

HISTORY OF THE USS TRUTTA (SS 421)

The USS TRUTTA (SS 421), a 1,570 ton fleet submarine of the BALAO Class of 1941-1942, was built at the United States Navy Yard, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The submarine's keel was laid on May 22, 1944, and the ship was launched on August 18th of the same year.

In accordance with the Navy custom of naming underseas craft for fish and denizens of the deep, the TRUTTA was named for a species of a northern European trout. At the launching ceremonies, the SS 421 was christened by Mrs. Edward C. Magdenburger, wife of a prominent Navy Department executive.

The TRUTTA was placed in commission on November 16, 1944, with Commander Arthur C. Smith, USN, as her first commanding officer.

Soon after commissioning, an intensive training program was begun with operations being conducted just outside of Portsmouth for two weeks. This was followed by trial torpedo firings at Newport, Rhode Island, for a week; after which the ship moved on to New London, Connecticut, for further training and exercises where three weeks were spent covering all phases of submarine warfare. Upon completion of all contract trials and a month's intensive training, the TRUTTA sailed for Panama on the 19th of January, 1945. Here, eight more days were spent in practice torpedo attacks and practice firings before the ship set out for Pearl Harbor, T. H., on February 8, 1945.

Between the SS 421's arrival at Pearl Harbor on February 25th and her departure on her first war patrol, the TRUTTA was subjected to still more advanced training. Minor voyage repairs were also effected at the Submarine Base at Pearl Harbor during this time.

On March 19, 1945, the TRUTTA departed from Pearl Harbor on her first war patrol, via Saipan, Marianas Islands, in company with the USS PARCHE and USS LIONFISH. During the 11-day trip to Saipan, wolf pack drills and exercises were held with the other boats and the crew received more individual training in "school of the boat."

Twenty-eight hours were spent in Saipan fueling, provisioning, and receiving minor voyage repairs from the USS FULTON (AS 11). Upon leaving Tanapag Harbor, Saipan, the starboard propeller hit a cable connected to an oil drum in the harbor and several hours later during the trim dive, the sound operators discovered that the propeller produced an abnormally high noise level accompanied by a definite squeak. It was decided to return to Saipan for proper repairs.

Finally, on April 3, 1945, the TRUTTA was off to the second start on her initial war patrol. En route to the Yellow Sea area, two days were spent off Bungo Suido on "watch dog" duty searching for major enemy fleet units which were expected to sortie from the Inland Sea. The TRUTTA arrived on this station just 24 hours after the Japanese battleship YAMATO and her accompanying task force had departed from Bungo Suido. Two other U. S. submarines, however, spotted the force and initiated contact reports which enabled Allied

task forces to intercept and completely annihilate this enemy force on the following day.

After two days south of Bungo Suido, the TRUTTA was ordered to proceed through the Nansei Shoto chain into the Yellow Sea for offensive patrol. On her passage through these islands just south of Kyushu, the TRUTTA was forced down eight times in one day by enemy planes before successful transit of the passage could be made.

In the early morning of April 15th, after arriving on station in the Yellow Sea, two seemingly large targets were picked up by radar. During the attack, four torpedoes were fired at the ships without a single hit. It was believed that the misses were due to the torpedoes running under the target ships since, due to unusual radar performance, the two small enemy patrol craft had been mistaken for much larger prey.

Four days later, in late afternoon, the SS 421 sighted two small "engines-aft" freighters in company with two sampans heading for the China coast. The ships were approached on the surface and then taken under fire by the sub's 5-inch, 20 millimeter and 40 millimeter guns. One ship was sunk and the other severely damaged.

On April 20th, while submerged off Chosan Kan on the west coast of Korea, a convoy of three ships and three escorts was sighted. As the submarine was being maneuvered for an approach, the convoy made a sharp change of course and entered shallow water before the attack could be made.

Upon her return from patrol, the TRUTTA was annoyed by Japanese patrol planes again in the passage through the Nansei Shoto islands. "Hold down" tactics were employed most effectively, forcing the TRUTTA to dive 12 times during one day and night. U. S. aircraft helped greatly by giving much needed air cover during a part of this critical passage. After a 41-day patrol, the TRUTTA arrived in Guam, Marianas Islands, for a refit by the USS PROTEUS (AS 19).

While the officers and crew spent two weeks at Camp Dealey, the submarine rest and recuperation center at Guam, Submarine Division 201 took over and made the necessary repairs to the boat.

Before the training period began, Lieutenant Commander Franz P. Hoskins, USNR, executive officer during the first war patrol, relieved Commander Arthur C. Smith, USN, as commanding officer of the TRUTTA.

During the seven day training period which followed, the TRUTTA had the interesting and unique experience of conducting torpedo firing exercises with the battleship SOUTH DAKOTA as target. Two torpedoes were fired at the battleship for two "bulls-eyes."

On June 2, 1945, the TRUTTA departed from Guam in company with the submarines QUEENFISH and SPOT for lifeguard duty between Iwo Jima and the Empire. In the early morning of June 6th, a severe typhoon, with winds of over one hundred knots velocity, caught the TRUTTA in its path. She rode out the storm on the surface for six hours before she was forced to submerge. Even at 200 feet the

submarine rolled as much as ten degrees! By early afternoon the sea had calmed down sufficiently to surface and proceed northward to the assigned life guard station.

On the following day, Lieutenant Arthur A. Burry, P-51 fighter pilot of the 45th Fighter Group, USA, was picked up. He had been in the water in his small rubber life raft for a total of six days, during which time he had ridden out the typhoon on June 6.

On June 10th, the TRUTTA made a photo reconnaissance tour around Tori Shima in the Nampo Shoto chain and took pictures of the Jap installation on that small island. After several more days of uneventful life guard duty, the TRUTTA transferred the rescued aviator to the submarine PETO and then moved westward into the Pungo Suido area for a week's stay. There she performed life guard duty by night for B-29 raids on nearby Jap cities and patrolled submerged by day looking for Jap shipping. Neither ship contacts were made nor life guard services called for during the short time in this area.

After a total of three weeks at sea, the TRUTTA was finally ordered around into the East China and Yellow Sea areas for patrol. In the early morning of June 24, 1945, Hira-do Shima was shelled by the SS 421 in a purposely conspicuous manner in order to divert attention of the Japs from the "Hell Cats," a group of nine U. S. submarines escaping from the Sea of Japan through La Perouse Straits far to the north.

On July 1, 1945, while patrolling off the entrance to Keijo, capitol of Korea, seven large seagoing trading schooners were encountered and sunk by gunfire. Again, six days later just south of Chosan Kan, Korea, three more similar four-masted schooners and a tug towing them were caught and sunk with the deck guns in the late evening. As a parting shot before leaving Chosan Kan, the TRUTTA ran into a shallow water harbor and destroyed five more cargo-laden schooners. Unfortunately, during this period in the Yellow Sea no targets worthy of torpedo fire were found. During her second war patrol, the SS 421 had completely destroyed 16 large cargo-carrying schooners and one tug for a total of 4,650 tons of enemy shipping sunk. Throughout the patrol off Korea, only eight enemy planes were sighted which served to indicate that Japan was weakening and could not hope to last much longer.

After 46 days at sea on her second war patrol, the TRUTTA again slipped into Guam for another refit alongside the USS FULTON and two more enjoyable weeks were spent by all hands at the submarine rest camp. After returning to the ship, four days were spent in training, followed by a four day post repair and loading period.

On August 12, 1945, the TRUTTA set out on her third war patrol amid flying rumors that Japan was negotiating for peace. Four days later, while just south of the Empire, official word was received that the war was over! It was hard for the officers and crew to realize that peace was again at hand, but all hands participated in "splicing the main brace" on that memorable night of August 16, 1945.

Shortly after the termination of hostilities, the TRUTTA received

orders to proceed to Midway Island and, upon arrival, the squadron commander delivered the good word that the TRUTTA, along with eleven other submarines, was scheduled to leave for the Atlantic Coast of the United States for duty. On the very next day, August 25th, the TRUTTA got underway for "the States."

After passing through the Panama Canal, orders were received to deviate from the course and proceed to New Orleans, Louisiana, for a month of leave, liberty, and recreation. The TRUTTA arrived in New Orleans on September 21, 1945, and spent a wonderful month in that city.

For Navy Day, the SS 421 moved to Gulfport, Mississippi, where she joined the new destroyer CHARLES P. CECIL. An estimated ten to fifteen thousand visitors came aboard both of the ships during the three-day "open house" in Gulfport.

From Gulfport, the TRUTTA sailed around the tip of Florida and up to Tomkinville, Staten Island, New York, to join the new Submarine Squadron Eight for duty.

By Directive dated January 1947, the USS TRUTTA (SS 421) was placed out of commission, in reserve, attached to the U. S. Atlantic Reserve Fleet.

In addition to receiving the Submarine Combat Insignia for both her first and second war patrols, the TRUTTA earned two (2) engagement stars on the Asiatic-Pacific Area Service Ribbon for participating in the following operations:

- 1 Star/Okinawa Gunto Operation
Assault and Occupation of Okinawa Gunto -- 24 March to 30 June 1945.
- 1 Star/THIRD Fleet Operations against Japan -- 10 July to 15 August 1945.

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STATISTICS

OVERALL LENGTH	312 feet
BEAM	27 feet
DISPLACEMENT	1,570 tons
SPEED	20 knots

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