen, wife of United States Senate Minority Leader Dirksen of Illinois.