

HISTORY OF USS RONQUIL (SS-396)

The keel of the RONQUIL was laid at the Navy Yard, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, on 9 September 1943. She was launched on 27 January 1944, with Mrs. C. M. ELDER, wife of Captain C. M. ELDER, USN, acting as sponsor. Three months later, 22 April, the new ship was put into full commission and Lieutenant Commander H. S. MONROE, USN, embarked as her first Commanding Officer.

Immediately following the commissioning, preliminary training was conducted in the Portsmouth, New Hampshire - New London, Connecticut area, and by 9 June RONQUIL was proceeding out of New London en route Pearl Harbor, T. H. After pausing briefly at the Panama Canal for voyage repairs, Skipper MONROE took his new command on to Pearl Harbor, arriving 8 July, where an intensive training program was conducted under the direction of Commander Training Command, Submarine Force, Pacific Fleet. By the end of July with three weeks of rugged workouts behind her, RONQUIL was ready for the forward area.

The USS RONQUIL departed Pearl Harbor for her first war patrol on 31 July 1945, pulling in at Midway on 4 August for fuel and a few last minute repairs enroute. Leaving Midway the same day the sub cruised steadily westward toward her patrol station - The Northeastern Formosa Sakishima Gunto area. Arriving in the area on the 15th, RONQUIL remained for fourteen days. During this time she made seven torpedo attacks on enemy vessels, sinking one large AD (Attack Transport) and damaging two more. Her Score: 7,100 tons sunk; 10,700 tons damaged. RONQUIL put in at Majuro Atoll, Marshall Islands on 8 September for refit by Submarine Division 141 and the USS BUSHNELL. For this, her first war patrol, the award of the Submarine Combat Insignia was authorized.

The RONQUIL's second patrol was conducted in two phases. In phase one she conducted patrol with a coordinated attack group in the Bungo suido area. In phase two, she was one of seven submarines carrying out an anti-patrol vessel sweep north of the Bonins. The first phase lasted from 30 September until 8 November 1944. The second phase lasted from 10 November to 28 November. Between the two phases, she received voyage repairs from the USS FULTON on Tanapag Harbor, Saipan.

During the second phase of the war patrol, the RONQUIL destroyed two patrol craft by gunfire, for a total of 400 tons. This gun action was conducted in very heavy seas and with extremely poor visibility. During the action, RONQUIL was hit by one of her own five inch shells exploding prematurely and received two holes in the pressure hull. A repair party led by LCDR Lincoln MAREY succeeded in repairing this damage so the RONQUIL could dive. For his courage in affecting repairs in the face of heavy seas that were constantly breaking over the deck, this officer was awarded the Navy Cross. The award of the Submarine Combat Insignia was authorized for this patrol.

The RONQUIL returned to Pearl Harbor via Midway from this patrol, arriving on 28 November, where refit was accomplished by Submarine Division 43 and the Submarine Base at Pearl Harbor. During this overhaul period Commander H. S. MONROE was relieved as Commanding Officer by Commander P. B. LANDER, USN. RONQUIL's third patrol was conducted in the Bonin Island area, where lifeguard duties as well as offensive patrolling was carried out. The sub got underway from Pearl Harbor on 1 January 1945, making the usual stop at Midway for fuel and then continuing on to the patrol area. No opportunities for rescue work were found on this patrol but on 7 February she sank a tanker of the TOHO MARU type.

After 45 days on patrol, during which time no further targets were sighted, RONQUIL left the area enroute for Guam, arriving on 14 February. Here

she was fitted by USS APOLLO Submarine Division 281. Award of the Submarine Combat Insignia for this patrol was authorized.

Her fourth patrol, beginning 11 March and lasting 44 days, took her into the area of the Northern Bonins, where nothing more than a few contacts were made on small patrol boats. But while the hunting was poor (she damaged one small patrol boat) the rescue work was good and the RONQUIL had the pleasure of rescuing 10 Army aviators from a downed B-29 in the waters between the Bonins and Japan.

After depositing the fliers at Saipan on April, the sub returned to the area for continuation of the patrol, which was terminated at Midway on 24 April. Here refit was accomplished by the Submarine Base, Submarine Squadron 24, and advanced Training Relief Crew Number Two. Award of the Submarine Combat Insignia for this patrol was authorized.

RONQUIL's last patrol, number 5, was conducted in the East China Sea and the Yellow Sea, during which patrol she made two determined torpedo attacks, the first resulting in the sinking of a large unidentified ship in a fog. The second target was not as easy to get as the first because of its wild zigzagging, and because, when the RONQUIL sent four torpedoes streaming for the target, countered by firing two torpedoes at her (a case of man biting dog). This was bad, but what was worse was the fact that one of RONQUIL's own torpedoes ran erratic, doubled back on its course, and missed her by ten feet (a case of dog biting man).

This last patrol lasted from 19 May to 26 July 1945, a total of sixty-nine days. Stops were made at Saipan enroute to the area on 30 May and at Guam when returning from the area on 15 July. RONQUIL arrived at Pearl Harbor on 26 July, where refit was undertaken by the Submarine Base and Submarine Division 104. For her last patrol, award of the Submarine Combat Insignia was authorized.

When the news of the end of the war came, RONQUIL was at sea near Pearl Harbor, training for her sixth war patrol which was scheduled to begin on 24 August. On 29 August, Commander Romondt RUDD, USN, relieved Commander LANDER as Commanding Officer of the RONQUIL.

During her five war patrols, the RONQUIL damaged 10,800 tons of enemy shipping and sent 21,600 tons to the bottom. She was awarded the Submarine Combat Insignia for all five war patrols, six engagement stars on the Asiatic-Pacific Area Service Ribbon, and the Navy Occupation Service Medal, Pacific.

The period from 29 August until 15 September 1945 was spent in training operations near Pearl Harbor. The RONQUIL then entered Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard for a routine overhaul. Upon the completion of the overhaul she reported to Commander Submarine Group, San Diego, for duty, and was assigned to Submarine Squadron Three. In March of 1946, Commander Frank E. HAYLER relieved Commander Romondt RUDD as Commanding Officer. During this period the RONQUIL was engaged in extensive training exercises in the San Diego area.

In January 1947, RONQUIL returned to Pearl Harbor, T.H., for overhaul. After this overhaul she departed for her first peace-time training patrol. This patrol took her to the French possession of Papette, Tahiti, in the Society; Kusae in the Carolines; Guam; Saipan; Yokosuka, Japan; and the Yellow Sea. RONQUIL returned to San Diego, California via Pearl Harbor, completing a 114 day training cruise after steaming 20,000 miles.

RONQUIL then resumed local operations in the San Diego area: On 5 June 1948, Lieutenant Commander Charles D. NACE relieved Commander Frank E. HAYLER as Commanding Officer. In July 1948, the RONQUIL entered San Francisco Naval Shipyard for routine overhaul and returned to San Diego in December 1948.

The RONQUIL spent the next three years in extensive anti-submarine warfare training for surface ships and aircraft and pro-submarine training. On 14 January 1950, Lieutenant Commander H.F. FISCHER, USN, relieved Commander Charles D. NACE as Commanding Officer. In May 1952, the RONQUIL went to Mare Island Naval Shipyard for decommissioning and subsequent conversion to a "Guppy type" submarine.

The RONQUIL was recommissioned on 16 January 1953 under the command of Commander R.C. MEDLEY, USN, and reported for duty as a unit of Submarine Division 32 under Submarine Flotilla One in San Diego, California. The major features of her conversion include a streamlined hull that permits greater underwater speed, a snorkel which enables the submarine to run submerged using the engines for propulsion, and the installation of modern electronic and fire control equipment.

On 12 June 1953, the RONQUIL departed from San Diego enroute to a tour of duty in the Western Pacific. She arrived in Yokosuka, Japan on 11 July 1953 after making brief stops at Pearl Harbor and Chi Chi Jima in the Bonin Islands.

On 19 July, the RONQUIL went to Tokyo, Japan, as a guest of the Japanese government to take part in the ceremonies of the "Blackship Festival" which commemorated Admiral Perry's opening of Japan in 1853. This was the first time a submarine of any nation had ever landed at the Japanese capital city.

The RONQUIL departed from Yokosuka on 11 August on a Special Cruise which lasted for a total of 34 days. She then took part in two "Hunter-Killer" operations in Japanese waters south as far as Okinawa. These operations were high-lighted by a four day stay in Hong Kong, B.C.C. She departed from Yokosuka on 20 November enroute to San Diego, California, via Pearl Harbor, arriving in San Diego on 11 December 1953. The next seven months were engaged in operational training and fleet exercises. Two Reserve Training periods were also conducted during this period.

On 10 September, 1954, the Ronquill arrived at Mare Island Naval Shipyard, Vallejo, California, to receive her ultimate "Guppy" conversion and a routine overhaul.

Since her conversion RONQUIL has been engaged in extensive anti-submarine warfare. In September 1962, RONQUIL entered San Francisco Naval Shipyard for overhaul. During this overhaul RONQUIL received her fiberglass sail and fiberglass superstructure. In March 1963, RONQUIL departed from San Francisco Naval Shipyard and commenced local operations in San Diego area. In November 1963, RONQUIL departed for a six month deployment to WESTPAC. The highlight of the deployment was a "good will" visit to the city of Aomori, Japan, located on Northern Honshu. In May 1964, RONQUIL returned to San Diego and commenced local operations.

In June 1964 RONQUIL departed San Diego for San Francisco Naval Shipyard to have a new battery installed. In August 1964, she returned to San Diego for local operations.

On 19 November 1964 RONQUIL slid beneath the surface of the sea for the 6,000th time.

In February 1965 RONQUIL, due to the outstanding readiness she had demonstrated in the past, was deployed to the Western Pacific on short notice to augment Seventh Fleet Forces as a result of the Vietnam crisis. RONQUIL's tour was short, five months, but she was able to make a good will visit to Hong Kong, B.C.C. as well as spending three upkeep periods in Yokosuka, Japan. For operations during this deployment RONQUIL crew members were awarded their choice of either the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal or the Vietnam Service Medal.

On 13 May, Lieutenant Commander James O. NAUGLE relieved Commander Peter F. BLOCK as Commanding Officer.

RONQUIL returned to San Francisco Bay Naval Shipyard for a regular overhaul on 1 September. The major change accomplished was installation of a much needed 60 ton air conditioning plant.

SHIP'S HISTORY

RONQUIL completed her overhaul at the end of January 1966 and proceeded to Keyport, Washington for extensive tests and evaluations of her weapons systems. While there, RONQUIL became the first submarine to fire the MK 48 torpedo. RONQUIL then proceeded to Vancouver, B.C., arriving on February 19 and departing February 23. The ship was opened to visitors on two consecutive days and over 3,000 people visited the ship. RONQUIL then departed for San Diego for an extensive training period prior to deploying to the Western Pacific. During this period the many new members of the crew were fashioned into a well knit team, able to accomplish any assigned task. As an example of the extensive training accomplished, RONQUIL fired more than 30 exercise torpedoes. During this period, on July 20, RONQUIL left for the Western Pacific on an extended deployment, her fourth in as many years. After a two week upkeep in Yokosuka, RONQUIL spent the next 4 weeks at sea, operating with 7th Fleet aircraft and dogging typhoons. These operations were capped off by a visit to Osaka, Japan after which RONQUIL once again returned to Yokosuka for two weeks of upkeep. RONQUIL spent the next 50 days at sea on independent operations. After another short upkeep in Yokosuka, RONQUIL once again headed for sea. Both Christmas and New Year's were spent at sea on this cruise but a redeeming factor was the 7 day liberty period the ship enjoyed in Hong Kong, B.C.C. early in January 1967. RONQUIL returned to San Diego on 22 February for local operations. In April RONQUIL commenced a six week battery renewal in San Francisco Naval Shipyard. Late in May of 1967 RONQUIL returned to San Diego where Lieutenant Commander Robert G. TOLG, Jr. relieved Commander J.O. NAUGLE as commanding officer on the 27th of that month.