

HISTORY OF USS KETE (SS 369)

The USS KETE (SS-369) was built at the Manitowoc Shipbuilding Company, Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Her keel was laid October 25, 1943, she was launched April 9, 1944. She was christened by Mrs. Edward S. Hutchinson, 248 South Church Street, Paris, Texas, wife of Captain Edward S. Hutchinson, U.S. Navy, and was named USS KETE for the dog Salmon. She was commissioned 31 July 1944 and placed in command of Commander R.L. Rutter, USN. For the next 10 days the KETE conducted builder's trials and independent ship's exercises on Lake Michigan. She departed Manitowoc for New Orleans, La., via Mississippi River on 20 August 1944, arriving at Naval Operating Base, (Algiers) New Orleans, La., on 28 August 1944. At New Orleans her crew was busy loading torpedoes, ammunition and fuel in order to depart on 31 August enroute for Panama Canal. Reaching her destination on 5 September, she transited the Canal on 9 September and commenced training under the direction of Commander Submarine Squadron THREE. On 23 September she completed training, and on the 28th she departed in company with USS PLENNY. Arriving at Pearl Harbor, T.H. on 15 October 1944 she conducted six days of training including one convoy exercise on an inbound task force. And received voyage repairs from the Submarine Base.

She got underway on 31 October 1944, in company with USS SEALION as Task Unit 17.1.26. She arrived at Midway on 4 November, took on fuel and departed the same day for their assigned patrol area. She entered Colnett Strait on 15 November and passed clear 25 miles southwest of Kusakaki Shima and Danjo Gunto. On the 19th she developed engine trouble. Remaining submerged she received orders to Saipan, and met her escort on 24 November. When she watched a Japanese plane go down in flames during her first air raid. From 25 November - 22 December she was moored alongside the USS FULTON while overhauling her bow planes. On 24 December 1944, she departed Saipan in company with the USS KRAKEN continuing her first war patrol operating as Task Unit 17.1.26. The KRAKEN left formation on the 25th and the KETE proceeded to her patrol area arriving 28 December 1944. She patrolled in the vicinity of Yoron Jima - Okinoyerabus Jima Pass. She was ordered to patrol Life Guard Station approximately 60 miles S. E. of Okinawa and operated at this station until ordered to Guam 27 January 1945 arriving 30 January 1945. No enemy targets had been sighted.

She departed Guam on 1 March 1945, under Lieutenant Commander Edward Ackerman headed for her second patrol in the vicinity of the Nansei Shoto Island Chain. In addition to this the KETE had orders to submit special weather reports, and to carry out rescue service during an air strike by carrier based planes. On the night of 9 March 1945, she sank three medium sized freighters. On the night of 14 March she fired four torpedoes which missed a small enemy cable laying vessel, and had only three torpedoes remaining aboard. In view of the small number of torpedoes left, the KETE departed her area on 20 March, and proceeded to Pearl for refit, stopping at Midway enroute for fuel. On 20 March she sent in a special weather report from

position latitude 29° - 38'N, longitude 130° -02'E. This was the last message received from her. At normal cruising speed she should have arrived at Midway about 31 March 1945. When she was neither sighted nor heard from by 16 April 1945, she was reported as presumed lost and was stricken on 11 July 1945.

Japanese information indicates loss by anti-submarine attacks or a mine is considered highly improbable. Three Japanese submarines were sunk east of Okinawa near this date and the likelihood that one of these submarines might have torpedoed and sunk her and been unable to report the attack before being sunk herself.

Lieutenant Commander Ackerman received the Gold Star in lieu of a Third Silver Star Medal which reads as follows:

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity as Commanding Officer of the USS KETE, while operating in the hazardous waters off Nansei Shoto against enemy Japanese forces during the Second War Patrol of that vessel, commencing March 11, 1945. Alert and aggressive as he navigated through waters surrounding Japanese-controlled seas, Lieutenant Commander Ackerman conducted bold attacks against enemy merchant shipping despite severe hostile countermeasures and, by his superb ship-handling and his expert knowledge of submarine combat tactics, sent to the bottom three freighters totalling 12,000 tons. A brilliant and intrepid leader, Lieutenant Commander Ackerman continued his daring offensive action until an overwhelming concentration of enemy surface vessels subjected his gallant craft to vicious counterattacks. His resolute determination, courageous conduct and unswerving devotion to duty served as an inspiration to the officers and men under his fearless command and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

The USS KETE (SS 369) earned the following medal:

ASIATIC PACIFIC CAMPAIGN MEDAL

1 Star/Okinawa Operation - Assault and Occupation of Okinawa Gunto -
6 March - 16 March 1945.

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STATISTICS

LENGTH:	311 feet, 9 inches	STANDARD DISPLACEMENT:	1525 tons
BEAM:	27 feet, 3 inches	NORMAL DRAFT:	15 ft. 3 in.
COMPLEMENT:	10 Officers, 71 Men	NORMAL SURFACE SPEED:	20 knots
ARMAMENT:	10 torpedo tubes, one 5"/25 caliber S.P. and one 40MM gun.		

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Compiled: 28 November 1955
Stencilled: 29 November 1955