



USS SKIPJACK (SSN-585)

**dp. 3070 tons (surf.), 3500 tons (subm.); l. 251.8'; b. 31.8';
s. 15k (surf.), 29k (subm.); td. 700'; a. 6-21" fwd.;
cpl. 9 officers - 76 enlisted men; cl. "SKIPJACK"**

Keel laid down by Electric Boat Div., General Dynamics Corp., Groton, CT, 29MAY56;
Launched: 26MAY58; Sponsored by Mrs. George H. Mahon;
Commissioned: 15APR59 with LCdr William W. Behrens, Jr. in command;
Decommissioned and struck from the Navy List 19APR90;
Disposal through SRP at PSNS completed 17MAR96.

USS SKIPJACK (SSN-585) was the proto-type which mated nuclear power with an Albacore hull. During her shakedown cruise in August 1959, she became the first nuclear ship to pass through the Straits of Gibraltar and operate in the Mediterranean Sea. Following post-shakedown availability at Groton, Connecticut, the nuclear submarine conducted type training and participated in an advanced Atlantic submarine exercise from May through July 1960. The remainder of the year was spent in a restricted yard availability and upkeep.

SKIPJACK commenced her 1961 operations by participating in two weeks of type training followed by antisubmarine warfare exercises through August, visiting Mayport, Florida, before returning to Groton.

In January 1962, *SKIPJACK* operated out of Key West, Florida, for two weeks before entering Portsmouth Naval Shipyard for extensive overhaul, lasting four and one-half months. Following her return to New London, Connecticut, the submarine operated locally prior to departing in October for duty in the Mediterranean with the 6th Fleet. During this tour, *SKIPJACK* participated in various fleet and NATO exercises and visited Toulon, France and La Spezia and Naples, Italy, before returning to New London.

The year 1963 was occupied in submarine attack operations and ASW exercises, all designed to test the capabilities of the nuclear-powered attack submarine. The highlight of 1964 was two months of duty with NATO forces, participating in exercises "Masterstroke" and "Teamwork" and visiting Le Havre, France, and Portland, England, before returning to New London in October.

After devoting most of 1965 to training exercises, the submarine ended the year by entering Charleston (SC) Naval Shipyard for an overhaul that lasted until 18 October 1966. *SKIPJACK* then got underway for sea trials off Charleston, before joining *USS SHARK* (SSN-591) for four days of type training in the Jacksonville, Florida area. She then sailed to her new home port, Norfolk, Virginia, before participating in Atlantic Fleet exercises.

Early in February 1967, *SKIPJACK* got underway for sonar and weapon tests and then participated in Atlantic submarine exercises from March through June. July and August were spent in restricted availability at the Newport News Shipbuilding & Drydock Co., following which *SKIPJACK* took part in *FIXWEX G-67*, an exercise designed to evaluate fixed wing ASW aircraft against a submarine with *SKIPJACK*'s characteristics. Following an extended deployment in October and November, the submarine returned to Norfolk to prepare for major operations of that year which she completed on 25 February 1968. The remainder of 1968 was spend in local operations in the Norfolk area.

On 9 April 1969, *SKIPJACK* commenced an overhaul in the Norfolk Naval Shipyard which was completed in the fall of 1970. After sea trials in December 1970, *SKIPJACK* returned to her regular duties.

Highlights of 1971 were sound trials and weapons system tests at the Atlantic Fleet Range, Puerto Rico, from 25 January through 5 March and NATO exercise "Royal Night" from 15 September to 9 October. On 22 October, *SKIPJACK* returned to Norfolk, where she remained through January 1972.

SKIPJACK spent most of 1972 in tests and type training out of New London and Norfolk and in the Caribbean. the submarine returned to Norfolk late in the year and remained in the area into 1974.

SKIPJACK was decommissioned and struck from the Navy List on 19 April 1990. Her disposal through SRP was completed at PSNS on 17 March 1996.

SSN-585 Skipjack

Skipjack Class was the first "top to bottom" new attack submarine design using nuclear propulsion. In 1954 the USS Nautilus, the world's first nuclear powered submarine, was launched. Nuclear power enabled this submarine to become the first true "submersible" - able to operate underwater for an indefinite period of time. In 1958 the the USS Albacore entered service with a "tear drop" hull design to reduce underwater resistance and allow greater submerged speed and maneuverability.

The first submarine class to combine nuclear power with the new hull design was the USS *Skipjack*. USS *Skipjack* was also unique in that it was the first nuclear submarine with a single shaft. Placement of the bow planes on the sail greatly reduced flow noise at the bow-mounted sonar. Deep-diving and high speed capabilities were the result of HY-80 construction and a new reactor design, the S5W. This reactor became the US Navy's standard until the Los Angeles class joined the fleet in the mid-1970's.

SSN 589 SCORPION was lost on 22 May 1968 with 12 officers and 87 enlisted men -- one of the worst casualties in the Navy's history. Based on prior experience with such problems and an analysis of the acoustic signature of the *Scorpion* loss, the Navy initially concluded that the most probable cause of the loss of the *Scorpion* was the launch of an inadvertently activated torpedo, which turned and struck the submarine. A six-month search eventually located the *Scorpion's* wreckage some 400 miles southwest of the Azores. Investigation of the boat's wreckage on the ocean floor found no evidence of torpedo damage. A six-month expedition in 1969 by *Trieste II* found no direct evidence to support the theory that the *Scorpion* was destroyed by a torpedo. While some portions of the *Scorpion's* hull were never found, the wreckage that was examined did not exhibit the conditions expected from the hydrostatic implosion of a submarine hull structure.

In 1970 a Navy panel completed a classified report that disavowed the Court of Inquiry's conclusion. Instead of an accidental torpedo strike, the new group suggested a mechanical failure caused an irreparable leak that flooded the submarine. That report said the bulk of the evidence suggested an internal explosion in the sub's massive electrical battery caused the sub to flood and sink. The large number of acoustic signals detected from the loss of the *Scorpion* was characteristic of a submarine going through deep depths after experiencing substantial flooding, rather than an intact submarine passing through collapse depth. At the time of its loss, the boat had a history of unresolved maintenance problems, poorly functioning safety systems, and had received an extremely abbreviated overhaul prior to its final mission.

Specifications

Displacement

3,070 tons surfaced

	3,513 tons submerged
Length	252
Beam	31 feet
Speed	15 knots surfaced 29 knots submerged
Test Depth	700 feet
Power Plant	One nuclear reactor, two steam turbines, one shaft

Ships

Name	Number	Builder	Homeport	Ordered	Commissioned	Decommissioned
Skipjack	SSN-585	Electric Boat	Norfolk	05 Oct 1955	15 Apr 1959	19 Apr 1990
Scamp	SSN-588	Mare NSY	San Diego	23 Jul 1957	05 Jun 1961	30 Sep 1991
Scorpion	SSN-589	Electric Boat	Norfolk	31 Jan 1957	29 Jul 1960	22 May 1968
Sculpin	SSN-590	Ingalls	San Diego	18 Jan 1957	01 Jun 1961	03 Aug 1990
Shark	SSN-591	Newport News	Norfolk	31 Jan 1957	09 Feb 1961	15 Sep 1990
USS Snook	SSN-592	Ingalls	New London	18 Jan 1957	24 Oct 1961	16 Oct 1986



USS SKIPJACK SSN 585



Welcome Aboard

SKIPJACK

ANY OF SEVERAL KINDS OF FISHES THAT JUMP ABOVE OR PLAY AT THE SURFACE OF THE WATER.



USS SKIPJACK

Submarines named SKIPJACK have established a long and proud heritage in the United States Submarine Force extending from 1911 to the present. USS SKIPJACK (SSN 585) is the third submarine to bear the name and continues to serve in the tradition of its predecessors.



LAUNCHED:	26 May 1958 by General Dynamics Corporation, Electric Boat Division, Groton, Connecticut	
SPONSOR:	Mrs. George H. Mahon	
COMMISSIONED:	15 April 1959, Commander W. W. Behrens, Jr., in command	
STATISTICS:	Length Overall	252 Feet
	Extreme Beam	31 Feet, 7 Inches
	Mean Draft	26 Feet
	Standard Displacement	3075 Tons
	Submerged Displacement	3513 Tons
	Design Depth	In Excess of 400 Feet
	Design Surface Speed	20 Knots
	Design Submerged Speed	In Excess of 20 Knots
	Complement	12 Officers, 88 Men
	Armament	Six 21 Inch Torpedo Tubes



USS SKIPJACK (SSN 585) revolutionized submarine warfare with the marriage of nuclear power to the Albacore hull shape. The adoption of this hull shape devoid of superstructure made for a hydrodynamically superior submarine and use of nuclear power provided high speed and unlimited endurance. Thus, the motto "Radix Nova Tridentis" (Root of the New Sea Power). On 8 March 1959, under the command of CDR W. W. Behrens, Jr., she commenced her sea trials, and upon completion, was acknowledged to be the world's fastest submarine, a record just recently broken by the new Los Angeles Class submarine.

Commissioned on 15 April 1959, she joined the Submarine Force U.S. Atlantic Fleet and immediately started work to prove the soundness of her radical design. The results are best exemplified by the fact that most follow-on nuclear submarines including the Polaris/Poseidon SSBN's, Trident, and fast attack submarines have all retained the basic design.



COMMANDER CHARLES E. ELLIS

United States Navy

Commander Charles E. Ellis, USN, is a native of Texas. He attended the University of Texas and graduated in 1968 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering.

Following Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program Training in New York and Naval Submarine School in Connecticut, Commander Ellis reported to USS GATO (SSN 615) and served a two and one half year tour in a variety of junior officer billets.

After attending Submarine Officers Advanced Course he reported to USS BERGALL (SSN 667) where he served for three years as Weapons Officer. In 1976, Commander Ellis reported to USS STURGEON (SSN 637) where he served for three years as Engineer Officer. He reported to USS GEORGE C. MARSHALL (SSBN 654) (GOLD) in June 1979 and served a two year tour as Executive Officer.

Commander Ellis is entitled to wear the following personal awards: the Navy Commendation Medal and the Navy Achievement Medal.

Commander Ellis is married to the former Judy Nell Stevens of Crowley, Texas. They reside with their daughters, Sue and Mary, in Gales Ferry, Connecticut.

COMMANDING OFFICERS

USS SKIPJACK (SSN 585)

CDR W. W. BEHRENS, JR.	April 1959 - December 1960
LCDR L. D. KELLY	December 1960 - January 1963
LCDR S. M. JENKS	January 1963 - August 1964
LCDR P. D. TOMB	August 1964 - June 1967
LCDR J. R. DEVEREAUX, JR.	June 1967 - October 1969
CDR R. B. PIRIE, JR.	October 1969 - July 1972
CDR G. R. STUBBS	July 1972 - August 1977
CDR R. N. PLATH	August 1977 - July 1980
CDR R. J. PETERSEN	July 1980 - March 1982
CDR D. L. WITZENBURG	March 1982 - April 1982
CDR C. E. ELLIS	April 1982 - Present

ACHIEVEMENTS

- ★ Acknowledged World's Fastest Submarine on Setting Speed Records on Sea Trials—March 1959
- ★ First Nuclear Ship to Pass Through Straits of Gibraltar—1959
- ★ Awarded Navy Unit Commendation for Operations in Atlantic Ocean—1960
- ★ Awarded Battle Efficiency "E" for Submarine Squadron Ten for Fiscal Year 1960
- ★ Conducted Fastest Submerged Transit of Atlantic Ocean on Record—1962
- ★ Awarded Battle Efficiency "E" for Submarine Division 102 for Fiscal Year 1964
- ★ Awarded Battle Efficiency "E" for Submarine Division 102 for Fiscal Year 1965
- ★ Awarded Battle Efficiency "E" for Submarine Squadron Two for Fiscal Year 1978





**U. S. S. SKIPJACK
(SSN-585)**

SHIP'S HISTORY

SKIPJACK, radically different and speedier than any predecessor submarine, was the first of a new generation of fighting ships. SKIPJACK marks important milestones in many areas of research and development. Her blunt-nosed, football-shaped hull is in itself an important development — used for the first time in a combatant ship. The adoption of this hull shape, devoid of all superstructure, marks SKIPJACK hydrodynamically superior to earlier submarines and makes it possible for her efficient, nuclear power plant to give her higher submerged speeds than on previous classes of submarines. Authorized by Congress as a part of the Navy's fiscal year 1956 shipbuilding program, her keel was laid at the Electric Boat Division of General Dynamics Corporation, Groton, Connecticut, on May 29, 1956. Two years later, Mrs. George H. Mahon, SKIPJACK's sponsor, broke the traditional bottle of champagne over the bow and SKIPJACK slid down the ways into the Thames River.

SKIPJACK commenced her sea trials on March 8, 1959, and on their completion was acknowledged to be the world's fastest submarine. She was commissioned on April 15, 1959, and joined the Submarine Force, U. S. Atlantic Fleet, with CDR William W. Behrens, Jr., U. S. Navy, as her first Commanding Officer. Immediately, she started work to prove the soundness of her radical design for, as is indicated by SKIPJACK's motto "Radix Nova Tridentis," (Root of the New Sea Power), much of the Navy's future was dependent on her. Her basic hull form and the nuclear power plant were used for almost all new submarines, including the potent Polaris missile submarines.

The nuclear propulsion plant in SKIPJACK was the result of a decade of developmental research by the Naval Reactors



Branch of the Atomic Energy Commission and the Westinghouse Electric Corporation, who also provided the reactor plant for the first nuclear submarine, NAUTILUS.

The present SKIPJACK is the third ship of the United States Navy to bear this distinguished name. The first SKIPJACK was launched in 1911. One of her earliest Commanding Officers was LT Chester W. Nimitz, later to be Fleet Admiral and Commander of American Forces in the Pacific Theater of World War II. The next SKIPJACK was commissioned in 1938 and was in Manila Bay when the United States was thrown into World War II. During 10 war patrols, she made an enviable record.

True submarines like SKIPJACK are fitted with the most modern anti-submarine fire control and sonar equipment, and are the most effective single weapons system available to combat other submarines. These classes of submarines can remain fully submerged on station almost indefinitely. They will be invisible and virtually undetectable and indestructible. They present an almost unchallengeable deterrent force-in-being to any potential aggressor.

Since becoming an active part of the U. S. Submarine Fleet, SKIPJACK has distinguished herself and demonstrated through endurance, flexibility and maneuverability, that she is one of the best fighting weapons of the Navy in numerous operations from the Caribbean to the Mediterranean. SKIPJACK was the first nuclear ship to pass through the Straits of Gibraltar and holds the record for the fastest submerged transit of the Atlantic Ocean. After spending the first five years of operations assigned to Squadron 10 in New London, Connecticut, SKIPJACK changed homeports to Norfolk, Virginia, joining sister ships SHARK and SCORPION in Squadron 6.

COMMANDER ROBERT B. PIRIE, JR., USN
Commanding Officer

Commander Pirie graduated from the United States Naval Academy in June 1955. He was assigned to USS MEREDITH (DD-890), in which he served as CIC Officer for a year. In December 1955 CDR Pirie won a Rhodes Scholarship and the following September he took up residence at Magdalen College, Oxford. After three years at Oxford, CDR Pirie graduated with the degree of B. A. (Hons.) in the Final Honour School of Philosophy, Politics and Economics.



On his return from Oxford, CDR Pirie attended Submarine School and Nuclear Power training. He was assigned to USS SEADRAGON (SSN-584) in August 1961, and served in that ship as Supply Officer, Electrical and Reactor Control Officer. While aboard SEADRAGON, CDR Pirie participated in a deployment to the Western Pacific, and a Polar Exploratory voyage in which SEADRAGON made rendezvous with USS SKATE (SSN-578) at the North Pole.

In September 1962 CDR Pirie was assigned to USS SCORPION (SSN-589) as Engineer Officer. Following a two year tour on SCORPION, he was ordered to the precommissioning unit of USS GEORGE C. MARSHALL (SSBN-654), which was commissioned in April 1966. Following the successful demonstration of MARSHALL's weapons system, including a test firing of a Polaris A-3 missile, CDR Pirie was transferred to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, where he served as staff assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Systems Analysis). Upon his departure from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, he was awarded the Legion of Merit for his services there. On 25 October 1969 he assumed command of SKIPJACK.

CDR Pirie is the son of Vice Admiral and Mrs. Robert B. Pirie, USN, (Ret.) of Virginia Beach, Virginia. He is married to the former Joan Adams, of Barrington, Rhode Island. The Pirie's have three children: John, Carl and Susan.