

HISTORY OF USS SEGUNDO (SS 398)

Our submarines were employed in our mounting offensive in the Pacific to cut enemy communications to his great sea empire, even attacking shipping in Japanese home waters. Our subs were also used to support fleet actions as pickets, weather stations, landing reconnaissance raiders and by attacking combat units including ASW vessels.

Though named for a rare fish of the Cavalla family, torpedoes from the USS SEGUNDO became familiar sounds to the Japanese as they smashed into the sides of their merchant ships, officially credited with only 2 vessels over 500 tons displacement. However, many smaller craft were sunk and several damaged.

The keel for this submarine was laid on 14 October 1943 at the U. S. Navy Yard, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. On 5 February 1944, Mrs. John L. Sullivan, wife of the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, christened the ship as she slid down the ways. She was accepted by the Navy at the commissioning ceremonies on 9 May when Lieutenant Commander J. D. Fulp, USN, came aboard as commanding officer.

She arrived at Pearl Harbor on 25 July, and sailed on 21 August for her first patrol. On the night of 8 September she delivered the operation plan to the HARDHEAD off Siargao Straits, and the following day arrived in the waiting area with instructions to conduct surface or submerged patrol. She was in contact with an American task force during the 12th as it delivered air strikes against the Eastern Philippine Coast. On the following morning two friendly planes came straight in and strafed the SEGUNDO as she was diving, but fortunately their shots fell short.

On 14 September she joined the Offensive Reconnaissance Group "Zoo". This group consisted of thirteen submarines forming a scouting line between the Palaus and Nansei Shoto. Their purpose was to report and intercept any enemy force attempting to hamper our occupation of the Palau Islands. No contacts were made and on 24 September the SEGUNDO joined a coordinated attack group known as "Wilkin's Bears" with the WHALE and SEAHORSE. She proceeded to her patrol area in the Luzon Straits and the upper part of the South China Sea. It was a very uneventful patrol, with no ships worthy of torpedo fire being contacted. She returned to Majuro on 21 October 1944 for refit.

The SEGUNDO departed Majuro on 16 November, and after topping off with fuel at Saipan, arrived in her patrol area in Luzon Straits and South China Seas on 1 December. She was now a unit of a pack known as "Roy's Rangers" consisting of the TREPANG, RAZORBACK, and SEGUNDO. These wolf-packs had been organized similar to the Germans in the Atlantic to make our patrols more effective. A total of nine ship contacts were made, but only one developed into an attack. This occurred on the evening of 6 December 1944. All three vessels of the wolf pack were able to attack, and the effectiveness of the coordinated attack group as a potent destructive power was amply demonstrated, sinking 7 of the convoy.

The SEGUNDO made two night surface attacks on this convoy of seven merchant ships, heavily escorted. The first was delivered against a large vessel which was later identified as the 6,933 ton freighter KENJO MARU. Six torpedoes were fired. The target zigged towards the SEGUNDO while the torpedoes were running to present about a 105° starboard track. One hit was seen from the bridge and two others were heard below. As the SEGUNDO pulled clear to reload, the target stopped, so the skipper chose to make his next attack on the undamaged ships of the convoy. The second attack was made on an overlapping target of three ships. Six more torpedoes were fired. The near right hand ship, evidently loaded with ammunition, completely disintegrated. Due to the flash and shock of this tremendous explosion observation of other hits was difficult, but one additional hit was seen by the starboard lookout. The center ship and point of air which had been the largest radar pip began to grow smaller at a range of 1600 yards, and was completely lost at 3900 yards, indicating that the ship sank. The latter ship was the 5,794 ton freighter YASAKUNI MARU.

The SEGUNDO then reloaded and proceeded with the intention of sinking her cripple of the first attack. She closed in time to see the RAZORBACK administer the coup de grace, as the ship erupted in flames from stem to stern. Contacts made during the remainder of this patrol were disappointing in that they were either too small for torpedo fire, or they escaped in the Island passes of the Luzon Straits. She departed the patrol area on 2 January 1945, and arrived in Guam on the 5th.

The submarine got underway on 1 February and arrived in the patrol area in the northern part of the East China Sea on the 7th to conduct her third war patrol. Three torpedo attacks were made during this patrol on unescorted ships near the Korean Coast in extremely shallow water. The first attack was a night surface attack on 6 March on a small ship steering a steady course at 9 knots. Four torpedoes were fired, but all missed due to fire control errors.

A medium size ship was attacked on the night of 10 March. After tracking the target for 1½ hours on a steady course at 7 knots, four torpedoes were fired. All ran erratic and missed. The SEGUNDO had maneuvered into position three miles from an island to maintain dark background. The target was not alerted and if the SEGUNDO was sighted the lookouts must have thought she was a fishing vessel.

The next night an attack was made on a medium freighter. Four torpedoes were fired and two hits were scored. The first blew the stern off. The second hit amidships and the ship sank within two minutes. The SEGUNDO departed her patrol area on 14 March, and arrived at Pearl Harbor on the 26th for supplies.

The sub sailed out of Pearl Harbor on 26 April for her fourth war patrol. She stood by on lifeguard duty on 14 and 15 May, but there were no opportunities to render services. On the 16th she steamed to her patrol area in the East China Sea and the Yellow Sea. Seven two masted schooners of about 100 tons each were sunk by gunfire near the Korean Coast on 29 May 1945. These schooners were part of a fleet of over 100 apparently carrying food from China to Japan. Two nights later four torpedoes were fired at a

large four masted full rigged ship of about 1250 tons. One hit amidships. The ship immediately broke in two and disappeared. Another four masted ship was contacted on 3 June 1945. The SEGUNDO made a fast pass at 500 yards firing automatic weapons at topside personnel and discouraged return fire. She then checked fire of her automatic weapons and proceeded to destroy the target with twelve hits from the deck gun, firing leisurely at point blank range.

On the night of 9 June two whalekiller type patrol chasers trying a submarine trap were contacted near Port Arthur. The night was clear and dark, but targets could be seen at 2000 yards with binoculars. One target showed a dim glow which provided a point of aim. Taking advantage of land background, the SEGUNDO closed at high speed until all gun crews could see target, then turned to bring all guns to bear, slowed speed, and opened fire. The target group appeared to be a tug with tow, so all guns except the 20mm were designated to fire at the leader. Tracers provided the necessary illumination and both Whalekillers returned fire with 37mm's. The leader's gun was silenced immediately, and the gun of the trailer was silenced by the 20mm. The trailer attempted to ram the SEGUNDO, but the 20 mm emptied a full magazine into his pilot house, setting it afire and putting it out of control. The deck gun continued to blast away until both ships were sunk.

On 11 June contact was made with a ship and two escorts off the Shantung Promitory in the Yellow Sea. The convoy was zigging radically in dense fog with visibility of about 500 yards. Four torpedoes were fired at a close range. Three hits were scored on the small freighter and she sank in three minutes. Four more torpedoes were fired at the larger escort, but with negative results. The SEGUNDO returned to Midway on 21 June 1945, where on 29 June Commander Fulp was relieved as Commanding Officer by Lieutenant Commander S. L. Johnson, USN.

The SEGUNDO's fifth patrol was conducted in the Sea of Okhotsk, beginning on 10 August 1945. After receiving word of Japan's surrender on 15 August she patrolled outside Kurile Island chain awaiting orders. She departed station on 24 August and steamed toward Tokyo Bay. Enroute she intercepted a Japanese submarine the I401 and escorted her prize back to Sagami Wan. In company with eleven other submarines she steamed from Tokyo Bay on 3 September enroute to Pearl Harbor. After a short stop-over the submarine proceeded to Seattle, Washington -- her war duty done.

The USS SEGUNDO earned four Battle Stars on the Asiatic-Pacific Area Service Medal for participating in the following operations:

1 Star/Western Caroline Islands Operation

Capture and Occupation of southern Palau Islands -- 6 September -
14 October 1944

Assaults on the Philippine Islands -- 9 September - 24 September 1944

1 Star/Iwo Jima Operation

Assault and occupation of Iwo Jima -- 15 February - 14 March 1945

1 Star/Okinawa Gunto Operation

Assault and occupation of Okinawa Gunto -- 14 May - 13 June 1945

1 Star/Second Submarine War Patrol -- 16 November 1944 - 5 January 1945

She also received the Navy Occupation Service Medal, Asia, for the period 2 - 3 September 1945. As of July 1953, the SEGUNDO is active with the U. S. Pacific Fleet.

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STATISTICS

OVERALL LENGTH	312 feet
BEAM	27 feet
SPEED	20 knots
DISPLACEMENT	1525 tons
COMPLEMENT	8 officers and 72 men

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THE CHASE, CAPTURE, AND BOARDING OF A JAPANESE SUBMARINE

Alex 'Snoopy' Leitch

USS SEGUNDO (SS 398) departed Midway Island on 10 August 1945 for her fifth and final patrol of WWII. Her Patrol Area was the Sea of Okhotsk, and under the command of LtCdr. S.L. Johnson, USN, who had just relieved Cdr. J.D. Fulp, USN on Midway, we proceeded to our Patrol Area. On 15 August 1945 we received word of the surrender of Japan. Captain Johnson immediately granted a warm can of beer for all hands. On 18 August 1945 we were ordered to patrol outside the Kurile Island Chain and await further orders. On 24 August 1945 we received orders to proceed to Tokyo Bay and we left station heading South.

NOW FOR THE STORY:

I was a qualified SI/c (ss) and standing Helm and Radar Watch. You remember the routine, 1/2 hour Radar, 1/2 hour Helm and 1/2 hour "Goof-off" or messenger. Standing the Mid-Watch (0000 to 0400) I had just relieved the Radar watch at 1145 on 27 Aug. 1945. There were no contacts on the screen. I was munching away on a sandwich and cup of coffee, when all of a sudden, a close and intense blip appeared on the screen about 3,000 yards away. I ran the couple of steps needed to get my head under the upper Conning Tower hatch, and hollered up to the OOD, "Radar Contact, 3,000 yards!" At the same time one of the Lookouts yelled, "Ship, bearing — degrees, close aboard". I went back to the radar and soon Capt. Johnson came flying up to the bridge. He told me to keep giving him bearings and ranges.

Since hostilities had ceased on 15 August and the target had not made any move, except to turn away, the

Captain did not send us to Battle Stations. It quickly became apparent that the target was picking up speed and trying to outrun us. Joe Brown, GM1/c was on the helm and I was still on the radar. As radar range increased, the Captain ordered flank speed and began giving course changes to Gunner Brown at the helm. As our speed increased to maximum, 19 to 20 knots, it was soon clear that we would be able to close the target. However, we could maintain our distance and position. We stayed on his tail, about 4000 yds, and so it went throughout our entire Mid-Watch.

We were relieved at 0400 and went below. Just about all of the off-going watch assembled in the after battery, drinking coffee, and talking about the mysterious ship we were chasing. As dawn was breaking, the Captain had the Quartermaster send out the International Signal to Stop on our 12 inch Searchlight. The Captain now ordered All Hands to Battle Stations Surface! As we manned our Battle Stations, I found myself in a most advantageous position. As Gun Captain on the forward 40 mm, just forward of the Bridge, I could hear all the dialogue between the captain and everyone else. Our quarry had stopped dead in the water and we were in an ideal torpedo firing situation. As it became brighter, it became apparent that our contact was a huge Submarine.

It turned out to be the IJN I-401, a boat over 400 feet long, displacing 5500 tons and equipped to carry aircraft. In fact, the I-401 was an extremely unusual craft. She, and two sister subs, were originally built for a single mission — to destroy the

Panama Canal. But the events of the war made it impossible for that operation to ever be undertaken. The boat was designed to handle two seaplanes, but had been modified, so that when the SEGUNDO came upon her, the deck hangar space had been enlarged to handle three Seaplane Bombers. Compared to her, the 1500 ton, 311 foot long SEGUNDO was a lightweight.

When the sun came up, it was decided by the captain, of course, that we would try to board the I-boat. After exchanging blinker light signals, a rubber raft was put over the side, and proceeded to the side of the I-boat. On its return, it carried a Japanese English speaking Officer. The captain gave our terms to the Jap officer, who then got back in the rubber raft and was taken back to the I-boat. To the best of my recollection, at least three trips, with Officer representatives from each side, were made before an agreement was arrived at.

The Japanese Captain would allow a prize crew of One Officer and 5 Enlisted Men to board the I-Boat. They would then proceed to Tokyo Bay with us, as our captive.

The following named men were members of that Boarding Party.

LT. J.E. BALSON, USNR (our Exec. Officer)

E.A. RUSSELL, CTM, USN(ss) (our COB)

R.S. AUSTIN, MoMM1/c (ss) USN

C.M. CARLUCCI, QM3/c(ss) USNR

K.W. DIEKMANN,

EM1/c(ss)USN

J.V. WALTON, TM2/c(ss) USN

It is my understanding that all the Enlisted Men above received the Bronze Star for this action. I do not know what LT. Balson may have been awarded. The Bronze Stars were sent through the mail, much later, I understand, and not awarded as a general ceremony in front of the

crew.

We then began our two-day trip towards Tokyo Bay. It is my understanding that the boarding party removed the Conning Tower Hatch, to prevent the Jap from diving. None of them ever went 'below decks' beyond the ladder. You might call this a little bit of "left-over" mistrust, considering their actions in the past. Every time they hollered down for some water, they were presented with a bottle of Saki. Oh well, War is Hell!! It's a good thing they weren't conning the ship. The SEGUNDO, meanwhile, maintained a position on the I-Boat's quarter, with our forward tubes loaded with War Heads. The idea being — that any suspicious maneuvering by the I-Boat — the Quartermaster would signal the Boarding Party to get over the side and away from the Submarine. Golly, I wonder why? Our Skipper, S.L. "Slick" JOUNSON, LCDR, USN, altho' new to us, struck me as a man who wouldn't hesitate two seconds to Issue the Command — Fire One! Fire Two!

At any rate, there were no problems with the Jap. We escorted the I-401 South into Sagami Wan, the body of water just south of Yokohama and Yokasuka. We arrived at 0500, on the morning of 31 August 1945, and at this time the American Flag was raised aboard the I-401. At 1100 that morning, the Japanese Captain delivered two swords, as a symbol of surrender, to LT. BALSON, the SEGUNDO'S Exec. Officer.

We were then relieved of our prize by the USS GATLING and were told to proceed up to the Tokyo Bay Approach and go to Yokosuka Ko and moor in a nest of Submarines alongside USS PROTEUS (AS 19). The PROTEUS had just arrived from Guam with Admiral Charles LOCKWOOD, ComSubPac, aboard.

The SEGUNDO participated in the Surrender Ceremonies aboard USS

MISSOURI on 2 Sept. 1945. On 3 Sept. 1945, SEGUNDO departed Tokyo Bay, in company with 11 other submarines, enroute to Pearl Harbor, T.H. where on 12 Sept. 1945 the SEGUNDO terminated her fifth and final Patrol.

As a member of the herd, so to speak, I have a few questions: At the time of these events I was just a lowly Seaman 1/c, but for some reason or another I certainly expected a little more in print about this distinctly unique and off-beat piece of Submarine Lore. Not for me, Shipmates, but for the SEGUNDO. It would seem to me that someone would have said, "Boy, ain't that something. Our Submarine capturing another Submarine with no outside help whatsoever!" Seems to me that Capt. Daniel Gallery, aboard a 'Jeep' Carrier in the Atlantic, captured a U-Boat. He had two DE's and helicopters plus his own planes, and

the Stateside Newspapers made one big hullabaloo about it. Not taking anything away from Capt. Gallery, Lord knows they did their job, and are to be admired for it, but what about us?

Ah so, Shipmates, the Silent Service did its bit, and then some. I'm tired of being "Silent". How about you? Give Hugh Lowder, Editor of POLARIS, a little help by submitting this type of Submarine (Non-fiction) Story. We are running out of time, gentlemen, and it's about time we got "A LOT" of these stories on paper so that our children and grandchildren can see that we were something other than "Old Geezers with nothing better to do than tell Tall Sea Stories".

THE REMARKABLE THING IS — THESE THINGS REALLY HAPPENED, TO US, U.S. SUBMARINE VETERANS WWII — IN THE 1940's.