

NAVY DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
DIVISION OF NAVAL HISTORY (OP 09B9)
SHIP'S HISTORY SECTION

HISTORY OF SHIPS NAMED SHARK

The nuclear submarine SHARK (SS(N) 591) is the sixth ship of the Fleet to bear the name.

The first SHARK, a 198-ton schooner of 12 guns, was built by the Washington Navy Yard. She was launched on 17 May 1821. The date of her commissioning is not known. Lieutenant Matthew C. Perry, USN, was ordered to proceed to the Washington Navy Yard to attend to the equipment of SHARK which was ready to receive her crew on 2 June 1821.

SHARK measured 86 feet between perpendiculars length of keel 67 feet, 4 inches; moulded beam, 24 feet, 7 inches; depth of hold, 10 feet, 4 inches; average speed, 8 knots; and tonnage, 198. She had a complement of approximately 70 officers and men and was armed with ten 18-pounder carronades and two 9-pounder long guns.

SHARK sailed from the Washington Navy Yard on 15 July 1821 for New York. She cleared New York Harbor on 7 August 1821 to make her first cruise for the suppression of the slave trade and piracy. Sailing by the way of the Madeira, Canary and Cape Verde Islands for the coast of Africa, she returned by the way of the West Indies to New York on 17 January 1822.

SHARK put to sea from New York on 26 February 1822 and joined Commodore James Biddle's squadron for the suppression of piracy and slave trading in the West Indies. On 25 March 1822, Lieutenant Perry took formal possession of what is now Key West, Florida, in the name of the United States. He gave it the name of Thompson's Island in honor of the Secretary of the Navy, and named the harbor Port Rodgers. Under orders of Captain Biddle, SHARK departed Nassau on 14 August 1822 for another cruise to the coast of Africa and made her return to Norfolk on 12 December 1822. She again sailed for the West Indies in February 1823 and returned to New York on 9 July for repairs. Lieutenant T. H. Stevens relieved Lieutenant Perry in August and SHARK sailed from New York on 5 October 1823, carrying Captain John Rodgers and three Navy surgeons to Thompson's Island for the purpose of examining and reporting on the fitness of that place as a rendezvous and base for naval vessels. She debarked Captain Rodgers and his party at Norfolk on 16 November 1823 before resuming her cruise in the West Indies. She returned to New York, 13 May 1824.

After repairs in the New York Navy Yard, SHARK, under command of Lieutenant Ocho Morris, sailed from New York on 5 October 1825 and cruised in the West Indies and the Gulf of Mexico until 29 August 1826 when she arrived at Norfolk. On 28 November she put to sea for another cruise along the coast of Africa, making her return by way of the Caribbean to arrive at New York on 5 July 1827.

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After five years of inactivity, SHARK sailed from Norfolk on 25 September 1833 to cruise extensively in the Mediterranean for the protection of American commerce until 22 January 1838 when she cleared Gibraltar for the United States. Sailing by way of the West Indies, SHARK arrived at the Norfolk Navy Yard on 24 March 1838.

Under command of Lieutenant A. Pigelow, SHARK put to sea from Hampton Roads on 22 July 1839 for duty with the Pacific Squadron. She was the first United States man-of-war to pass through the Straits of Magellan from east to west, 13 December 1839, bound for Callao, Peru. During the next five years she spent much of her time along the coast of Peru for the protection of American citizens and property during civil disturbances in that country, making infrequent cruises northward to observe conditions in Panama and to receive mail. She was ordered to Honolulu in the spring of 1846 to undergo thorough repairs in preparation for an exploratory voyage up the Columbia River of the Oregon Territory. She reached the coast of Oregon, 30 miles above the mouth of the Columbia River, on 15 July 1846, and soon crossed the bar for explorations in the valley regions of Astoria and Fort Vancouver. She sailed down river from Vancouver on 23 August and was again at the mouth of the Columbia River on 8 September 1846. The next day was devoted to observations on the bar and preparations for crossing. The attempt to cross was made on 10 September 1846 and resulted in wrecking the SHARK without casualty to her officer or crew. They were taken to San Francisco by the chartered Hudson's Bay schooner CADBORO.

The second SHARK (SS 8) was launched 19 October 1901 at the Crescent Shipyard, Elizabethport, New Jersey, under a sub-contract from the J. P. Holland Torpedo Boat Company. The submarine was commissioned 19 September 1903 and after training and evaluation experiments at the Naval Torpedo Station of Newport, Rhode Island, trained midshipmen at the Naval Academy. She was placed out of commission 21 April 1908 and disassembled for transportation on board CAESAR (AC 16) by way of the Suez Canal to the Philippine Islands. She was recommissioned at Cavite 14 August 1908 to continue training and experimental work in Philippine waters. Her name was changed to A-7, effective 17 November 1911, and she patrolled in Manila Bay and off Corregidor Island during World War I. She was decommissioned for the last time on 12 December 1919, following authorization for use as a practice target. Her name was stricken from the Navy list on 16 January 1922.

The third SHARK (S.P. 534), a 74-foot motor patrol craft, was acquired by the Navy on 17 May 1917 and first commissioned on 24 May of the same year for service in the Boston Section Patrol, under the Commandant of the First Naval District. Her entire career was spent in patrolling ocean approaches to Boston Harbor and along the coast as far as Rockland, Maine. She was decommissioned on 19 January 1919 and sold 4 November 1919.

The fourth SHARK (SS 174) was built by the Electric Boat Company of Groton, Connecticut. Her keel was laid 24 October 1933 and she was launched on 21 May 1935, under the sponsorship of Miss Ruth Ellen Lonergan, twelve-year-old daughter of United States Senator Augustine Lonergan of Connecticut. The submarine was placed in commission at the Submarine Base, New London, Connecticut, on 25 January 1936, Lieutenant C. J. Cater, USN, in command.

SHARK's overall length was 298 feet, 1 inch; extreme beam, 25 feet, 1 inch; standard displacement, 1,316 tons; mean draft, 13 feet, 13 inches; and submerged displacement, 1,968 tons. Her designed speed was 19.5 knots on the surface and 8.75 knots submerged. She was designed for a complement of 5 officers and 45 men; and was armed with six 21-inch torpedo tubes (including 2 deck-firing tubes), one 3-inch .50 caliber gun, two .50 caliber guns and two .30 caliber guns. She was designed to carry 16 torpedoes.

SHARK cleared New London on 27 February 1936 for shakedown cruise which included incidental visits to the Panama Canal, principal island ports of the Caribbean Sea, and gulfport cities of the United States. She returned from this cruise to New London on 18 May 1936 and after final alterations and trials out of the Portsmouth Navy Yard, New Hampshire, put to sea from New London, 8 February, 1937, bound for the Pacific.

SHARK arrived at San Diego on 4 March 1937 and spent the next two years in a schedule of operations from that base as a unit of Submarine Division 13, Squadron SIX, Submarine Force, U. S. Fleet. This duty included training exercises with her division, Fleet tactics along the western seaboard, and periodic cruises for Army-Navy war problems and battle practice in waters extending to the Hawaiian Islands. She entered the Mare Island Yard on 16 August 1938 for a regular overhaul and got underway from San Diego on 16 December to base operations from Pearl Harbor as a unit of Submarine Division 13, Squadron FOUR.

SHARK terminated operations in the Hawaiian area on 3 December 1940 when she got underway from Pearl Harbor to join the Asiatic Fleet at Manila, Philippine Islands, on 20 December 1940. She maintained a busy schedule of fleet tactics and exercises in the Philippine waters from the Naval Base of Cavite, and was under the command of Lieutenant Commander Lewis Shane, Jr., USN, when the Japanese struck Pearl Harbor.

SHARK got underway from Manila the night of 9 December 1941 to patrol waters of the Philippine Islands and was at sea the next day during the Japanese bombing raids on Manila. On 11 December she investigated Tabayas Bay for signs of enemy transports, then came to anchor in Santa Cruz Harbor. On 13 December she hailed a native fisherman and sent him into the village of Marinduque to inform the population of the outbreak of war. The Mayor of the village and fifteen men came out to receive instructions including the one to extinguish the Santa Cruz light. She was ordered to return to Manila on the 19th and arrived in port on 21 December 1941 to embark Admiral Thomas C. Hart, Commander-in-Chief of the U. S. Asiatic Fleet, for transportation to the Dutch Submarine Base at Soerabaya, Java, where some of the Asiatic Fleet submarines would base their operations.

Under the command of Lieutenant Commander Lewis Shane, Jr., SHARK was barely missed by a torpedo from a Japanese submarine on 6 January 1942, and four days later was ordered to Ambon Island where an enemy invasion was expected. On 27 January 1942 she was directed to take station with submarines patrolling Molucca Passage, then ordered to cover passage east of Lifonotola, and later expanding her patrol area to include Banka Passage. On 2 February 1942 she reported to her base at Soerabaya, that she had been depth-charged

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off Tifore Island and had missed on making a torpedo attack. Five days later she reported chasing an empty cargo ship heading northwest. This was the last message or contact with SHARK and she was given up for lost on 7 March 1942. Records available after close of World War II did not reveal the cause or date of her loss.

SHARK (SS 174) was awarded one battle star for her support of Asiatic Fleet Operations in the Philippines. Her successive commanding officers were Lieutenant C. J. Gater (25 Jan 1936 - 18 May 1939); Lieutenant P. D. Compton (18 May 1939 - 24 Mar 1941); Lieutenant L. R. Daspit (temporary command 25 Mar-17 Apr 1941); and Lieutenant Commander Louis Shane, Jr., who took command 17 April 1941 and perished with his submarine in February 1942.

The fifth SHARK (SS 314) was built by the Electric Boat Company of Groton, Connecticut. Her keel was laid 28 January 1943 and she was launched 17 October 1945, under the sponsorship of Mrs. Albert Thomas, wife of the Honorable Albert Thomas, Representative to the Congress of the United States from the Eighth District, Houston, Texas. The submarine was placed in commission at the Submarine Base, New London, Connecticut, on 14 February 1944, Lieutenant Commander Edward Noe Blakely, USN, in command.

SHARK's overall length was 311 feet, 9 inches; extreme beam 27 feet, 3 inches; standard displacement, 1526 tons; mean draft, 15 feet, 3 inches; submerged displacement, 2424 tons; and a designed depth of 400 feet. Her designed speed was 20.25 knots on the surface and 8.75 knots submerged. SHARK was designed for a complement of 6 officers and 60 men. She was armed with ten 21-inch torpedo tubes, one 5-inch .25 caliber gun, one 40-mm gun, one 20-mm gun, and one .50 caliber machine gun.

SHARK completed trials and a schedule of training out of New London until 26 March 1944, then got underway for the Pacific. She transited the Panama Canal, 4-9 April, and arrived at the Submarine Base of Pearl Harbor on the 24th of April for final training in the Hawaiian area.

SHARK put to sea on 16 May 1944, forming a coordinated attack group with submarines PINTADO (SS 387) and PILOTFISH (SS 386) for search of waters to the west of the Marianas. Touching at Midway (20-21 May), she submerged ahead of an enemy convoy in the early morning of 2 June 1944 and pressed home an attack for hits on an enemy tanker and sank the overlapping target which was later identified as the 4,700-ton freighter CHIYO MARU (20°-53'N; 140°-17'E). She evaded a string of 39 exploding depth charges from the milling enemy escorts and commenced tracking another heavily escorted convoy on the afternoon of 4 June 1944. In maneuvering for attack approach she encountered a patrolling destroyer dead ahead while between the center and port columns of the convoy. Failing in a maneuver for a "down-the-throat" shot, she passed down the port side of this enemy at 180 yards and sent four torpedoes flashing towards a heavy-laden cargo ship. She was rewarded by four hits which sent the 6,000-ton KATSUKAWA MARU to the bottom of the sea (19°-35'N; 136°-43'E). She went deep as four depth charges exploded around her and artfully dodged 49 others before surfacing to continue the chase. She caught up with the remnants of the fleeing convoy the afternoon of 5 June, and after nightfall let go a spread

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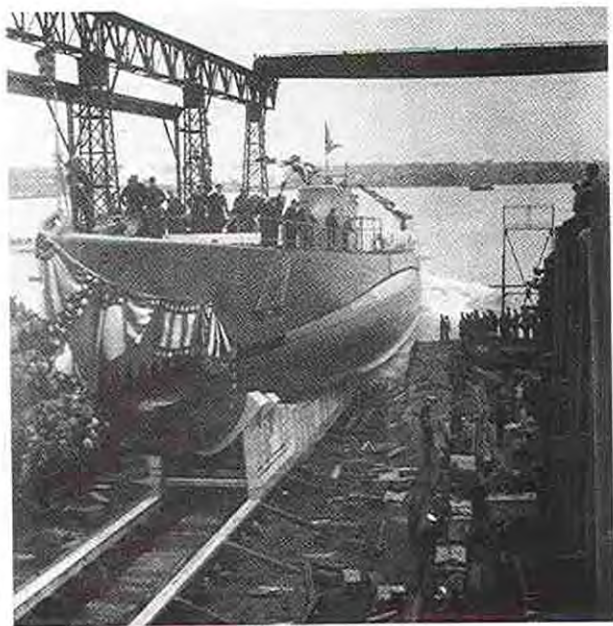
of six torpedoes which sank the 3,080-ton freighter TAMAHIME MARU and the 7,006-ton passenger-cargo ship TAKACKA MARU (17°-37'N; 140°-32'E). An enemy destroyer came down SHARK's torpedo tracks and the last four of more than sixty underwater explosions straddled her for a violent shaking which caused excessive vibrations of her port shaft. She surfaced near midnight but was unable to catch up with the convoy. On the afternoon of 8 June she made rendezvous with PINTADO (SS 387), PILOTFISH (SS 385) and TUNNY (SS 282), passing all "wolf-pack" data to the last named submarine before she headed for Midway. She arrived in port on 17 July for refit and cleared Midway on 10 July 1944 to conduct her second war patrol in waters off the Volcano and Bonin Islands.

Four torpedoes missed their mark as an enemy convoy made a sharp "zig" away from course on 19 July 1944 and SHARK was held down by a destroyer while the convoy escaped in the darkness. About three hours before midnight of 1 August she surfaced for an end-around and lay in wait dead ahead of an enemy convoy. As she dived for periscope approach she aroused three escorts and took evasive tactics to escape the notice of their sound searching, which continued until the morning hours of 2 August 1944. That afternoon she set course for Iwo Jima where she was to take lifeguard station in support of fast carrier airstrikes. On the afternoon of 4 August 1944 she rescued two men of a crashed LEXINGTON torpedo-bomber from a rubber boat and took a ring-side seat for the last carrier strike on Iwo Jima before retiring. She was again on lifeguard station 10 August as Army Liberator Bombers hit Iwo Jima. She dived to avoid bombing and gun strafing that day and photographed the scrap pile of wrecked enemy planes on Iwo Jima where bull-dozers were clearing the bombed-out airstrip. She terminated her lifeguard duties on 19 August and touched at Midway (24-25 August) before her arrival in Pearl Harbor on 29 August 1944 with her valuable reconnaissance photographs and aviator guests.

SHARK was lost during her third war patrol, probably in the vicinity of Luzon Strait, 24 October 1944. Forming a "wolf-pack" with SEADRAGON (SS 194) and BLACKFISH (SS 221), she had put to sea from Pearl Harbor on 23 September 1944 for waters off Saipan in the Marianas Islands. She touched at Saipan on 3 October then passed through Luzon Strait to assist in covering an area about midway between Hainan and the western end of Bashi Channel. After being out-distanced by a fast convoy on 22 October, she flashed a message to SEADRAGON (SS 194) on the 24th, that she was closing an enemy freighter. This was the last word received from SHARK. She was presumably the victim of a fierce counter-attack delivered by Japanese destroyers on that day.

SHARK (SS 314) was awarded one battle star for her war patrols in support of the capture and occupation of the Marianas Islands.

The sixth SHARK (SS(N) 591) is under construction by the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company of Newport News, Virginia. The nuclear-powered submarine is scheduled to be launched in April 1960.



The second Shark (SS 314) joined the Pacific War in 1944. She was lost on her third war patrol. The Japanese recorded depth charging a submarine, now thought to be Shark, on 24 October 1944, and having seen "bubbles and heavy oil, clothes, cork, etc." This attack is considered the most probable cause of Shark's loss. No one survived.