

HISTORY OF USS PERCH (SS 313)

Work on the USS PERCH (SS 313) was begun January 5, 1943, with the laying of the keel at the Electric Boat Company, Groton, Connecticut. This was the first "deep water" boat to be built by the Electric Boat Company Yard. September 12, 1943, saw the launching ceremony with Mrs. David A. Hurt as the sponsor.

It is of interest here to mention that Mrs. Hurt's husband, Lieutenant Commander David A. Hurt, USN, commanded the first PERCH during the early part of the war and was at this time held in a Japanese prison camp, following the loss of that vessel.

Work then progressed rapidly and on January 7, 1944, at the Submarine Base, New London, Connecticut, the USS PERCH (SS 313) was declared a unit of the U.S. Navy. Lieutenant Commander Blish C. Hills, USN, assumed command and preparations were begun to fit her out for the arduous patrols which lay ahead. The ship and her crew were trained at New London in the familiar waters of Block Island and Long Island Sounds and at Newport, Rhode Island where numerous dives, approaches, and drills were conducted. On February 19, 1944, she departed for Key West, Florida, where she was to give services to the Fleet Sound School. Following this came the journey through the Caribbean to the Panama Canal and thence to Pearl Harbor where she arrived on April 3, 1944. Then followed another intensive training period that was to ready her for the acid test -- war patrols in Japanese waters.

On April 29, 1944, she departed Pearl Harbor in company with the USS PETO en route Midway where they were to be joined by the USS PICUDA in a wolf pack commanded by Commander F. W. Fenno, USN. Those three submarines then started the westward journey so familiar to seafaring men of the submarine service. The waters of the South China Sea were selected as the hunting ground for the PERCH and her teammate. Early in the morning of May 24, 1944, a medium tanker was contacted, stalked to a favorable attack position, and damaged by four torpedo hits. The counter attack by a lone escort prevented further observation of the damage inflicted. At this time it became apparent that it would be necessary to leave station due to a casualty which resulted in the loss of both high pressure air compressors by flooding of the pump room. The thirty-seven day patrol was completed upon arrival at Majuro, Marshall Islands, on June 4, 1944, and was designated as successful. The refit was accomplished by the USS SPERRY and the Submarine Division One Hundred Two Relief Crews while the officers and crew enjoyed rest and relaxation at Myrna Island in a tropical setting of palm trees and coral beaches.

On June 27, 1944, the PERCH began her Second War Patrol. This time the assigned area was the waters off Surigao Straits in the Philippines. Endless uneventful days passed until a one hundred ton Japanese trawler was contacted and fell prey to PERCH gunfire. The patrol netted and sunk: one hundred tons, and was concluded at Pearl

Harbor on August 26, 1944. The patrol had lasted sixty days and was characterized by thorough but fruitless search by an eager and willing ship. Refit was undertaken by the newly arrived tender, the USS HOWAL W. GILMORE and the Submarine Division Two Hundred Twenty-One Relief Crew.

September 19, 1944, saw the departure of the PERCH from Pearl Harbor on her Third War Patrol. Upon arrival in Midway she was joined by the submarines CROAKER and ESCOLAR and the three set out to patrol the confined waters of the East China and Yellow Seas. Shortly before entering the area, the three submarines were caught in a severe typhoon in which depth control became almost impossible. One evening when the PERCH surfaced in the thick of the typhoon, a freak wave moved up from astern and swept tons of water down the open conning tower hatch, resulting in the temporary loss of the radar, air compressors, and air conditioning units due to salt water flooding. Repair work was started immediately and five days later when the patrol area was entered, the PERCH was again in full fighting trim. One heavily escorted transport was contacted but torpedo attacks against her were unsuccessful. In addition, lifeguard services were rendered to B-29 raids on Honshu but there were no opportunities to rescue downed aviators. The PERCH then set course for Saipan to re-fuel prior to her journey to Brisbane, Australia, for duty with Submarines, Southwest Pacific Fleet. Her arrival in Brisbane terminated a sixty-six day patrol and refit was undertaken by Submarine Repair Unit Number One Hundred Thirty-Four while the officers and crew went to the various rest camps on the sea and in the mountains to enjoy two weeks in the land "down under."

The Fourth War Patrol began on December 19, 1944, from Brisbane. First the PERCH patrolled off Hainan, China; next off Singapore; and lastly, in Balabac Straits off Borneo. No enemy ships were sighted and the Patrol ended uneventfully at Fremantle, Western Australia, February 15, 1945, after fifty-eight days of fruitless search. Refit was accomplished by the USS EURYALE and Submarine Divisions One Hundred Eighty-One and One Hundred Eighty-Two Relief Crews.

On March 12, 1945, the PERCH departed Fremantle carrying with her eleven Australian specialists trained in commando warfare. On the first night of the mission, in the Makassar Straits, above Balikpapan Borneo, she landed four of the party who were to make a reconnaissance of the beach and surrounding territory prior to the landing of the remaining personnel and equipment several days later. Coming in close ashore two nights later to disembark the remainder of the party, the PERCH contacted a coastal freighter that threatened to cut off her return to open water. It was decided this ship could seriously menace the operation so she was engaged with gunfire and with the second hit burst into towering flames. The PERCH was credited with sinking a 300 ton coastal freighter. The remainder of the operation proceeded according to plan and the PERCH returned to Fremantle, Western Australia, completing her Fifth War Patrol. The eighteen day patrol was designated as successful and combat insignia were awarded. Voyag

repairs were commenced by the USS EURYALE and finished by the USS CLYTIE. The Commanding Officer, Commander Blish C. Hillis, USN, who had conducted these first five patrols was relieved by Lieutenant Commander Charles D. McCall, USN.

On April 15, 1945, the PERCH departed Fremantle on her Sixth War patrol and journeyed to the Java Sea to hunt out the enemy. A convoy of two ships was contacted but an alert escort discovered the presence of the PERCH and subjected her to a severe two hour depth charging which caused considerable damage throughout the ship. The PERCH could really take it! She then went to the China coast off Hainan to conduct the remainder of the Patrol. The patrol was concluded at Pearl Harbor on June 5, 1945, fifty-one days. The refit was accomplished by the Submarine Base and Submarine Division One Hundred One Relief Crew.

On July 11, 1945, the PERCH departed Pearl Harbor and after fueling at Saipan, proceeded north for duty in the Lifeguard League off Japan. Here she was called upon to render assistance to a Navy Corsair pilot who was in the water two miles off-shore. The PERCH went in and made the rescue, miles inshore from water deep enough for diving. After rescuing the pilot she boarded fishing vessels and buildings on the beach and retired to sea again. A few hours later on the same day, another distress call was answered by the PERCH and a pilot from the same fighter squadron was picked up five miles off-shore. The next two days saw the capitulation of Japan so the PERCH was ordered home. The patrol was completed at Pearl Harbor on August 30, 1945. It had lasted fifty days and combat insignia were awarded.

Then began the long awaited journey home. To the strains of "California, Here I Come", she departed Pearl Harbor and set course for the Golden Gate. Her arrival at Hunters Point on September 8, 1945 completed a tour of over 100,000 miles that had taken her to every corner of enemy controlled waters.

The PERCH does not possess a long record of sinkings. To some must fall the task of search without loot. But to see a job through to the end, adding her own bit to the whole, is to share in the part which the submarines played in achieving final victory. The PERCH is proud to be a part of the fighting underseas Navy.

By Directive dated January 1943, the USS PERCH (SS 313) was redesignated as a submarine transport (SSP 313), was placed in an active status, attached to the U. S. Pacific Fleet.

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STATISTICAL TOTALS:

Number and Type of Ships Sunk: 1 Trawler; 1 SC.
Total Tonnage of Ships Sunk: 400 tons.
Number and Types of Ships Damaged: 1 AO (Med).
Total Tonnage of Ships Damaged: 5,000 tons.
Total Number of Aviators Rescued: 2

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The USS PERCH earned four (4) battle stars on the Asiatic-Pacific Area Service Ribbon, for participating in the following operations:

1 Star/Marianas Operation

Capture and Occupation of Saipan -- 11 June to 10 August 1944

1 Star/THIRD Fleet Operations against Japan -- 10 July to 15 August 1945

1 Star/Submarine War Patrol, Pacific, 28 April to 4 June 1944

1 Star/Submarine War Patrol, Pacific, 12 March to 30 March 1945

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STATISTICS

OVERALL LENGTH	312 feet
BEAM	27 feet
SPEED	20 knots
DISPLACEMENT	1,465 tons

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