

HISTORY OF USS HALIBUT (SS 232)

It was a proud but battered submarine that slipped into Pearl Harbor from her last war patrol. The crew knew that she could take it but only the Japs knew how she could "dish it out". Davy Jones was kind to HALIBUT, for after almost deciding to keep her, he released her from the dark green ocean depths because she had contributed so many Japanese ships to his underwater domain.

On 3 December 1941, Mrs. Paul T. Blackburn, wife of Captain Blackburn, USN, Ret., broke a bottle of champagne over the stubborn nose of a submarine and called it HALIBUT. The ship was commissioned 10 April 1942 at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and Lt. Commander Phillip H. Ross took command.

The first war patrol started from Pearl Harbor 9 August 1942 bound for a patrol area in Alaskan waters. By 21 August she was searching Chichagof Harbor, Attu, for signs of enemy shipping; finding none she proceeded up the coast until sighting a 3000-ton Jap freighter at sunrise on 23 August. Racing at maximum speed on the surface to catch the freighter before it entered a nearby port, HALIBUT drew the fire of the Jap's deck guns forcing a submerged approach. One man was missing from his battle station having failed to clear off topsides with the others prior to the dive.

Two patrol vessels that looked like TOMOZURO Class destroyers came up over the horizon and a twin-float biplane started to come directly at HALIBUT. With a smooth, glassy sea, the sub poked her periscope up for a cautious look around. Explosions rumbled near her immediately and a half hour later when she came up for a second look she was again greeted by an explosion. Suspecting that a trail of some kind was being left, HALIBUT went deep for her health's sake and proceeded toward Kiska.

A four-day search of the great circle course between Japan and Attu brought nothing in the way of big game. On 9 September sighted an enemy vessel that looked like a destroyer. She illuminated HALIBUT with a searchlight from astern forcing her to dive. Around midnight the sound of fast screws of an enemy vessel was followed by depth charges exploding above and astern but the enemy though he had lost contact and went his way.



A submerged patrol off the north coast of Attu revealed no signs of enemy shipping. For several days nothing but enemy patrol vessels was sighted and HALIBUT had to disappoint Davy Jones on her first war patrol which terminated to Dutch Harbor 23 September.

The second war patrol started with heavy seas and head winds as the submarine departed Dutch Harbor for her patrol area on 2 October. Two days later she commenced a high speed run to follow up a contact report of an enemy cargo vessel. On her way she sighted a B-24 headed for home with one engine shot away. When HALIBUT came upon the scene of the enemy ship she was just in time to see a bomb burst from a plane send up a getser of water near the Jap.

The skipper of the Japanese ship was very crafty but HALIBUT maneuvered into position to let go four torpedoes. The first exploded prematurely, and the other three went directly under without exploding because the ship was high out of the water. The ship turned out to be a decoy with concealed guns and two submerged torpedo tubes firing forward but HALIBUT luckily escaped getting caught by this innocent-looking fortress, and continued to patrol the area until the patrol ended at Dutch Harbor 23 October. Pickings were mighty slim on this patrol but HALIBUT had shown commendable aggressiveness which promised well for the future.

The third war patrol started after a refit period at Pearl Harbor which took her to Midway by 27 November. HALIBUT entered her patrol area 7 December 1942 to deliver a Pearl Harbor anniversary present to the Japanese Empire. Only two days later she picked up a convoy of two large transports escorted by two AMAGIRI Class destroyers. She tracked the Japs until after midnight and sent two torpedoes after the larger transport. A hit amidships left the whole middle of the ship into the air, momentarily suspended on a blossom of flame, smoke and debris. The stern had disappeared several minutes later and the bow was pointing into the air indicating the opposite direction of her new course.

By making a large turn to the right, HALIBUT was able to avoid an approaching destroyer and fire two more torpedoes at the second transport. Both torpedoes exploded for hits but the escort vessels bearing down on HALIBUT forced her to dive and spoiled her chance of seeing whether another ship had joined the ocean-bottom fleet. Bursts of flame from the transports and subsequent underwater explosions indicated that the Japs were two transports short from that attack.

The next few days were spent off the coast of Hokkaido and the area proved to be well chosen for on 12 December, HALIBUT made a radar contact on the port beam which turned out



to be a large coal-burning vessel of 7000-tons. Three torpedoes were released — three hit! All three flashes were observed from the bridge and shortly after, a loud explosion and an instantaneous glow lit up the freighter like a neon light. The bow went up into the air at a 45 degree angle and she backed down — straight down — till the smooth surface of the ocean swallowed the bow completely.

Sighting smoke on the 16th of December, HALIBUT pointed her inquisitive nose on a closing course and found a convoy passing northward along the coast. The escort vessel had passed out of sight. The last and largest freighter in the column was selected as the recipient of three tropedoes. She took two of them and 6780 tons of Japanese shipping went down by the bow with the screw lifted high and helplessly out of the water. In this attitude the ship executed a one-half gainer and slipped below the surface.

HALIBUT still could not see the Jap escort destroyer and, when it returned to investigate, had to make a quick evasion. The destroyer dropped depth charges but HALIBUT was swimming 300 feet under water by this time and the charges went off astern and above her. Two of the charges were close enough to knock her 15 degrees off course but no damage was sustained.

A small freighter of about 3000 tons was sighted on 19 December and attempted to escape into port after having seen HALIBUT. The freighter was outmaneuvered and the sub angled into a firing position. A spread of torpedoes headed directly for the ship but apparently went right under her as she was riding high in the water. The freighter made good her escape.

Rain squalls and sound contacts helped HALIBUT on 22 December when she was patrolling 15 miles off shore. The sound of freighters' screws was picked up just in time to see her emerge from a rain squall. One torpedo of three struck home while HALIBUT made a quick periscope sweep to locate the patrol ship previously seen. In doing so another ship emerged from a sheet of rain, but she was not in position to attack. The pinging sound of screws of the patrol vessel forced the sub below the surface but not before she observed the first freighter sinking with her back broken between the stack and stern. HALIBUT went deep to avoid proximity to the depth charges which followed.

She spent the remainder of the month patrolling the Aleutian track and ran into very cold weather with snow and sleet much of the time. HALIBUT fired the last torpedos of the patrol at a small freighter on 30 December but they missed for no apparent reason and HALIBUT departed from the patrol area 4 January for Pearl Harbor via Midway.

SCORE FOR THIRD WAR PATROL

SUNK



1 Passenger-Freighter	10,000-tons
1 Freighter	7,000-tons
1 Freighter	6,780-tons
1 Freighter	6,500-tons
Total	<u>30,380-tons</u>

1 Passenger-Freighter DAMAGED 8,000-tons (probably sunk)

A badly needed refit period before her fourth war patrol put HALIBUT in good fighting trim as she left Pearl Harbor 8 February 1943. Stopping first at Midway, HALIBUT entered her patrol area around Wake Island 17 February to search the Empire-Kwajalein track. She was not long in drawing her first blood on this patrol.

On the night of 20 February, the light of a full moon revealed a 5600-ton freighter apparently on her way to Saipan or Guam. At 1600 yards a spread of three torpedoes with three hits was too much for the freighter and she listed 70 degrees to port and sank quickly with no survivors.

Two vessels were sighted on the night of 3 March, on a 9500-ton passenger-freighter and the other a 7500-ton flush deck diesel freighter. A spread of four torpedoes was sent after the larger ship and two of them hit; one under the bridge and the second one aft. The other ship disappeared behind the first and HALIBUT closed to press home an attack. Just about this time the Jap ship had similar ideas about pressing home an attack as he appeared bearing down on the sub from the starboard beam with two guns of about 5-inch size and a stream of tracer fire reaching after the sub. The smart practice and volume of gunfire indicated that HALIBUT might have tangled with an auxiliary cruiser.

While making her get-away, HALIBUT noticed the first vessel burning amidships and shortly after, a loud explosion sounded like the ship's boilers blowing up. HALIBUT wasn't through yet and returned for an attack on the second ship. As she approached, the torpedoed ship was on her beam ends flickering in the water indicated that the crew had abandoned ship and the second vessel was picking up the survivors.

The smart Jap ship had sighted the sub approaching and opened a lively fire again with deck guns and machine guns, forcing HALIBUT to retire as the weather obviated any chance of a submerged approach.

A beautiful big target ship appeared on 9 March at a range of nine miles and HALIBUT was again spurred on to the chase. What a chase it was! Shortly after midnight, after eight hours of tracking, HALIBUT drew in to 4000 yards to witness one of her biggest disappointments. On the sides



and on the stacks big red crosses were illuminated. The ship was accepted as a hospital ship and not molested. It was a long chase with Mercy the victor..

Shortly after noon on 11 March, a convoy was sighted and HALIBUT approached for a killing. It was almost a killing for the sub. The convoy was protected by escort destroyers and an Adm (twin-float plane). HALIBUT was detected and jolted by a loud explosion as the first depth charge erupted close aboard. She dove to 300 feet and could hear the approach of the escort ships as the sound of their screws speeded up. A well-placed pattern of depth charges put out lights and shook the sub, knocking out the sound gear and the pit log.

HALIBUT didn't quit but pursued the convoy into the following day and approached the ships in a rain squall finally getting into the position to fire two spreads of three torpedoes each. The ships were not visible in the squall but one hit was believed scored on the first ship and two on a second ship. Two minutes later, three more torpedoes were let go at the closest ship in the second group of the convoy and two hits were seen and heard on the target as an escort ship pointed her bow toward HALIBUT. Red flares were seen from both groups of ships as the sub retired to the southeast to replenish her torpedo supply. Three freighters of the convoy were believed to be severely damaged with possibly two of them sunk.

The war patrol ended as HALIBUT arrived at Midway 27 March, enroute to Pearl Harbor.

SCORE FOR THE FOURTH WAR PATROL  
SUNK

1 Freighter (Syuan Maru Class)	5624-tons
1 Freighter (Manila Maru Class)	9486-tons
	Total 15110-tons

3 Freighters (unidentified)	<u>DAMAGED</u>	5000-tons each -
		Total 15000-tons

With her new 4-inch .50 caliber gun and two new 20MM guns, HALIBUT departed Pearl Harbor on her fifth war patrol 10 June in the Truk and Guam areas. With a stop at Johnston Island, she arrived in her patrol area on 20 June 1943. Her first contacts offered no targets and her luck was no better on 23 June when, in the darkness of the early morning, a freighter was sighted with a destroyer patrolling ahead. Visibility was excellent but HALIBUT belatedly perceived that the destroyer had turned and was headed directly toward her. A turn and dive was the only answer and ten depth charges shocked the water near the sub, four more following as the destroyer made a second pass over her. The crew was kept busy correcting the many defects which showed up partly as the result of depth charging.



When, two days later, another patrol vessel sighted HALIBUT and rained another depth charging on her, it looked as though she was the hunted instead of the hunter. The radar mechanism was out of order and with a fire in the galley and a siege of food poisoning, it looked like an unlucky cruise.

The luck changed for the better on 10 July when two ships were sighted on the starboard bow. The light of a half moon revealed a converted carrier leading an auxiliary cruiser. A quick set-up was made on the carrier but HALIBUT lost depth control and by the time it was regained, the carrier had passed a favorable firing bearing. The cruiser quickly became the target and a spread of six torpedoes scored three times. The first hit raised a column of smoke and debris from the vicinity of the bridge. An approaching escort ship was sufficiently distracting to miss the other two hits, but before she dived to safety, HALIBUT saw the cruiser go down by the stern with red flares firing and blinker signals from the carrier. A minute later a series of six explosions sounded like internal explosions in the cruiser.

Sinking of the cruiser marked the high-light of the patrol and HALIBUT arrived at Midway 28 July, her fifth war patrol ended.

#### SCORE FOR THE FIFTH WAR PATROL

##### SUNK

1 Auxiliary Cruiser (Aikiku Maru Class) 10,500-tons  
(possibly sunk)

HALIBUT was ready for sea again by 20 August when she departed Midway on her sixth war patrol. Nine days later she was already in contact with the enemy. A freighter and destroyer were the target and unable to get a good shot at the freighter, she fired three torpedoes at the destroyer but they all went too deep. In her search for the sub, the Jap destroyer crossed her stern and three more torpedoes also missed. With many lookouts from then on HALIBUT was the target, as 43 depth charges tried to burst the sides of the sub.

Off the coast of Esan Saki, HALIBUT tracked several freighters until she could send three torpedoes after one of them. The freighter tooted her whistle and seconds later a torpedo hit forward of the bridge tossing debris and water 300 feet into the air. The ship settled rapidly on an even keel to her new destination. The sound of fast whirring screws revealed a previously sighted sampan to be something more aggressive in design and HALIBUT was forced down to the dark ocean depths. From down below she could hear the familiar crackling noises of the Japanese freighter breaking up. Blended with the music of the disintegrating freighter came the discordant sound of the whirring screws of the patrol boats and the tympany of the depth charges in an underwater concert that no one enjoyed.



In the early morning of 5 September the fog was just lifting off the water and the ships which HALIBUT had been tracking were well concealed until a Jap freighter suddenly popped out of the fog just 700 yards away. It was a sure shot and three torpedoes were sent on their way. All three missed! Firing three more torpedoes for misses only served to spread the alarm and the ships commenced to zig-zag radically and undoubtedly do a piece of work on their radios designed to spoil this hunting ground for further conquests.

Hunting was good the next day however, as HALIBUT closed in on a 6000-ton freighter heavily loaded including deck cargo. Two shots fired with the bow tubes produced little more than a small splash and an explosion of campaign-bottle velocity. A quick look around for a possible escort destroyer and HALIBUT again took position for firing two more torpedoes. The freighter swerved away from the torpedo tracks and it began to look like a game of touch-tag at a girl's finishing school. Another look through the periscope showed only the bottom of the freighter's keel, and it soon disappeared along with many tons of precious cargo which were sorely needed by some Japanese General somewhere.

HALIBUT then headed for the shores of Honshu, Japan, but paused long enough to track a radar contact which proved to be a destroyer. Four torpedoes headed for the only destroyer and the only result was the dull thud similar to the hits of the previous day. The whistling sound of an approaching torpedo was reported from the sound man and HALIBUT dove to avoid getting hit by either one of her own torpedoes on an erratic run or a torpedo labelled "Made in Japan" running hot, straight, and true.

On the way back to Midway, HALIBUT damaged a sampan of 150 tons with surface fire and finally arrived at Pearl Harbor 16 September.

SCORE FOR THE SIXTH WAR PATROL

SUNK

1 Freighter (Nagano Maru Class)	3824-tons
1 Freighter (Italy Maru Class)	5859-tons
Total	<u>9683-tons</u>

DAMAGED

1 Destroyer	1000-tons
1 Sampan	150-tons
Total	<u>1150-tons</u>

The seventh war patrol started as HALIBUT departed Pearl Harbor 10 October 1943. A stop at Midway and the sub was off to the wars again. It wasn't until 1 November that her first opportunity to fire a torpedo developed. A convoy of freighters with escort presented a long range target and three slow torpedoes were fired at the overlapping targets.



One of the ships tooted his whistle and turned off course which left a mele of smoke and shifting masts as the ships started to run away. A large column of smoke issuing from the ship that whistled indicated a posible kill on this ship but escort vessels dropping depth charges made further pursuit and observation impossible.

In tracking two freighters the next day, HALIBUT fired three torpedoes at the lead ship. A hit under the bridge and another under the mainmast served to bring the freighter around in an attempt to ram the sub. In maneuvering to avoid ramming, position was lost for firing at the second ship. But the first ship couldn't pursue very long for she listed badly to the starboard and sank in 8 minutes. Three torpedoes were sent after the second freighter but the long range saved her. A surface chase only netted three high explosive shells from the freighter before the sub was forced to dive. Further attack on the freighter proved fruitless as the night was black and rainy.

The 5th of November was a Red Letter Day for HALIBUT. Following a radar contact at 28,000 yards, she discovered a force of Japanese men-of-war which included a TONE Class cruiser, a SHOKAKU Class carrier, two battleships (one of the NAGATO Class) and several destroyers. The most tempting target was the carrier and HALIBUT tracked her until she finally landed a hit on the carrier's stern which disabled her steering and slowed her down. Two more torpedoes hit the Jap flat-top and she was observed to have a port list and down by the stern. The last bow torpedo was fired but stuck in the tube and, with no more torpedoes and a destroyer approaching, the sub went deep.

The destroyer rumbled overhead by the time the sub had reached 80 feet. The speeding screws of two more destroyers could be heard overhead and depth charges started going off. One destroyer passed so close overhead that the whine of the turbines could be heard through the hull. This contest of nerves continued for four hours before HALIBUT finally slipped out of the trap and made her way back to Midway and Pearl Harbor, arriving 17 November.

SCORE FOR SEVENTH WAR PATROL  
SUNK

1 Freighter (Eihuhu Maru Class)	3,520-tons
1 Aircraft Carrier (Shokaku Class) <u>DAMAGED</u>	15,000-tons

War patrol Number Eight started with the departure of a wolfpack from Pearl Harbor on 14 December, including TULLIBEE, HADDOCK, and HALIBUT. After a stop at Midway, the wolfpack arrived in the patrol area 28 December and



their first contact turned out to be a hospital ship which was not pursued. The next contact was a Japanese submarine which escaped under gunfire. A Jap heavy cruiser of the Atago Class with two destroyers raced by too fast to close the ring and the contact was lost. The next attack on a destroyer was spoiled by prematurely exploding torpedoes which resulted in a thorough depth charging.

The last tempting target was a Jap escort carrier moored in Garapan Anchorage at long range with destroyer and patrol boats augmented by aircraft patrols covering all approaches. A brazen attempt to get in a long range torpedo shot was frustrated by bombs apparently dropped from an airplane. The destroyer nearest to HALIBUT suddenly turned toward her, belching black smoke, and dropped a few thousand dollars worth of depth charges. When the patrol ended with the entry of HALIBUT into the channel at Midway 2 February, the fact that she had no Jap ships to her credit was certainly not due to lack of aggressiveness.

Departing on her ninth war patrol, HALIBUT steamed out of Pearl Harbor 21 March 1944 to patrol the Nansei Shoto Area. The first enemy ship that presented itself as a candidate for destruction hove into view on 12 April in company with three escorts. The ship was well loaded and well protected but HALIBUT managed to release three torpedoes, one of which hit directly amidships with a flashing explosion. The pesty patrol boats started to bear down on HALIBUT and she was forced to dive. Forty seconds later the the breaking-up noises of the freighter sounded like powerful internal explosions. About 35 depth charges were dropped at intervals but the crackling sound of a sinking ship collapsing was by far the most pleasing sound of all.

A convoy of three ships with five or six escorts was sighted 27 April. Conditions for surface attack were ideal except for brilliant phosphorescence in the water. Two spreads of three torpedoes were fired at two of the ships in the convoy. A patrol vessel came down on HALIBUT and forced her to retire but not before the flash of a torpedo hit was seen followed by two vivid green flashes. The patrol vessel lost contact with the sub and expended a good portion of her depth charges before she departed.

One of the freighters had broken off from the other ships and apparently expected the night and rain to be sufficient protection, for no escort vessel accompanied her. What a surprise when a torpedo from HALIBUT suddenly ripped her open amidships followed by another hit under the mainmast. She settled by the stern and fires broke out immediately. Upon approaching to administer the coup de grace, the ship disappeared and all that could be seen were boatloads of survivors bobbing around in the water.



As it grew lighter in the morning, HALIBUT commenced tracking the remaining freighter but it made a wide end-around and soon the pugnacious nose of a patrol boat pointed in the direction of the submarine. The stern tubes were made ready as the patrol craft persisted in following. Four torpedoes were fired down her throat resulting in a hit which obscured the craft from view. Her career was ended with the bow sinking first.

A twin-engine patrol bomber was sighted over the patrol boat and some close explosions persuaded HALIBUT that discretion was the better part of exposure on the surface. She went below. From periscope depth, two patrol vessels could be seen and a plane was circling overhead. HALIBUT departed from this unhealthful scene to the tune of ninety depth charges.

An early morning patrol along the northern shore of Kuma Shima revealed two large warehouses close to the beach. HALIBUT surfaced and pumped 53-rounds of 4-inch high explosive shells into them at a range of 3000 yards. Hits were scored on the warehouses and smaller buildings nearby. Considerable smoke was issuing from the buildings when the sub shoved off.

A large group of motor sampans was sighted on 3 May and HALIBUT closed the range for a surface attack. All guns were scoring hits on the two trailing sampans when suddenly two of the men manning the 4-inch guns were machine-gunned and forced below with painful injuries. One of the sampans exploded violently in a billow of flame giving off a strong odor of gunpowder. Numerous fragments hit the sub and a lookout was wounded in the hip. (The ammunition-carrying sampans carried a load similar to a small freighter.)

The wounds of the men with machine gun hits were critical enough to force HALIBUT to make tracks toward Midway. By 9 May she rendezvoused with PERCH and the doctor aboard was paddled to HALIBUT by rubber boat. The nature of the wounds necessitated keeping the men aboard until reaching Pearl Harbor 15 May as the patrol ended.

SCORE FOR NINTH WAR PATROL

SUNK

1 Freighter (Bandoeing Class)	4000-tons
1 Coastal Minelayer (Tsubame Class)	570-tons
1 Cargo Sampan	250-tons
	Total 4820-tons

DAMAGED

1 Freighter (Attuta Maru Class)	7983-tons - later status
1 Freighter (Unknown Class)	5000-tons
	Total 12983-tons



After her ninth war patrol, HALIBUT commenced a major overhaul period at San Francisco 24 May 1944. She arrived at Pearl Harbor again 20 September and, after a training period, departed on her tenth war patrol 8 October in company with TUNA and HADDOCK in the Luzon Strait area.

Dive-bomber pilots were seen working over a Japanese battleship on 25 October as HALIBUT approached the scene. Their radio conversations were very interesting to the submarine as she watched the show. After the planes had finished their attack, the sub approached the battleship with the high pagoda-type super-structure. As the battleship zigged, she presented a nice broad view and a good target for the six torpedoes that sizzled after her. Just then, an approaching destroyer forced HALIBUT down.

Like a blind man, HALIBUT was forced to see with her ears. Five explosions followed by two moderate ones and a loud triple explosion with prolonged heavy reverberations indicated that the battleship was running into a bit of difficulty yp "top sides". The sound of screws starting and stopping brought visions of a boat picking up survivors. Upon surfacing, a look in the direction of the battleship revealed nothing but a large mound with no superstructure visible. It looked like the hull of a large ship capsizing. It disappeared from sight and from the radar screen simultaneously.

HALIBUT had tracked a convoy on 14 November until she drew into position to fire four torpedoes after the largest freighter in the group with an overlapping target on another ship. Explosions were heard and the ship on the far side of the convoy belched black smoke and dropped astern. Suddenly, a heavy eruption was heard close aboard followed by several more as HALIBUT went deep to 325 feet. Another close charge damaged the conning tower and more close explosions shook the sub violently ant pushed her down to 420 feet below the surface. Much minor damage resulted with everything loose displaced and both gyros knocked out. The skids in the forward torpedo room with their torpedoes jumped up a foot damaging the torpedoes and dislodging all deck plates with the result that personnel were thrown into the bilge. One man thought he was going right through the bottom of the ship. Sea valves springing open and the escape trunk shipped water. The rush of high pressure air and mixed smells of bottles of everything from hair tonic to ketchup gave the impression of chlorine gas escaping the flooding. The men worked in great heat and pressure to the point of exhaustion to control the damage.

It was fortunate that the Japs knocked off depth charging when they did for one good sneeze more at this point might have sounded taps for our gallant undersea warrior. All hands aboard couldn't help but give thanks for a well-built ship when they surfaced to look over the topside damage. The Divine Hand of



providence had surely brought the good ship HALIBUT and her brave crew up from a watery grave.

What proved to be the last patrol of HALIBUT ended when she tied up safely at Saipan on 19 November 1944. She limped into Pearl Harbor 1 December on her way to the West Coast, United States, for overhaul and repair. She subsequently made her way through the Canal Zone to various ports along the East Coast, including Portsmouth, New London, and Philadelphia where she was stricken from Naval registry 8 May 1946.

#### COMMANDING OFFICERS

Lt. Commander, Phillip H. Ross	April 1942 to August 1943
Commander, I. J. Galantin	September 1943 to December 1944
Commander, G. F. Gugliotta	January 1945 to February 1945
Lt. Commander, R. C. Benitez	February 1945 to May 1945
Lieutenant, J. G. Galligan	June 1945 until decommissioned

#### S T A T I S T I C S

STANDARD DISPLACEMENT: 1,525 tons	<u>ARMAMENT</u> Ten 21-inch Torpedo Tubes;
LENGTH OVERALL: 311 feet	one 4-inch .50 Caliber Dual
SPEED: 20 knots (surface)	Purpose Gun; two 20MM guns

All personnel attached to and serving on board USS HALIBUT during the below mentioned time are authorized to wear the Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon. The award was made to HALIBUT by Navy Secretary James Forrestal and reads as follows:

"For outstanding herosim in action against enemy Japanese shipping and a combatant unit during her Tenth War Patrol in the Luzon Strait Area from October 8 to December 1, 1944. Brilliantly intercepting an enemy task force retreating from the Battle for Leyte Gulf, the USS HALIBUT fearlessly penetrated the vigilant screen's inner defenses, and while withstanding severe anti-submarine measures, destroyed with six perfectly directed torpedoes a 10,000 ton heavy cruiser. Later, after tracking a large hostile convoy heavily protected by air and surface escorts, she daringly pressed home the attack and, although extensively damaged by merciless depth charging, valiantly carried on to demolish a medium freighter. A seaworthy and gallant ship, the HALIBUT escaped destruction only by the heroic performance of duty of her courageous officers and men and succeeded in achieving a notable combat record, in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

Stencilled: 1/9/46



NAVY DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS  
DIVISION OF NAVAL HISTORY (OP-29)  
SHIP'S HISTORIES SECTION

HISTORY OF USS HALIBUT (SS 232)

USS HALIBUT (SS 232) is named for the largest species of flatfish, found on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

HALIBUT was built by the Navy Yard, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Her keel was laid 16 May 1941 and she was launched 3 December 1941, under the sponsorship of Mrs. Paul T. Blackburn, wife of Captain Blackburn, USN, Retired. The ship was placed in commission 10 April 1942, when Lieutenant Commander Phillip H. Ross, USN, assumed command.

HALIBUT completed dock trials and on 14 May commenced a series of drills and tests in waters off Portsmouth. She sailed 5 June and after torpedo tests at Newport, Rhode Island, arrived at the New London Submarine Base for training drills and exercises. On 27 June she departed New London for the Pacific. She transited the Panama Canal on 9 July and the next day departed Balboa for Pearl Harbor, arriving 23 July 1942.

On 9 August 1942 HALIBUT departed Pearl Harbor to conduct her first war patrol off the Aleutian Islands. After searching Chichagof Harbor of Attu Island for signs of enemy shipping she patrolled waters between Attu and Kiska. On 23 August she battle-surfaced on a freighter but was forced down by the enemy's gun. She continued trailing for a second try but lost contact while evading counter-attacks of two enemy patrol craft and a seaplane. She next commenced patrol of the great circle route from Attu to Japan. She had sighted no targets after four days and resumed patrol off Kiska, returning to Dutch Harbor on 23 September 1942.

On 2 October 1942 HALIBUT departed Dutch Harbor on her second war patrol which was also conducted off the Aleutian Islands. On 11 October she surfaced for a torpedo attack on what appeared to be a large Japanese freighter. The enemy, a decoy "Q-boat" with concealed deck guns and torpedo tubes, fired a torpedo and high explosive shells as HALIBUT took evasive action to escape the trap and continued her patrol. She returned to Dutch Harbor on 23 October and sailed for Pearl Harbor on 31 October 1942.

HALIBUT departed Pearl Harbor 22 November for her third war patrol which was conducted off the northeast coast of Honshu. She commenced tracking a convoy in the late night of 9 December and closed for attack early the next morning, scoring a hit amidship to sink GENZAN MARU, 5,708 tons, then swung to starboard for two hits which sank SHINGO MARU, 4,470 tons (41-10N; 141-32E). On 12 December she made three hits on GYOKUZAN MARU, 1,970 tons, and sent her to the bottom by the stern with fires raging



amidships (40-19N; 142-27E). Near Shiriya Saki Light on 16 December, she made two hits on a freighter and observed the enemy down by the bow and sinking. It is believed that this freighter was KOSEI MARU, 233 tons, who disappeared in this area the same day. HALIBUT was knocked fifteen degrees off course by two explosions during the counter-attack of escorts but suffered no damage. She was again in the area 22 December and scored one hit to break the back of an unidentified transport. A second enemy vessel escaped while HALIBUT was held under by an escort vessel. She returned to Pearl Harbor on 15 January 1943.

HALIBUT departed Pearl Harbor 8 February 1943 to conduct her fourth war patrol. She submerged off Wake Island to observe shore activity on 18 February, then steamed for the Empire-Kwajalein shipping lanes. She commenced tracking an unescorted freighter the morning of 20 February and closed that night to sink passenger-cargo SHINKOKU MARU, 3,991 tons, (15-09N; 159-30E). While northwest of Truk on 3 March she made two hits to damage passenger-cargo NICHYU MARU, 6,817 tons, (10-22N; 145-21E). She retired when an accompanying freighter opened with her deck guns but continued tracking the enemy until contact was lost during the night. On 11 March she was detected as she closed for attack on a convoy and held down by one escort while the convoy escaped. HALIBUT gave chase into the following day, approached in a rain squall and fired nine torpedoes but was unable to observe the targets or results. She returned to Pearl Harbor on 30 March 1943 for a complete overhaul.

On 10 June 1943, HALIBUT departed Pearl Harbor on her fifth war patrol. This patrol was conducted without radar which ceased functioning one day out of Pearl Harbor. She was detected by escorting destroyers 23 June as she closed for attack on a freighter and waited out a severe depth charge attack. While northwest of Truk on 10 July, she lost depth control while closing a carrier, then regained control and scored hits to damage ex-cruiser AIKOKU MARU, 10,437 tons (10-27N; 150-50E). Escorts forced her down in a severe depth charge attack but she escaped damage and returned to Midway on 28 July 1943. Commander Philip H. Ross was relieved by Lieutenant Commander Ignatius J. Galatin, USN, on 12 August 1943.

For extraordinary heroism as commanding officer of HALIBUT, Commander Ross was awarded the Navy Cross and a Gold Star in lieu of a Second Navy Cross. He also was awarded a Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V" for meritorious service during HALIBUT's fifth war patrol.

On 20 August 1943 HALIBUT sailed for the coast of Japan on her sixth war patrol. On 29 August she made an unsuccessful attack on a destroyer and went deep to evade forty-three depth charges. The next day she submerged close to shore and fired three bow shots to sink TAIBUN MARU, 6,581 tons, (41-53N; 141-10E). Although she had been sighted during approach on 6 September, she pressed home an attack to sink SHOGEN MARU,



3,362 tons, (42-13N; 142-16E). That same evening she fired four torpedoes at a destroyer for unobserved results and on 8 September, damaged a sampan with her deck guns. She returned to Pearl Harbor on 16 September 1943.

HALIBUT departed Pearl Harbor 10 October 1943 for her seventh war patrol. She made an unsuccessful attack on a convoy 31 October and was held down for most of the day by two torpedo boats. On 2 November she regained contact with units of the same convoy northwest of Truk and pressed home an attack to sink EHIME MARU, 4,653 tons, (29-18N; 134-48E). When her torpedoes missed a second freighter, she surfaced for a second try and was forced down by high explosive shells from the enemy. She continued tracking the target and broke off the chase after two more unsuccessful attacks. On 5 November she made a torpedo attack for heavy damage to escort carrier JUNYO in Bungo Channel. Three destroyers held her down for four hours but she escaped without damage and returned to Pearl Harbor on 17 November 1943.

On her eighth war patrol, HALIBUT formed a coordinated attack group with HADDOCK and TULLIBEE. She departed Pearl Harbor 14 December 1943 enroute to the Marianas Islands. On 14 January she made an unsuccessful attack on a destroyer and was forced down by the enemy who dropped 20 depth charges within fifteen minutes. She then conducted submerged patrol in the enemy harbors of Guam and Saipan. On 23 January a long range torpedo attack on an aircraft carrier anchored in Garapan Anchorage was frustrated by bombs from an enemy patrol plane, followed by depth charge attack by an enemy destroyer. HALIBUT returned to Midway on 2 February 1944.

During post repair trials 20 February 1944, a leak was discovered necessitating dry-dock at Pearl Harbor until 21 March when HALIBUT sailed for the Nansai Shoto area on her ninth war patrol. On 12 April she shifted to the east of Okinawa and attacked from inshore, scoring one hit amidships to sink passenger cargo TAICHU MARU, 3,213 tons, (28-07N; 129-01E). On 6 April she fired six torpedoes to scatter a convoy, then closed on one vessel which had become separated from the escorts. She fired three torpedoes to sink GENBU MARU, 1,872 tons, (27-20N; 128-15E), then shifted her attack and fired four torpedoes to sink coastal minelayer KANOME, 450 tons, (27-37N; 128-11E). HALIBUT evaded counter-attack by two patrol craft and a patrol bomber during which some ninety depth charges were dropped. On 29 April she bombarded two warehouses and other buildings on the north-eastern shore of Kume Shima. On 3 May she made a surface gun attack on the last two of a group of motor sampans, exploding one and leaving the other ablaze. During this action, three of her men were wounded by machine gun fire of the enemy and fragments of the exploding sampan. Due to the critical condition of the wounded men, she departed her patrol area and returned to Pearl Harbor on 15 May 1944. Two days later she sailed for general overhaul at San Francisco, returning to Pearl Harbor, 20 September 1944.



For her tenth war patrol, HALIBUT formed a coordinated attack group with HADDOCK and TUNA. She departed Pearl Harbor on 8 October 1944 and during the Battle for Leyte Gulf (25 October), sank destroyer AKITSUKI, 2,700 tons, off Cape Engano (20-29N; 126-36E). On 31 October she rejoined the other submarines to form a scouting line off the west coast of Formosa.

On 14 November 1944, HALIBUT attacked a convoy in Luzon Strait, firing four torpedoes on the largest freighter. About six minutes later she was counter-attacked, apparently by planes equipped with "jikitanchiki", the Japanese version of the magnetic airborne detector. These planes flew so low over the water that they were heard by the men in HALIBUT. After dropping bombs, the aircraft left markers and called in the convoy's surface escorts who delivered a short but severe depth charge run and for some unknown reason abandoned their attacks. One close explosion severely damaged the port side of the conning tower as HALIBUT went deep. This was quickly followed by three or four more explosions. In the forward torpedo room, the skids with their torpedoes jumped up one foot, all deck plates were dislodged, and the pressure hull and tank tops were wrinkled and numerous bolts sheared. When she surfaced it was found that a depth charge had exploded on or very close to the 4" gun mount (forward). The breech cover was smashed and punctured, and the chamber pushed to port. Her men made temporary repairs and she limped into Saipan for emergency repairs on 19 November.

She arrived at Pearl Harbor 1 December 1944 and on 4 December, Lieutenant Commander Ignatius J. Galentin was relieved by Lieutenant Commander G. F. Cugliotta, USN. For heroic service as commanding officer of HALIBUT, Lieutenant Commander Galentin was awarded the Navy Cross, the Silver Star Medal and two Gold Stars in lieu of the second and third Silver Star Medal.

HALIBUT departed Pearl Harbor 5 December and arrived at San Francisco on 12 December 1944. She underwent battle damage repairs in the Hunter's Point Naval Shipyard, departing 16 February 1945 for Portsmouth, New Hampshire. On 11 March she arrived at the Portsmouth Navy Yard where damage was found to be too extensive to justify the necessary overhaul. She was placed out of commission on 16 July 1945 and remained in modified reserve status for disposal. Her name was stricken from the Navy list 8 May 1946 and she was sold on 10 January 1947 to the Quaker Shipyard and Machinery Company of Camden, New Jersey.

HALIBUT received 7 battle stars and other awards for the following operations:

- 1 Star/SUBMARINE WAR PATROL - PACIFIC: 22 Nov 1942 - 15 Jan 1943
- 1 Star/SUBMARINE WAR PATROL - PACIFIC: 8 Feb 1943 - 30 Mar 1943
- 1 Star/SUBMARINE WAR PATROL - PACIFIC: 10 Jun 1943 - 28 Jul 1943



1 Star/SUBMARINE WAR PATROL - PACIFIC: 20 Aug 1943 - 16 Sep 1943  
 1 Star/SUBMARINE WAR PATROL - PACIFIC: 10 Oct 1943 - 17 Nov 1943  
 1 Star/SUBMARINE WAR PATROL - PACIFIC: 21 Mar 1944 - 15 May 1944  
 1 Star/LEYTE OPERATION: 10 Oct 1944 - 1 Dec 1944  
 NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION: 8 Oct 1944 - 1 Dec 1944  
 PHILIPPINE REPUBLIC PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION BADGE: 10 Oct 1944 -  
 1 Dec 1944

## COMMANDING OFFICERS

LCDR P. H. Ross, USN	10 Apr 1942 - 12 Aug 1943
LCDR I. J. Galantin, USN	12 Aug 1943 - 4 Dec 1944
LCDR G. F. Gugliotta, USN	4 Dec 1944 - 15 Feb 1945
LCDR R. C. Benítez, USN	15 Feb 1945 - 19 May 1945
LT J. G. Galligan, Jr., USNR	19 May 1945 - 14 Jul 1945
LT F. W. Meyers, USNR	14 Jul 1945 - 18 Jul 1945

## ORIGINAL STATISTICS

LENGTH OVER-ALL	311'8"
EXTREME BEAM:	27'4"
STANDARD DISPLACEMENT:	
Tons:	1,526
Mean Draft:	15'3"
SUBMERGED DISPLACEMENT:	
Tons:	2410
DESIGN SPEED:	
Surface:	20.25
Submerged:	8.75
DESIGN DEPTH:	300'
DESIGN COMPLEMENT:	
Officer:	6
Enlisted:	54
ARMAMENT:	
Torpedo Tubes:	(10) 21"
Secondary:	(1) 3"/50
	(2) .50 cal.
	(2) .30 cal.
TORPEDOES:	24