

NAVY DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
DIVISION OF NAVAL HISTORY (OP 29)
SHIP'S HISTORY SECTION

HISTORY OF USS SPIKEFISH (SS 404)

USS SPIKEFISH (SS 404) is named for the marlins or spearfishes in the fish family Istiophoridae. The name "Spikefish" is usually applied to the striped marlin of the Pacific, scientifically known as *Makaira mitsukurii*, occurring along the California coast and southward off the coast of Mexico, across the Pacific Ocean to Japan and New Zealand. The spikefish is conceded to be one of the most spectacular fighters taken on rod and reel and is often described as "jumping fireworks."

USS SPIKEFISH (SS 404), a submarine, was built by the Navy Yard, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Her keel was laid on 29 January 1944 and she was launched on 26 April 1944 under the sponsorship of Mrs. Harvey Wilson Moore, Jr., widow of Lieutenant Moore who perished with the loss of submarine PICKEREL in 1943. The ship was placed in commission on 30 June 1944 when Commander N. J. Nicholas, USN, assumed command.

SPIKEFISH remained at the Portsmouth Navy Yard for outfitting until 31 July then conducted training in the Portsmouth-New London area. She departed Portsmouth on 16 September for a training period at Balboa, Canal Zone, until 8 October, then sailed to arrive at Pearl Harbor on 23 October 1944.

On 15 November 1944 SPIKEFISH departed Pearl Harbor on her first war patrol which was conducted in the Kurile Islands and Okhotsk Sea area. The only contacts made were identified as Russian ships and were not attacked. She returned to Midway on 1 January 1945. She sailed from Midway on 26 January to conduct her second war patrol in the Nansei Shoto area. On 24 February she attacked a convoy of six freighters and four escort vessels. She fired a spread of six torpedoes at two of the freighters and heard three timed explosions as she dived to escape a string of eighty depth charges dropped by the escorts. On 5 March she was held down by several enemy patrol vessels after unsuccessful attack on two ships of a convoy. She returned to Pearl Harbor on 19 March 1945.

On her third war patrol, SPIKEFISH departed Pearl Harbor on 19 April 1945 and steamed to Guam in company with submarine DRAGONET. The two submarines arrived at Guam on 1 May and SPIKEFISH departed on 5 May for lifeguard station off the east coast of Formosa. No aviators were forced down in her patrol area by 26 May when she was directed to take station off Sakishima as lifeguard for carrier pilots. She bombarded the Miyara airstrip on Ishigaki Jima on 5 June and two days later rescued a fighter pilot who crashed some twenty miles from that vicinity. She returned to Guam on 13 June 1945.

On 8 July 1945 SPIKEFISH departed Guam for her fourth war patrol. After lifeguard station patrol in the vicinity of Nampo Shoto she made an uneventful search in the Yellow Sea, then took lifeguard station off Shanghai. On 11 August she destroyed a 250-ton Japanese sea truck and took three survivors aboard as prisoners of war. During the evening of 13 August she made radar contact with a surfaced enemy submarine and subsequently lost contact when the enemy dived. Believing the enemy had proceeded in a westerly direction and surfaced, SPIKEFISH changed course and again established contact shortly after midnight. She tracked the enemy from ahead until dawn then closed for two torpedo hits and the target was observed to sink in a large cloud of smoke. She then closed the scene and after much difficulty, managed to take one survivor prisoner by looping a lifeline around his neck and hauling him aboard over the fantail. In this action SPIKEFISH sank Japanese submarine I-373 (1660 tons). SPIKEFISH received orders to cease hostilities on 15 August and arrived at Tanapag Harbor, Saipan, on 21 August. After transfer of the prisoners, she departed the next day for return to Pearl Harbor, 31 August 1945.

On 6 September 1945 SPIKEFISH departed Pearl Harbor, enroute in company with submarine HOE to the east coast of the United States. She transited the Panama Canal on 23 September and arrived at the submarine Base, New London, Connecticut, 29 September 1945. She sailed from New London on 25 October to participate in the Navy Day celebration at Charleston, South Carolina, returning to the Portsmouth Navy Yard for overhaul (1 Nov 1945 - 15 Feb 1946). She was attached to submarine Squadron TWO and based her operations at New London, engaged in training of student officers and men of the submarine school. This duty was intervened by overhaul at Portsmouth (7 Apr - 22 Sep 1947); a training cruise to Bermuda (25 Sep - 2 Oct 1947); and a cruise of service to the Fleet Sonar School, Key West, Florida (19 Jan - 20 Feb 1948); and overhaul in the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard (16 May - 8 Jul 1948).

On 16 July 1948 SPIKEFISH departed New London as part of a task group which included PIPER (SS 409), TORO (SS 422), ARGONAUT (SS 475), and PETREL (ASR 14). The task group conducted coordinated attack exercises enroute to Santiago, Cuba, arriving 22 July. Three days later SPIKEFISH commenced a series of three-day training cruises for reserve midshipmen in local areas of Guantanamo Bay. She returned to New London 13 August 1948.

SPIKEFISH continued operations from New London until 30 April 1955. During local operations at that port she engaged in sonar and weapons training for students of the submarine school; conducted student practice dives; and exercised with aircraft of various patrol squadrons in the area of the Virginia Capes. She made periodic cruises to the Caribbean to take part in Atlantic Fleet exercises; conducted exercises with aircraft of Patrol squadrons at Jacksonville, and Key West, Florida. She also made brief practice cruises to Bermuda, British West Indies; and Halifax, Nova Scotia. Overhaul periods were spent in the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Philadelphia Naval Shipyard, and the Charleston Naval Shipyard.

On 30 April 1955 SPIKEFISH departed New London, enroute to the Mediterranean in company with PIPER (SS 409). She arrived at Gibraltar on 26 July for fuel and departed on 27 July to join units of the Sixth Fleet at Phaleron Bay, Greece, on 5 August 1955. After exercises with British submarine HMC TRENCHANT out of Rhodes Bay, she engaged in combined maneuvers with units of the Royal Hellenic Navy in the operating area of Suda Bay, Crete. She then conducted a schedule of training maneuvers in the Malta operating area, followed by visits to Cartagena, Spain; and Monaco, France. She departed Gibraltar on 26 September and returned to New London on 8 October 1955.

SPIKEFISH resumed operations while based at New London through 31 December 1958. Training duties and maneuvers in local operating areas were alternated with anti-submarine warfare exercises and Atlantic Fleet training maneuvers extending along the eastern seaboard to principal ports of the Caribbean. She made several practice cruises to Halifax, Nova Scotia, during this period and also performed service for the Fleet Sonar School, Key West, Florida. Overhaul was completed in the Portsmouth and Brooklyn Naval Shipyards.

SPIKEFISH earned three battle stars and other awards for operations listed below:

1 Star/IWO JIMA OPERATION

Assault and Occupation of Iwo Jima: 15 Feb - 6 Mar 1945

1 Star/OKINAWA GUNTO OPERATION

Assault and Occupation of Okinawa Gunto: 9 May - 8 Jun 1945

1 Star/ANTI-SUBMARINE ASSESSMENT: 13 Aug 1945

NAVY OCCUPATION SERVICE MEDAL (Europe): 26 Jul - 27 Sep 1955

LIST OF COMMANDING OFFICERS

CDR N. J. Nicholas, USN:	30 Jun 1944 - 24 Mar 1945
CDR R. R. Managhan, USN:	24 Mar 1945 - 24 Feb 1946
CDR W. C. Thompson, Jr., USN:	24 Feb 1946 - 19 Jun 1947
CDR J. W. Reed, USN:	19 Jun 1947 - 18 Jun 1949
CDR J. A. Leonard, USN:	18 Jun 1949 - 18 Oct 1949
CDR W. A. McGuinness, USN:	18 Oct 1949 - 28 Aug 1951
LCDR A. R. Christiansen, USN:	28 Aug 1951 - 29 Sep 1952
LCDR J. G. Hudson, USN:	29 Sep 1952 - 28 Sep 1954
LCDR J. J. Love, Jr., USN:	28 Sep 1954 - 14 Sep 1956
LCDR H. H. Caldwell, USN:	14 Sep 1956 - 21 Apr 1958
LCDR L. B. Findly, USN:	21 Apr 1958 -

ORIGINAL STATISTICS

LENGTH OVER-ALL:	311'6"
EXTREME BEAM:	27'3"
STANDARD DISPLACEMENT:	
Tons:	1526
Mean Draft:	15'3"
SUBMERGED DISPLACEMENT:	
Tons:	2391
DESIGNED SPEED:	
Surfaced:	20.25 knots
Submerged:	8.75 knots
DESIGNED COMPLEMENT:	
Officer:	6
Enlisted:	60
ARMAMENT:	
Torpedo Tubes:	(10) 21-inch
Secondary:	(1) 5"/25 caliber
	(1) 40-mm. & (1) 20-mm.
	(2) .50 caliber
TORPEDOES:	24