

HISTORY OF USS GRENADIER (SS 210)  
(Also: SS-525)

USS GRENADIER (SS 210), a 1,475-ton fleet submarine of the "G" Type of 1939-1940, was built at the Navy Yard in Portsmouth, New Hampshire where her keel was laid on 2 April 1940. The sub was launched on 29 November 1940 with Mrs Walter S. Anderson, wife of Rear Admiral Walter S. Anderson, USN, President of the Board of Inspection and Survey, Navy Department, as the official sponsor.

GRENADIER was placed in commission on 1 May 1941 under the command of Commander Allen Raymond Joyce, USN.

The submarine was 307 feet in overall length, 27 feet abeam and had a surface speed of 21 knots. In addition to ten torpedo tubes -- six forward and four aft -- she carried one 3-inch anti-aircraft deck gun and two anti-aircraft machine guns.

After usual shakedown exercises, held in Atlantic waters, GRENADIER sailed for the Pacific and on 4 February 1942 left Pearl Harbor on her first war patrol. This patrol was conducted in the coastal waters of Honshu, Japan, chiefly off Tokyo Bay and in the traffic lanes to the Bonin Islands.

In the early morning of 26 February, an overzealous trimming-down submerged the submarine prematurely and, at the time, the lower conning tower hatch was shut but the water in the conning tower raised waist-deep before the upper hatch could be closed. This resulted in flooding out the trim and drain pumps, the low pressure blows, main hydraulic pump and one air compressor; and necessitated complete hand operation in diving until repairs could be effected.

About dawn on 1 March, while patrolling between Miyaki Shima and Nojima Saki, a plane was heard but never seen. GRENADIER only managed to attain a depth of 35 feet before the bomb went off but, judging from the effect, the plane must have had as much trouble seeing the submarine as GRENADIER did the plane.

That afternoon, just north of Inuboe Saki Light, GRENADIER probably went closer to the mainland of Japan than had any allied vessel since the beginning of the war. She made a submerged attack on a 5,000 ton freighter which was only one mile from the beach -- and GRENADIER was on the beach side of the freighter. A spread of four torpedoes resulted in one hit, but the freighter was not observed to sink.

This first patrol ended on 23 March 1942 at Pearl Harbor. Commander Joyce was relieved as commanding officer of the submarine by Commander Willis Ashford Lent, USN, at the end of this patrol.

Her second war patrol commenced after a refit at the Submarine Base, Pearl Harbor, when GRENADIER headed toward Nagasaki, Japan, on 12 April 1942. This patrol proved both more interesting and profitable and resulted in a Gold Star in lieu of a second Navy Cross being awarded to the commanding officer, Commander Lent.

Shortly after midnight on the morning of 25 April, the sub's radar picked up a plane five or six miles distant. As she began a quick dive, the plane was sighted at an estimated altitude of 1,500 feet, heading for the ship. Two bombs exploded as the plane passed over and later another was heard in the distance. Other than a shaking up, the submarine was not harmed.

On the night of 1 May 1942, off Danjo Gunto in the light of a bright moon, a large three-island freighter of the AFRICA MARU class was sighted about four miles away. A submerged attack was made and a spread of four torpedoes was fired. Two hits resulted in the first sinking for GRENADIER.

During the late afternoon of 8 May 1942, GRENADIER intercepted a south-bound convoy of six medium freighters and the TAIJO MARU, a large merchant vessel of 14,900 tons, heavily escorted by aircraft and destroyers. The TAIJO MARU was, of course, picked as the first target and a submerged approach was terminated with firing a spread of four torpedoes. With two hits registering, the TAIJO MARU went to a watery grave -- and GRENADIER underwent an uncomfortably prolonged depth charging. Actually, in this attack, the submarine had been spotted and bombs were dropped before her first torpedo had been fired. The depth charges and bombs continued for 23 hours with about 70 being dropped close aboard and many more in the distance. A propeller shaft was so damaged that it squeaked causing sufficient noise to make the submarine easy prey for the destroyers. Lights were knocked out, leaks developed, and the superstructure was twisted around considerably. The Japanese acknowledged the loss of the TAIJO MARU.

On 14 May, the patrol area was shifted and GRENADIER sailed to Bungo Suido through the narrow Van Bemen Strait, making a brilliant run at 17 knots through poor visibility, running from one patrol vessel to another. On 25 May the sub was ordered back to Midway. Unfortunately, the sector assigned to GRENADIER made it impossible for her to participate in any fighting in the Battle of Midway, and on several occasions she was forced to deep submergence by planes.

The report of the second war patrol which ended on 10 June 1942, contained the following endorsement: "The GRENADIER returned from a very successful patrol in enemy-controlled waters and remained at sea for 59 days. In spite of strong anti-submarine measures, including three long depth charge attacks, the commanding officer returned his ship without damage to material or personnel.....The commanding officer covered his area very thoroughly but due to weather conditions and not operating in shipping lanes, only three contacts with enemy shipping were developed."

GRENADIER's third war patrol commenced on 13 July 1942 from Pearl Harbor. Commander Lent had been relieved as commanding officer by Lieutenant Commander Bruce L. Carr on 18 June 1942.

Forty days were spent on station around Truk and Tol Island. On 30 July, three torpedoes were fired and sank a large tanker of 15,000 tons. Two hits were made on the tanker, which immediately aroused the escorting destroyers and they proceeded to drop 14 depth charges very close aboard which shook up GRENADIER severely. Later these destroyers pleased the sub's crew by sitting right over their nest without laying any eggs.

Vice Admiral C. A. Lockwood, then Commander Submarines, Southwest Pacific, endorsed the third war patrol report as follows: "The attack on the tanker was well executed and the GRENADIER efficiently evaded without damage a subsequent depth charge attack by escorting destroyers....The sinking of the 15,000-ton tanker was confirmed by other sources."

Another endorsement read as follows: "The attack on the large tanker was vigorously and efficiently carried out. The commanding officer successfully evaded the severe depth charging that followed. The numerous sightings of aircraft and lack of enemy air attacks indicates an alertness and high state of training." There were 41 air attacks made on this patrol, which terminated on 18 September 1942 in Fremantle, Australia.

For her fourth war patrol, GRENADIER proceeded to the approaches to Haiphong, Indo-China. The main object of this patrol was to lay a minefield of 32 mines off Haiphong, but eight torpedoes were carried to conduct an offensive patrol against enemy shipping in the South China Sea between Latitude 12 and 18 degrees north.

The mine plant was successfully executed at night as GRENADIER dodged junks and islands in water which was, in parts, as shallow as 26 feet and laid one of the first submarine minefields of the war. The fifth mine exploded prematurely, 45 minutes after planting.

Shortly after midnight on the morning of 12 November, a surface approach was made on a freighter near Cape Varella. It was believed that the target course and speed had been well checked and the bridge personnel saw the torpedo tracks run under the freighter. The third and last torpedo caused a large commotion under the enemy's bridge as though its air flask had exploded. At this time the freighter doused a small light which had been showing and turned in toward the beach.

At 0657 the same morning, a corvette was sighted at close range in poor visibility. A dive was made, the approach started, and the first look revealed the enemy ship to be at a range of less than 1,000 yards and coming in at high speed. Depth charges were dropped close aboard forcing GRENADIER to the bottom with considerable force, carryi

away both sound heads. Salt water was taken in the after battery compartment causing chlorine gas to be formed which caused much suffering among the crew, but with no permanent casualties.

Upon surfacing in the evening of 16 November, the handicap of having no sound gear was illustrated. The visibility was poor and a corvette was sighted close aboard immediately after surfacing. During the subsequent depth charge attack, everyone was wishing that the sound gear was still intact so that the tables could have been turned.

Among the incidents of this patrol GRENADIER sighted a diplomatic ship and a hospital ship near the Gulf of Tonkin. Then, at 0728 on 30 November the submarine had the heart-breaking experience of sighting an aircraft carrier of the RYUJO class at 8,000 yards and a heavy cruiser and destroyer at 15,000 yards heading south in a heavy rain squall in the Strait of Makassar. When sighted, the ships were at high speed with an angle on the bow of at least 80° starboard. Since it was impossible to close, GRENADIER surfaced to pass on the contact report to Radio Darwin. This patrol ended in Fremantle on 10 December 1942.

During the refit period at Fremantle Lieutenant Commander Carr was relieved by Lieutenant Commander J. A. Fitzgerald, USN, as the submarine's commanding officer.

The fifth war patrol of GRENADIER began on 1 January 1943 and was conducted in the approaches to Soerabaja, Makassar, and Balikpapan, the vicinity of Saleier Strait, Pulassi Island, and the northern entrance to Bali Strait.

At 0620 on the morning of 10 January in the northern approaches to Soerabaja, GRENADIER battle-surfaced on a 60-ton, two-masted schooner flying the Jap merchant flag. The schooner was sunk by gunfire from the 3-inch and automatic weapons.

In the afternoon of 12 January in the same area, a steamer of 750 tons was sighted towing a well loaded hulk barge of about 500 tons. The seas and wind were sufficient to hold the speed down so that the submarine was able, at 1705, to join the formation as third ship in column waiting for darkness. After nightfall, she surfaced, started mounting the machine guns, and closing distance.

It was necessary to lash 7x50 binoculars to the 3-inch gun to use as sights since the regular sights had flooded and at 2042 fire was opened on the steamer. Seventeen minutes later the cease fire order was given with the ship afire and beginning to settle. A few minutes later she opened fire on the barge, ceasing after three minutes to watch both enemy vessels sink.

On 22 January 1943, after ascertaining with a lead line (the fathometer was out of commission) that there was enough water in which

to dive, a convoy consisting of two 7,000-ton cargo vessels escorted by a destroyer and a patrol vessel was sighted hugging the coast just south of Balikpapan. The approach was made and three torpedoes were fired at the leading vessel and two at the second. One hit was made on the first ship and two on the latter. The counter-attack by the enemy escorts with depth charges in about ten fathoms of water prevented the skipper from observing the results of the hits. Several hours later, a quick look showed only the escort vessels, oil on the surface, and large column of heavy black smoke.

On the last day of January, off the entrance to Makassar City in the Celebes, GRENADIER made the unfortunate exchange, with a small enemy steamer, of three torpedoes for some depth charges -- neither having any effect.

The commander Task Force 51, endorsed the report of the fifth war patrol as follows: "The GRENADIER operated for a considerable part of this patrol in relatively shallow water in spite of the handicap resulting from the failure of the fathometer -- the patrol throughout was marked by a spirit of aggressiveness which, with additional experience, will produce maximum results on future patrols."

Commander, Submarine Squadron 6 said, "Assigned patrol areas were thoroughly covered by the GRENADIER; determined attempts were made with torpedoes and gunfire."

GRENADIER was credited with inflicting the following damage on the enemy during this patrol: Sunk -- 1 schooner, 60 tons, 1 tug, 750 tons; and 1 barge, 500 tons. Damaged -- 2 freighters totaling 14,000 tons.

GRENADIER's sixth war patrol began on 20 March 1943 from Fremantle Australia. She headed for the Andaman Sea, from the Gulf of Martaban down through the Mergui Archipelago to Malacca Strait, to investigate and destroy enemy shipping. GRENADIER was the first American submarine to be in this area. Pictures were taken of the harbor at the Island of Sabang.

On the night of 6 June, a small freighter of about 2,000 tons was sighted off Puket Island. A surface torpedo attack resulted in her damage and, to the officers and men on the bridge, what appeared to be an attempt to beach the vessel. Later information, received from several different Japanese sources, revealed that this ship had been sunk. After the explosion, the wounded ship fired on the submarine with two guns (estimated to be 5-inch) using tracer ammunition, most of the shells going over GRENADIER or landing in the sub's wake. This fire was returned until the freighter got too close in to the beach.

The next several weeks were uneventful, showing no evidence of shipping in this area, and a request was made by the impatient GRENADIER to change to a more fruitful area. At the same time that

orders were received to shift to Sunda Straits, two freighters of about 3,000 tons were picked up. It being night, a surface attack was commenced in bright moonlight but unfortunately GRENADIER was sighted when she had closed to 2,500 yards. At this time the submarine commenced firing with her 3-inch and automatic weapons and the two enemy ships returned the fire with what appeared to be 5-inch guns. The commanding officer deemed it advisable to retire and attempt to gain a position ahead of the ships for a submerged approach in the morning. However, a slight miscalculation put the freighters, which were using a high speed and erratic zig-zag plan, out of range when the attack was resumed.

It again became necessary for the tenacious GRENADIER to surface with the intent of sweeping wide around the two ships in order to gain a position for a submerged attack. At about 0830 on 21 April 1943 a heavy naval bomber was sighted heading for the submarine. A quick dive was made and what was estimated as two 1,000-pound bombs exploded as GRENADIER was passing the 90-foot depth. The explosion was just above the forward part of the after torpedo room and lights immediately went out while the boat took a down-angle of about 20 degrees. Power to the screws was lost, so the Captain ordered to put her on the bottom, which was at about 45 fathoms.

Gauges were broken throughout the boat and the overhead of the after torpedo room was found to be stove in to a great extent. The soft patch and air induction in the maneuvering room were leaking on the maneuvering cubicle, and the cubicle had been sprung against the overhead, fusing wires and causing electrical fires in the maneuvering room. In the after torpedo room there was a tangled mass of torpedoes, bodies and bunks; but miraculously there were no major casualties among the men. The thick, strong back by the torpedo loading hatch was buckled. The hydraulic steering and stern plane gears were put out of commission, but by the excellent work of Pienka, Machinist's Mate first class, and Shaw, Machinist's Mate second class, a jury rig was improvised. The propeller shafts had been warped and there was considerable leakage around their bearings while the after torpedo tubes were so warped that it was impossible to operate the tube doors.

Squads were organized to fight the fire in the maneuvering room and it finally brought under control, but intermittent fires were continually breaking out which, along with the leakage, overcame any progress on repair of electrical equipment.

Remaining on the bottom all day using emergency lights, without power to run the air conditioning or air circulating units, and with the fires using up a great deal of the precious oxygen -- it became necessary to use carbon dioxide absorbent throughout the boat and to bleed oxygen into the air from the oxygen flasks.

GRENADIER surfaced that night and work was continued. As she came up and the pressure was released against the after torpedo room hatch,

it sprang out to such an extent that it was possible to put a hand around a portion of the "knife edge."

By this time it was apparent that there was no hope of being able to repair the submarine sufficiently to get underway, or even be able to dive again. Therefore, all classified equipment and publications were destroyed and a fruitless attempt was made to transmit a radio message telling of GRENADIER's plight and the crew's intention to abandon ship to the nearby Pilgrim Island.

Shortly after dawn on the morning of 22 April 1943, several ships were sighted on the horizon, coming in. A Zero headed in on the submarine but 20-millimeter gunfire forced the plane to drop her bomb several hundred yards short. It could be seen that the plane had been hit, and subsequent intelligence obtained in Penang, Malay States, revealed that the pilot had been killed and the plane crashed.

At about 0830 the skipper ordered GRENADIER abandoned and all hatches were left open. The Chief-of-the-Boat, Chief Torpedoman's Mate Withrow, opened the vents and came topsides to have the decks submerge under him, as the whole crew watched their home, of which they had become so proud, plummet to the bottom -- and turned to face the oncoming Japanese vessels with hearts of lead.

After a little more than an hour in the water, the entire crew of GRENADIER was captured by a Japanese naval escort vessel, a converted merchant ship of about 2,000 tons, and taken into Penang. There the Japanese naval forces proved themselves to be nothing human by their starvation, continual beatings and other torture methods to gain information from their captives. Time after time the prisoners would be tortured until they lost consciousness rather than submit to their captors, who claimed that the crew was still their enemy and acted accordingly.

This state of being was to continue until the crew reached a registered camp, at which time they would become prisoners-of-war. It took some of the men nearly two years to reach this exalted status.

After a week in Penang, Commander Fitzgerald, Commander Whiting (executive officer), and Lieutenant Commander Harty (communications officer) were flown to a naval non-registered, interrogation camp in Ofuna, Japan, run by the Yokosuka Naval Base. Chief Radioman Knutson was flown to Soerabaja, Java, where he was questioned by German naval officers, and from them received extremely severe treatment. He was later flown to the camp in Ofuna.

The remaining members of the crew left Penang in a filthy hold of a steamer on the 5th of August 1943, and arrived in Singapore two days later to be interned in a blocked-off portion of an Indian prisoner-of-war camp in Selitar, just outside the captured English naval base.

in Singapore. There the men were fairly unmolested but still received very small rations, no medical care and were required to work in the naval base. However, by this time not many were able to stand, much less work.

These men left Singapore on 26 September 1943 in a hold of the ASAMA MARU. One man, Electrician's Mate second class L.L. Barker, was too ill to travel and was left behind, but fortunately joined some of his shipmates at a later date in Japan. The voyage on the ASAMA MARU was highlighted by severe mass beatings when the watch would change -- missing no one. At the end of the trip the prisoners were put into small launches and taken to a small village near Shimonoseki on 9 October 1943. Two days later, 29 of these men were taken to the interrogation camp in Ofuna and later the remaining 41 were interned in a prisoner-of-war camp in Fukuoka.

Over the course of the next 15 months, the members of GRENADIER's crew in Ofuna gradually spread out over the northern part of Honshu in various prisoners-of-war camps. Few who saw the submarine's crew after six months of captivity would have believed that many could have lived; but God was with them and only four died -- all in a camp in Fukuoka. These four, all fine men, were: Charles Doyle, MoMM1c, USN; Charles F. Linder, MoMM2c, USNR; George W. Snyder, Jr., MM3c; and Justiniano G. Guico, StM1c, USNR.

#### DAMAGE TO ENEMY BY USS GRENADIER

First Patrol	Damaged	1 Freighter, 5,000 tons
Second Patrol	Sunk	1 Freighter, 9,500 tons 1 Passenger ship, 14,900 tons
Third Patrol	Sunk	1 Tanker, 1,500 tons
Fifth Patrol	Sunk	1 Schooner, 60 tons 1 Tug, 750 tons 1 Barge, 500 tons 2 Freighters, 14,000 tons
Sixth Patrol	Sunk	1 Freighter, 2,000 tons 1 Plane
Total Sunk		42,710 tons plus 1 plane
Total Damaged		19,000 tons



USS GRENADIER (SS 210) earned four Battle Stars on the Asiatic-Pacific Area Service Medal for participating in the following operations:

- 1 Star/Midway -- 3-6 June 1942
- 1 Star/Submarine War Patrol, Pacific -- 4 February to 23 March 1942
- 1 Star/Submarine War Patrol, Pacific -- 13 July to 18 September 1942
- 1 Star/Submarine War Patrol, Pacific -- 1 January to 20 February 1943

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### USS GRENADIER (SS 525)

A second Navy ship to be named GRENADIER was authorized by Act of Congress on 19 July 1940 and her keel was laid at the Boston Navy Yard Boston, Massachusetts, on 8 February 1944. USS GRENADIER (SS 525) was like the SS-210, named for a family of soft-finned, mostly deep-sea, fishes having a tapering body and also to perpetuate the name of the former submarine which was lost due to enemy action in Malayan waters on 21 April 1943.

SS-525 was christened and commissioned in dual ceremonies at the Boston Naval Shipyard, Charlestown, Massachusetts, on 10 February 1951. Mrs. John A. Fitzgerald, wife of the commanding officer of the first GRENADIER sponsored the new ship.

USS GRENADIER (SS 525), sister ship of USS GRAMPUS (SS 523), is one of a group of streamlined submarines constructed for the Navy under the "Greater Underwater Propulsive Power" (GUPPY) project. The perfection of the snorkel or breathing apparatus, such as that installed on GRENADIER, allows increased submerged endurance.

This modernized submarine is 306 feet in length, 27 feet abeam, has a speed of 20 knots, and displaces 1,570 tons.

USS GRENADIER (SS 525) is attached to the U. S. Atlantic Fleet with her home port at New London, Connecticut, and home yard at Boston Massachusetts.

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## USS GRENADIER (SS210) - PATROL IN PEACE

In April 1943, GRENADIER, under Lieutenant Commander J. A. Fitzgerald, was patrolling in Malacca Strait. Although this waterway, lying between the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra, was deep in enemy territory, targets had proved disappointingly scarce to this veteran submarine on her sixth war patrol. Dangerous hunting ground, but Fitzgerald was determined to investigate the approaches to that Malay seaport. Early in the morning of the 21st, a few miles off Penang, GRENADIER sighted and set out on the trail of a two-ship convoy. At 0800 she had about 15 minutes to go to obtain a strategic position on the convoy's track, when the lookouts reported, "Plane on the port quarter." Fitzgerald gave the order to dive.

A few seconds after GRENADIER submerged, the executive officer remarked, "We ought to be safe enough now. We're between 120 and 130 feet." His statement was punctuated by a blast that sounded as if a munitions vessel had blown up immediately overhead. A bomb had exploded near the bulkhead between the maneuvering room and after torpedo room. In the conning tower the lights blacked out and power was lost. GRENADIER heeled over about 15 degrees and coasted helplessly - down - down - coming to rest on the sea floor under some 270 feet of water.

Communications with the after compartments went out of kilter. Then the alarming word came through, "Fire in the maneuvering room!" Smoke surged from the compartment, men groped about blindly, coughing, and as the fire got out of hand, Fitzgerald ordered the compartment sealed.

Some thirty minutes later the compartment was opened and entered by a damage control party using "lungs" and respirators. Flames were eating into the hull-insulation cork, cables, stores and cleaning rags. The main motor cables had been gashed when the submarine heeled over, and arcing and sparks from the resulting short circuit had started the blaze.

Two fire fighters were overcome by the suffocating smoke. Crew members went about their duties, tight-lipped, or sat staring dozedly at the overhead. Fitzgerald spoke quietly over the intercom, "Steady men. Everything is under control." But when the fire was finally smothered, the maneuvering room was a wreck. The induction valve had been knocked off its seat and a two-inch stream of water was pouring in. The hard patch above the main motor-controller had ruptured, admitting a spray that soaked the maze of electrical apparatus. Short circuits and grounds started a pyrotechnic sputter, and no sooner was one blaze extinguished than another cropped out.

Meantime, a bucket brigade hustled between the maneuvering room and the forward torpedo room, trying to keep the water level below the main motors. In the fouling air, men slumped from heat prostration and physical exhaustion. Eventually a jury rig was installed between the main battery and a drain pump, so that the pump could be put on the motor room bilge. The bucket line was secured, and the submariners turned to other emergency repair tasks.

GRENADIER had suffered serious internal injuries. In the forward end of the after torpedo room the hull on the starboard side had been dished in from four to six inches. The after tubes had been forced to port, bending the main shafts. All the hull frames in the maneuvering room and the after torpedo room were bent inward. The door between the maneuvering room and the after torpedo room was sprung and would not close properly. The strongback in the after torpedo room loading hatch was bent. Water sprayed in through the damaged hatch. Later the crew discovered that about two-fifths of the gasket in this hatch was chopped up. The hatch had been wrenched into an elliptical shape, and a man could put his hand between the knife-edge and the hatch cover.

All hydraulic lines to the tubes, vents and steering mechanisms in the after torpedo room were broken. Many of the gages in the after room were knocked a cockbill. In the maneuvering room the control gage was twisted askew. Deck plates and supporting frames were warped. The engine room had also suffered damage and hydraulic lines to the main vents were discovered broken.

The radio transmitter in the conning tower had been jarred from its foundation and the insulators in the antenna trunk were fractured. The SJ radar appeared to be unharmed, but it could not be tested. Minor damage extended all the way to the forward battery room where dishes and phonograph records had been shattered. GRENADIER's ship's company worked throughout the day, laboring to regain propulsion. Electricians did everything they could to shield vulnerable equipment from the salt bath showering from the maneuvering room overhead, but intermittent electrical fires and persistent leaks frustrated their best efforts. The radio, however was put back in commission and the motors were at last revived. At 2130, the submarine struggled to the surface. Somehow Lieutenant H. B. Sherry, the diving officer, managed to keep her on an even keel.

Fitzgerald had hoped that on the surface they could stem the leakage and restore the electrical equipment. The submarine was cleared of smoke, and the engineers and electricians got to work on the damaged power plant. By means of jury rigs they finally managed to turn over one shaft at slow speed. But the shaft was badly bent and it was impossible to get the contact levers into the second stage of resistance. Approximately 2,750 amperes were required to turn the shaft, whereas the normal was 450. After a heartbreaking attempt, the engineering officer, Lieutenant Alfred J. Toulon, and the electricians reported to Fitzgerald on the bridge that their efforts were stymied. Everything possible had been done to establish propulsion, and it was literally no go.

With her deck gun out of commission, GRENADIER could neither fight nor run away - a desperate situation for a submarine far behind the enemy's lines in the hottest kind of water. Morning was coming, and it would certainly bring with it a horde of Japanese sub-hunters. In this extremity, Fitzgerald was not for sitting on his hands. He soon had the crew working on a sail which might take GRENADIER in closer to the beach where the crew could be disembarked and the submarine blown up. But the sail proved useless in the breathless doldrum of a tropic sunrise. As daylight burned through the eastern mists, Fitzgerald decided it was high time to scuttle the helpless submarine and strike out for shore.

# SUBMARINE SAGAS



## THE SINKING OF THE USS GRENADIER SS 210

By Robert W. Palmer

Pre-dawn on 21 April, 1943, USS GRENADIER (SS 210) was making an end-around on two Japanese ships which had been sighted to the westward during the previous night. Her Fairbanks-Morse engines were each delivering full power, driving GRENADIER along course 155 degrees toward Malacca Strait and a pre-determined position from which it was anticipated a successful torpedo attack could be made on the two ships.

At about 0835, still some ten minutes before diving, a single engine plane was sighted, at low altitude, approaching the port quarter. The C.O. by personal observation determined that the object

sighted was not a bird, or other false alarm, ordered 'DIVE-DIVE-this is not a drill.' ALL AHEAD EMERGENCY! The already electrified atmosphere below at once became volatile. As 120 feet registered on the depth gage a sense of safety was immediately destroyed by terrible sounds — a subtle turbulent S-W-I-S-H, a metallic click as a firing mechanism activated, then ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE — The instantaneous result was as though two express trains had collided head on. As near as could be determined the detonation occurred close by and to starboard above the after torpedo room bulkhead, causing a violent list to port. Stunned men in the maneuvering room were knocked about, those in the after torpedo room became airborne, ending up between torpedo tubes and on the deck. All power for propulsion, auxiliary equipment and lighting was

lost. Emergency lighting was activated at once; the awesome sight of devastation was incomprehensible, it was inconceivable that GRENADIER could have withstood so much damage, and still could be more or less intact; especially from abaft the after engine room bulkhead. The after torpedo room was in complete disarray; tubes were askew, pipe lines, valves and gages ruptured or rendered inoperative, equipment and bodies in a jumbled mess on the deck.

The maneuvering room was damaged beyond belief. Both propeller shafts were seized in a vice-like grip by the bulkhead which had been forced to port. To further complicate the situation, sea water was pouring in from the hardpatch above the cage, the ATR loading hatch, and numerous other openings. As we passed 200' on the way down, the electricians in the cage passed the word "FIRE IN THE MANEUVERING ROOM"! The fathometer indicated that we were in about 270' of water whereupon the skipper decided to settle on the bottom in lieu of surfacing. GRENADIER and crew began their struggle for survival.

A bucket brigade was established between the motor room and forward torpedo room. The object being to keep the water level from reaching the main propulsion motors. This continued until a jury rig could be established to power the main electrical circuits. Many exhausting hours were spent attempting to clear short circuits and establish propulsion. During the day, many a man passed out from fatigue, heat and foul air, even though oxygen had been released into the atmosphere and CO<sub>2</sub> absorbent had been spread throughout the interior. Finally at about 2130, preparations were made to surface. All tanks that would hold water had been filled in order to anchor



USS GRENADIER (SS 210) abandoned and all hatches were left open on 22 April 1943 off the Malaysia coast. The Chief-of-the-Boat, CTM Withrow, opened the vents and came topsides.

GRENADIER and keep her from moving in the fast current of Malacca, and sliding off our perch and into deep water which was close by. Banks of compressed air was bled into these and the main ballast tanks. Finally, and with reluctance, she moved upward, broke the surface and 76 officers and men, totally exhausted and very short of oxygen, tasted sweet fresh air which, but for their herculean efforts and a bit of luck, would have been denied them forever.

Throughout the night every effort was continued in hopes of re-establishing propulsion, but to no avail. The entire drive was out, shafts bent, screws damaged; radio communication destroyed, and the 3" deck gun inoperative. Mattress covers were sewn together and rigged to number two periscope in hopes that enough wind could move the ship close to the Malaysia shore where it could possibly be submerged and made seaworthy. Dead calm belated this effort. Preliminary steps were taken to destroy GRENADIER should such action become necessary in order to preclude her falling into enemy hands. Shortly after 0800, another Japanese plane began an approach from ahead. Though we were a sitting duck, we were not incapable of some retaliation. The plane appeared to be dive bomber, referred to as a VAL and as it burped its guns it began a strafing run down our starboard side. We opened up with two



*GRENADIER survivors (l to r): John E. Simpson, John F. Schwartzly, Jewell C. Embry, and Charles E. Johnson. Newly repatriated from Japanese Prisoner of War Camp, the men had just picked up new tailor made uniforms.*

20mm guns, two .30 cal. machine guns, a few rifles, some .45 cal. pistols, and some tommy guns. The commissary steward threw potatoes that he had brought topside in that there were no more arms to go round. Tracers revealed that the 20mm fire was effective, the plane waivered, pulled up and circled our stern making an approach up the port side, again our automatic weapons stood us in good stead as the plane was again hit several times. The pilot

must have become very discouraged for he released his bomb as he passed abreast to port. It detonated about 200 yards off the starboard bow. Subsequently we were advised by the Japanese in Penang, that the pilot died in the crash of his plane upon his return to base. This information was not without cost, special treatment was administered, especially to the Gunner's mate by the Japanese, after our capture.

By this time, surface ships were observed at some distance, approaching from both north and south. Destruction of sensitive equipment was completed. A Tommy gun was emptied into the TDC (Torpedo Data Computer), torpedoes were run hot in the tubes, radio gear smashed, all codes destroyed, documents thrown over the side in weighted bags. Time was running out! We would soon be surrounded, and being no match for Corvettes, an armed merchant ship, and a two engined bomber closing in, the skipper had to abandon ship. The skipper had previously advised all hands to put on their most servicable clothing, he then had to make that awful decision. "All hands on deck except the Chief of the Boat, wear life belts, inflate the rubber life boat and all hands over the side and away from the hull."

Then to the Chief below; "Open everything and come topside." The Chief of the boat, then the skipper, joined all other personnel in the



*The Convent on Light Street in Penang where GRENADIER'S crew were imprisoned initially by the Japanese.*

water. Many a tear was shed as GRENADIER slid gracefully under the water for the last time. Machine gunning the crew in the water did not occur and all hands were picked up by an armed merchant ship and taken to a commandeered Catholic school in Penang, Malaysia. Torture and inhumane treatment began immediately. Beating, burning, breaking fingers with bamboo or pencils between them, and to quote the skipper, then Lieutenant Commander John A. Fitzgerald, USN, as he described the various tortures inflicted; Quote: The men were divided half and half between the school rooms on the ground floor, stone decks; the officers in single rooms on the second floor, wooden decks. The rough treatment started the first afternoon, particularly with the men. They were forced to sit or stand in silence in an attention attitude. Any divergence resulted in a gun butt, kick, slug in the face or a bayonet prick. In the questioning room, persuasive measures, such as clubs, about the size of indoor ball bats, pencils between the fingers and pushing of the blade of a pen knife under the finger nails, trying to get us to talk about our submarine and the location of other submarines.



USS GRENADIER officers, crew, and their ladies at recent Reunion in Hartford '82. Of this group the POW's are: Herbert, Palmer, RAdm Albertsen, RAdm Fitzgerald, Garrison, Westerfield, Capt. Harty, Leslie, and Poss.

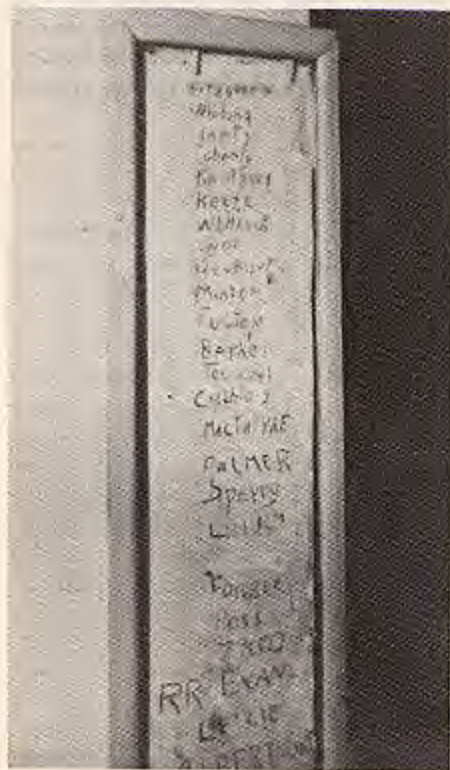
Considering all this, I believe the men held up remarkably well. To the best of my knowledge, our RM1c Knutson and I were the only ones to receive the water treatment and I the only one who lost a fingernail. Believe it or not, the pain of the pencils between the fingers was so great that I did not realize my left hand was being stabbed with a knife, only when I saw the blood gushing did I realize what had happened. Of the water treatment, it needs a degree of explaining. Usually, I was severely beaten by a club or two clubs as the mood struck my captors. Simultaneously, two guards would arrange themselves on each side of the victim, taking turns to see who could drive the hardest. I was then tied to a bench to such an angle that my feet were on a plane of about 30 degrees above my head. They would then start pouring tea kettle after tea kettle of water down my nose, holding a hand over my mouth in the meantime; everytime I would move my head or try for air, a heavy fist would bounce off my chin.

Maybe I would pass out and maybe not. Following this I would receive another club beating until I passed out. On coming to, they would try to get me to talk; when it was not forthcoming, more beatings — finally I would be carried to my room and dumped on the floor waiting for a

while until they decided to try again. Every time I would hear that warrant officer, assisted by his walking stick, come into the building, I would think it was for me again or maybe some other poor devil. We all had the same feeling for everyone received beating after beating, as like treatment was given to all hands. One became so stiff and sore it was almost impossible to move, let alone change position from standing or sitting or reclining, even if able to get away with it Unquote.

This was the beginning of twenty eight and a half months of similar treatment for most all of the crew and officers alike. Work camps eased the brutality somewhat, however, the Japanese contributed to the death of four crew members. There was a total lack of medical treatment.

At the time of questioning at the Catholic school on Light Street in Penang, as we were taken back and forth to the Benjo (toilet), we managed to scratch our names on one of the walls. The skipper, the executive officer and our communications officer did not, as they were flown directly to Japan, arriving at OFUNA on 1 May, 1943. The wall with the names on it has been preserved by the sisters of the Convent School over these many years. Visitors today view the names and hear the tale of torture of GRENADIER crew. The children, we



GRENADIER names scratched on the "benjo" wall of The Convent on Light Street in Penang. Sisters at the school have preserved the names until this day.