

NAVY DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION (OP-09B9)
SHIPS' HISTORIES SECTION

389

HISTORY OF USS PIRANHA (SS-389)

USS PIRANHA (SS-389) is the first ship of the Fleet to bear the name for the most ferocious of all freshwater fishes.

The Piranha is a South American freshwater fish belonging to the family Characindae, known as the Characins. This is the largest family of fishes known, with nearly a thousand species in South America and in Africa. The Piranha is found in the Amazon and Orinoco river systems and is scientifically known as Serrasalmo Spilopleura. It is about the shape of a person's hand; has extremely strong jaws armed with triangular, shark-like teeth. It is fearless in its attack on large or small animals. These fish occur in schools and at the first sense of blood in the water they become wild and uncontrollably voracious. There are authentic accounts where a burro has been driven into the water inhabited by these fish and within a very short time nothing was left but the skeleton. The Piranha grows to a length of a little over one foot.

PIRANHA (SS-389) was built at the Portsmouth Navy Yard, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Her keel was laid 21 June 1943. She launched 27 October 1943, under the sponsorship of Mrs. William S. Farber, wife of Rear Admiral William S. Farber, U.S. Navy, Assistant Chief of Naval Operations. The fleet submarine commissioned in the Portsmouth Navy Yard 5 February 1944, Lieutenant Commander Harold E. Ablo, USN, commanding.

PIRANHA had a length overall of 311 feet, 6 inches; extreme beam, 27 feet, 3 inches; standard displacement, 1,526 tons; mean draft, 15 feet, 3 inches; submerged displacement of 2,391 tons; designed depth of 400 feet; designed speed: surfaced: 20 knots, submerged: 8.75 knots; and a designed complement of 6 officers and 60 men. She was originally armed with one 5-inch .25 caliber gun; one 40-mm, one 20-mm and two .50 caliber machine guns.

PIRANHA departed the Portsmouth Navy Yard 17 March 1944 for the Torpedo Station at Newport, Rhode Island, thence to operating areas out of the submarine base at New London, Connecticut. She sailed 3 April for two weeks of advance warfare training out of Key West, Florida, departing the 18th for transit of the Panama Canal and onward routing to her new base at Pearl Harbor. She entered Pearl Harbor 18 May 1944 for intensive combat training in Hawaiian waters.

PIRANHA put to sea from Pearl Harbor 14 June 1944 to conduct her maiden war patrol as a unit of a coordinated attack group called the "Mickey Finns" under tactical command of Captain W. V. O'Regan in GUARDFISH (SS-217). She topped off with fuel at Midway 18 June, thence in company with GUARDFISH (SS-217), THRESHER (SS-200) and APOGON (SS-308) to initiate the entrance of Pacific submarines into "Convoy College", a newly established patrol area laying across the principal Japanese convoy routes between Formosa, Luzon and the Asiatic mainland.

PIRANHA evaded patrol boats in the early morning darkness of 5 July 1944 to transit Bashi Channel. There, she entered "Convoy College" with her sister submarines to "major" in torpedo warfare in the eastern and western entrances of the Luzon Straits, and along the coast of Northern Luzon.

At 2054, 11 July 1944 PIRANHA received a contact report from THRESHER and headed toward the estimated daylight position of a convoy: "Going ahead with everything we have on four main engines." Three hours later a contact message was flashed to her by GUARDFISH and PIRANHA changed course to intercept. By 0347, 12 July she was in position some 20,000 yards ahead of a convoy and dived for dawn attack. Soon smoke appeared on the horizon off Northern Luzon to reveal at least six ships in three columns with several escorts on both flanks. Picking out the largest ship in the center column, she fired three stern torpedoes that quickly sent the 6,504-ton passenger-cargo ship NICHIRAN MARU to the bottom.

PIRANHA had no chance to observe her target sink as she immediately was faced with a problem of depth control after firing, then went deep to avoid an expected depth-charging which never developed. One hour later she rose to periscope depth and found the convoy "going over the hill." But one ship, guarded by two destroyers, a submarine chaser plus constant air cover, apparently had remained in an attempt to rescue some of the troops and crew of NICHIRAN MARU. For the next ten hours PIRANHA chased as the enemy changed course in frequent rain squalls. She played hide-and-seek with destroyers, and finally maneuvered into attack position. But a control error fed the torpedo data computer set a wrong bearing for the target and the opportunity for the kill was lost.

Having scored the first sinking of the "Mickey Finns", PIRANHA prowled the western side of Luzon Strait where she picked up sonar contact the night of 15-16 July. About one hour to sunrise of the 16th she was dead ahead of the convoy: "It was a workout trying to get a look at the convoy, what with large swells covering the periscope, and the plane over the convoy. I was about to come around for a stern shot...when a zig gave me a good set-up for the bow tubes on a port track..." The submarine fired three torpedoes "at a large transport literally loaded to the gunwales with troops." The 5,733-ton passenger-cargo ship SEATTLE MARU was sunk in this attack.

An aircraft headed for PIRANHA who went deep: "We were going down nicely when at 250 feet there was an explosion, followed by a second one, which was as close to any block busting variety I wish to experience." The submarine was soon aware of seven enemy surface hunters pinging and milling around overhead. The first of sixty-two depth charges exploded as she evaded northward and escaped without injury.

As soon as she had lost her pursuers, PIRANHA surfaced and sought to regain contact on the convoy as she flashed word that alerted THRESHER and GUARDFISH. Each of the three submarines sped to the attack. The night of 16 July PIRANHA spotted a series of flashes ahead on the horizon as GUARDFISH attacked the convoy to sink the 5,863-ton auxiliary ship MATAI MARU and the 5,215-ton cargo ship JINSAN MARU. By 0130, 17 July, PIRANHA had a target in sight: "We were closing range 15,000 yards, when at 0145, target exploded. It looked like THRESHER had beaten us to it... That explosion should have taken care of anything within 1,000 yards of it." The standard comment on PIRANHA's bridge to this impressive spectacle is unprintable. THRESHER had sunk the 2,205-ton cargo ship SANEI MARU and the 2,838-ton cargo ship SHOZAN MARU in swift action on the contact report sent her by PIRANHA. The convoy, or what remained in it, turned away with PIRANHA tracking astern. It was moving too fast for PIRANHA to catch at submerged speed and daylight prevented an "end around" on the surface. So PIRANHA broke off contact to proceed to the new patrol area assigned her by GUARDFISH.

Daylight of 17 July 1944 found Luzon Island in sight and an enemy plane darted for the surfaced submarine. The Captain and Executive Officer had relieved the Officer of the Deck "and gave a nice performance on their dive. Making flank on four engines on diving alarm, stern planes were put on hard dive, and there they stayed, as normal power would not operate on rise. By blowing bow buoyancy, then backing, and finally blowing main ballast, things were brought under control at 200 feet. We were 4,000 pounds heavy forward, all of which made things more interesting..."

At 0400, 19 July 1944, PIRANHA received a contact report from GUARDFISH and changed course to intercept a convoy. She tracked the enemy into the afternoon when a patrolling aircraft forced her under: "This birdie sat on top of us until dark and we lost contact with the convoy. Every time we pushed the scope up that darn Mavis was cruising around within a mile or so. Finally, under cover of darkness PIRANHA gained attack position: "2040 fired four torpedoes on good sized ship...all astonished at no hits." She evaded the escorts and set course to catch the convoy before dawn. But contact with the convoy was lost.

On 27 July 1944 PIRANHA dodged past fast patrol craft in her passage of Luzon Strait. Two days later she departed her patrol area enroute to Majuro Atoll in the Marshalls where she terminated her first war patrol 8 August 1944. So the "Mickey Finns" concluded a "wolf-pack foray" that cost Japan more than 40,000 tons of merchant shipping in "convoy college." PIRANHA had graduated with honors.

PIRANHA's second war patrol was spent in offensive reconnaissance of areas east of Luzon and Formosa. She was one of ten submarines that formed submarine Task Group 17.18, under tactical command of Captain C. W. Wilkins in SEAHORSE (SS-314) to support the capture and occupation of the Palau Islands. Given the code name "Zoo" the ten submarines divided into three packs. The "Bears" comprised SEAHORSE, WHALE, SEGUNDO and GROUPE. The "Dogs" comprised RAZORBACK, PIRANHA and CAVALLA. The "Cats" comprised BAYA, BECUNA and HAWKBILL.

PIRANHA departed Majuro 30 August 1944 to fuel at Saipan in the Marianas (7-8 September). She then put to sea to form with the "Zoo" 13 September as Admiral William F. Halsey's Third Fleet battleships and aircraft carriers entered into the second day of a three-day preliminary bombardment of pre-selected targets at Peleliu.

Fanning out on an axis, the "Zoo" maintained an offensive reconnaissance across the enemy fleet's most probable line of approach while the fighting 1st Marines stormed the shores of Peleliu 15 September 1944. PIRANHA and her sister submarines would warn the Third Fleet of any approach of the enemy. They were ready to intercept and destroy any enemy target on approach or retirement from the Palau assault area. But the Japanese Fleet did not choose to challenge the invasion.

The "Zoo" submarine task group dissolved 25 September 1944 when their operations in support of surface and air forces for the seizure of the Palaus were no longer required. PIRANHA and her sister submarines of the "Zoo" had found no opportunity to attack the enemy in this phase of their patrol. But their negative reconnaissance reports were valuable contributions in seizing the Palau's which afforded an advance air base and logistic anchorages to support the liberation of the Philippine Islands.

PIRANHA now shifted to enemy traffic lanes on an independent and arduous search that netted only contacts with two patrol craft. Her first contact came the early afternoon of 29 September 1944 when she caught sight of a fast patrol craft in her periscope lens but was unable to close the range for attack. On 9 October, at 0800, she went to battle stations and closed a "killer-boat", a trawler type patrol craft of about 250 tons, mounting a 3-inch gun forward. PIRANHA fired three torpedoes at the "killer boat" who evidently spotted her periscope, zigged clear of the torpedoes, and came boiling down the torpedo wakes with a vengeance. One depth charge exploded close aboard and another

fairly close as the submarine sought the cover of the depths. Two more depth charges exploded, then the enemy screws faded out and the submarine escaped the danger. After nine days of patrol westward along the 20th parallel, PIRANHA set course for Pearl Harbor, arriving 23 October 1944.

PIRANHA began her third war patrol 19 November 1944 when she departed Pearl Harbor as a unit of a coordinated attack group that included SEA POACHER (SS-406) and SEA OWL (SS-405). After fueling at Saipan, the trio headed into the East China Sea and off the western coast of Kyushu, Japan.

Westward of Kyushu, PIRANHA combined offensive patrol with lifeguard station duties for the air strikes of heavy land-based bombers. She surfaced on lifeguard station the morning of 19 December to guard B-29 bomber strikes. She was still on station that afternoon when a Japanese patrol bomber roared out of the overcast. PIRANHA dived and was some 70 feet down when an aerial bomb exploded close aboard. But she suffered only a good shaking, a few broken light bulbs and several bent gyro spindles.

PIRANHA was again on lifeguard station for B-29 strikes 6 January 1945. Despite aggressive and thorough area coverage she found only one contact worthy of torpedo fire. This contact came near midnight of 8-9 January 1945 when she fired six bow torpedoes at radar bearings of overlapping pips. She heard the sound of two exploding hits as she swung away to evade the nearest escort. She attempted to regain attack position on the target. But the enemy escort interposed between the aggressive submarine and the suspected base track of the convoy until the submarine was outdistanced. She departed her patrol area 11 January and terminated her third war patrol at Guam, 13 January 1945. During refit, 24 January 1945, Commander Donald G. Irvine, USN, relieved Commander Harold E. Ruble, USN, as commanding officer of PIRANHA.

PIRANHA again went to "convoy college" on her fourth patrol. She put to sea 11 February 1945 as a unit of a coordinated attack group that included SEA OWL and PUFFER. She was soon prowling convoy lanes running from the Luzon Straits to Formosa, thence towards Hong Kong. Seventeen days were spent on lifeguard station for airstrikes in an area southwest of Formosa. While covering the approaches to Takao, Formosa, the morning of 27 February 1945 she sighted a large junk close to Ryuku Shu. An airstrike was in progress at the time. Thinking the junk might be an aircraft or submarine spotter, PIRANHA daringly closed at high speed in the shallow water. She quickly disposed of the potential menace to the air strike with gunfire and rescued one prisoner: "Could see air raid going on about 20 miles south of Takao. Could see our planes, bomb burst, and AA fire. Probably the Japanese were too busy dodging our planes to pay any attention to us when we were shelling the junk..."

PIRANHIA hugged close to the China coast the morning of 5 March 1945 as she continued to maintain lifeguard station for B-29 strikes. She received an aircraft report of ships leaving Hong Kong so headed for the convoy. But fishing junks got in her way: "0820...The further westward we go the more fishing junks we see. Decided we never could intercept the convoy and keep out of sight of these junks too. Made a large Japanese man-of-war flag with a piece of 3' x 6' white bunting and some red paint (fairly realistic job even at close quarters, done by a Qm2c who is an ex-commercial artist.) Hoisted our false colors and zig-zagged through the junks at 20 knots. Had to pass within about 200 yards of one junk...0930 reached the convoy's 15 knot circle and the 25 fathom curve. Nothing in sight. Our orders are explicit - we can't go inside the 25 fathom line except to effect the rescue of a downed aviator. Started back toward Hong Kong on a general westerly course just outside 25 fathom line, hoping to see the convoy if it is making less than 15 knots or is behind time. Ran down our false colors so as not to mislead any of our planes or submarines - we only wanted to fool any possible Japanese in the vicinity. Apparently the ruse worked. We weren't bothered."

On 9 March 1945 PIRANHIA was on lifeguard station within sight of bombing and anti-aircraft fire in Mirs Bay. She headed in that general direction to catch any shipping that might be flushed out of shallow water: "0317 Dived from unidentified plane - Plane dropped flare and two bombs on us. No damage done. Could have been either our own or a Japanese. We were right on the edge of the blind bombing zone."

The night of 11 March 1945 PIRANHIA made radar contact on a convoy while patrolling near Chilang Point: "Decided to enter blind bombing zone in hot pursuit, believing none of our planes would be up here this early." She moved to the attack, firing three bow torpedoes but gained no hits as the torpedoes ran too deep. She "decided to attack again with four torpedoes set on zero feet with spread set forward and aft," hoping that one would run shallow enough to hit. As she completed her reload the targets speeded up to 25 knots, then slowed to 14 knots, confirming a "Chidori" destroyer type identification of the targets.

As PIRANHIA closed for the kill: "2231 H. SJ picked up plane at 5,000 yards dead ahead closing rapidly - no IFF return - couldn't raise him on VHF. At range 2,000 yards rang up all stop to reduce wake, swung right with full rudder to get off track. The medium patrol bomber passed down PIRANHIA's port side about 50 feet away, altitude about 100 feet, banked sharp to counter PIRANHIA's turn, and dropped four bombs "at the end of our wake about 100 yards astern while still banking left. Believe our evasive turn foxed him. No damage except to the baker's cakes which collapsed. 2234H broke off attack and went all ahead frantic heading out for deep water and submarine patrol zone.

Doing broken field running through numerous sampans. 2235 PDM seemed to be over Chidoris... Hope the PDM didn't waste all his bombs on us. 2340H Well inside submarine patrol zone everybody resumed breathing. Nothing to show for a strenuous evening's work except ten wasted torpedoes and eighty "Butterfly" stomachs. This was a bitter disappointment to everyone - we couldn't have had a better fire control set up..." Thus PIRANHA remained on lifeguard patrol, dodging fishing junks, aerial attacks, and hoping for targets to be flushed outside the blind bombing zone.

PIRANHA again made radar contact on a plane the night of 20 March 1945: "...let him come in to 3,500 yards, swung hard right and dived - tactics seem to fox them (or perhaps they are just poor shots)... They seem to try to bomb the end of our wake. We use that principle and try to cut off our wake sharply by stopping the engines and swing off track...Successful so far...In three attacks we have always been missed astern, the bombs landing very close to the end of our wake."

PIRANHA bombarded Pratas Island in the early morning of 26 March 1945 hurling in nearly one hundred 4-inch shells. She transited Balintang Channel in the bright moonlight of 27 March to fuel at Tanapag Harbor, Saipan (2-3 April). She then proceeded with five other submarines to patrol off Wake Island 8-18 April, thence to Midway where she arrived 21 April 1945.

PIRANHA departed Midway 17 May 1945 en route to Marcus Island where she took up lifeguard station 22 May. She was on the eastward side of the island when she sighted a "floating pier, marine railway on beach, large kingposts and cargo handling boom on the end of the pier." She decided to try for a torpedo shot at the pier and cargo handling gear as this installation appeared to be the only place ships or submarines could approach and unload supplies. The single torpedo ran erratic, broached several times, and made no explosion. The submarine cleared the area to take lifeguard station to the westward of Marcus: "1720 26 B-24's bombed Marcus in two waves. A spectacular sight. Watched all planes carefully for signs of distress. All planes left on a southeasterly course, none of them in any apparent trouble."

The night of 26 May 1945, PIRANHA reconnoitered the piers on Marcus, closing to 400 yards when shore batteries fired several rounds at her periscope. When she surfaced 10 miles south of Marcus one of her crew picked up a large piece of Japanese shrapnel on her after deck. That night Japanese shore batteries fired four salvos, one shell landing some 50 yards on her starboard quarter. The submarine responded in kind the night of 31 May 1945. She passed down the westward side of Marcus and plastered the island with 88 rounds of 4-inch shells. Her action drew no reply from shore batteries. Two fires burned in the center of the island as she departed to fuel at Tanapag Harbor, Saipan (4-6 June).

On 6 June 1945 PIRANHA departed Tanapag Harbor to smartly conduct the second phase of her fifth war patrol in Northern Empire waters of Japan. On 14 June she closed the eastern coast of Honshu in chase of a tanker hugging the fog-covered beach and surrounded by four small escorts. Suddenly the fog lifted and chance of surprise was gone: "Everybody had now seen everyone else in the vicinity. We felt very naked." There was no possible chance of closing the target submerged. PIRANHA decided to close on the surface and "give him his choice of three things: run on the beach, run into the restricted area, or fight it out with us." She headed for the large ship at 19 knots: "Unfortunately for us he had a big gun and know how to use it. He headed for us at his best speed, shooting fast and accurately. His escorts came with him. We twisted and turned several times trying to maneuver him into a position for a shot. The Japanese was a good sailor, he stayed in shoal water where we couldn't possibly get to him submerged and held us off with his gun. If we dived, all he had to do was to go on up the coast behind the restricted area and leave 5 small escorts behind to beat us up in shallow water."

PIRANHA broke off the action and retired to the accompaniment of several shell straddles. As she proceeded up the coast she fired several clips of 40-mm into a small freighter who headed for the beach emitting dense black funnel smoke. A plane zeroed in on the submarine who dodged the aircraft bombs. But she was held down by the aircraft until the convoy got past Taugaru Straits.

Still in pursuit of her quarry, PIRANHA dived at dawn of 15 June 1945 in Taugaru Straits. There she spotted an ore ship crossing the strait under escort of four aircraft. She could make no headway: "1101 found that at standard speed slowing to look every 20 minutes we were actually being swept backwards out of the straits by the current." The target passed over the horizon while the submarine pondered her dilemma, then gave up the chase. The following morning, 17 June 1945, she picked up sound contact on a small cargo ship and a tanker under escort of a high-speed submarine chaser. Her torpedoes ran astern the cargo ship but she again attacked the convoy and slammed two torpedoes into the bow of the coastal tanker. The stern of this target was awash with the port rail under the water as she pressed home a second torpedo attack. Her two torpedoes ran under the bow of the target as it lifted out of the water: "People on the AO bridge firing machine guns at torpedo wakes." The target drifted toward the beach, bow out of the water and listing heavily to port: "Believe he'd be lucky if he could beach himself before he sank. The hit must have collapsed his engine room bulkhead to make him sink so fast."

PIRANHA was forced down by the submarine chaser but evaded this enemy after dodging a series of 21 depth charges. On 17 June he entered Ibouri Wan, closed the beach to three miles, and poured 40-mm shells into a small trawler laden with oil drums. The target became a veritable torch as the oil ignited. Five days later she made attack approach on a freighter but a submarine chaser "caught us under foot and ran over us ..." The first of 22 depth charges rained down as she opened out from coast at deep submergence: "The steep rocky coast close aboard made it sound like we were being depth charged inside a well - all noise and no damage."

On 23 June 1945 PIRANHA sank two trawlers with gunfire, then "played tag in the fog" with a fast submarine chaser "right on our tail and gaining." She manned the after 40-mm guns and at 0855: "Both of us charged out of the fog bank at 19 knots. Identified ship as PC-13 Class or a DE... Nothing for it now but to dive. He was gaining but fast." The fog lifted rapidly and there was no chance of PIRANHA getting back under its friendly cover. She dived and set up firing preparation for bow shots at the target. But "He had us on his sonar or saw our diving swirl. At any rate he came straight for us." A pattern of eleven depth charges caused only minor damage. The enemy crossed overhead the submarine and charged away in the fog. Soon three other surface escorts were heard in the vicinity but PIRANHA evaded the hunters and pulled out from the coast to repair her damage. She touched Midway (4-5 July) and returned to Pearl Harbor from her Fifth War Patrol 10 July 1945.

PIRANHA departed Pearl Harbor for her Sixth War Patrol 14 August 1945. Fourteen hours later she was ordered to reverse course for return to base as hostilities with Japan came to a close. PIRANHA returned to Pearl Harbor the afternoon of 15 August 1945. She put to sea 22 August for a call at Midway, thence in company with submarine tender AEGIR (AS-23) to San Francisco, arriving 11 September 1945. Following inactivation overhaul, she decommissioned in the Mare Island Naval Shipyard 31 May 1946.

PIRANHA was assigned to the Mare Island Group, U.S. Pacific Reserve Fleet. She was reclassified an auxiliary submarine (AGSS-389) 6 November 1962, remaining in reserve until 1 March 1967 when her name was struck from the Navy List. As soon as industrial stripping is completed, her hulk will be sold for scrapping.

PIRANHA's conning tower will form one of the exhibits of the Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz Memorial Naval Museum, Fredericksburg, Texas. The Nimitz Hotel, long operated by his grandfather is being restored to its original appearance at Fredericksburg. It will be created into a major naval museum in commemoration of the great American and superb naval leader who served his country so selflessly and effectively during peace and war.

PIRANHA's first, third and fifth war patrols were judged successful for the award of the Submarine Combat Insignia. She received five battle stars for the operations listed below:

- 1 Star/FIRST SUBMARINE WAR PATROL - PACIFIC: 14 Jun-8 Aug 1944
- 1 Star/WESTERN CAROLINE ISLANDS OPERATION:
Assaults on the Philippine Islands: 9-24 Sep 1944
- 1 Star/THIRD SUBMARINE WAR PATROL - PACIFIC: 19 Nov 1944-13 Jan 1945
- 1 Star/IWO JIMA OPERATION:
Assault and occupation of Iwo Jima: 15 Feb-16 Mar 1945
- 1 Star/OKINAWA GUNTO OPERATION:
Assault and occupation of Okinawa Gunto: 17 Mar-21 Jun 1945

LIST OF COMMANDING OFFICERS

Lieutenant Commander Harold E. Ruble, USN:	5 Feb 1944-24 Jan 1945
Lieutenant Commander Donald G. Irvine, USN:	24 Jan 1945-13 Dec 1945
Lieutenant Commander John R. Zullinger, USN:	13 Dec 1945-20 Feb 1946
Lieutenant Commander Charles B. Bishop, USN:	20 Feb 1946-31 May 1946

In reply refer to: 6

SS389

Serial

U. S. S. PIRANHA 389

OFFICE OF THE
COMMANDEER SUBMARINE
PACIFIC FLEET
ADMINISTRATION

San Francisco, Calif.

29 October 1945.

From: The Commanding Officer.
To: The Secretary of the Navy.
Subject: Ship's History-submittal of.
Reference: (a) ALPac 202.
Inclosure: (A) Ship's History of U.S.S. PIRANHA.

1. In accordance with reference (a), the ship's history of the U.S.S. PIRANHA (S 389) is herewith submitted.

D. C. IRVING.

c/c: CinCpac.
ComSubsPac AD.

successful and all hands again received the combat pin award. Comdr. ABEL received another Bronze Star.

The fourth patrol, under Comdr. J. L. IRVING, was conducted in the Luzon Straits and South China Sea areas, with additional duty off Wake Island. PIRANHA was part of the scouting line during the Iwo Jima operation, for which the area received another bronze star for the area ribbon. Lifeguard services were rendered off Formosa and Hong Kong. One gun attack was made on a junk and one prisoner recovered. The long search for enemy vessels, 74 days in all, was otherwise unrewarded and the patrol was deemed unsuccessful. She returned to Midway, after several bombings, via Wake, (where the Sea Owl sank a Jap submarine), after having run completely out of food.

The PIRANHA's fifth patrol, of 56 days duration under Comdr. ABEL, was conducted in two parts. The first part was two weeks of lifeguard duty off Marcus Island, which she bombarded. After stopping at Eniwetok, PIRANHA proceeded to the northeastern coast of ICHU for two weeks more. Here she sank one large tanker and three anti-submarine vessels with torpedoes, one patrol boat and three loggers with gunfire. Although the effort was made, no prisoners were taken. During this patrol PIRANHA was subjected to enemy depth-charging, bombing and gunfire, and encountered several floating mines. PIRANHA returned to Eniwetok for her refit. The patrol was deemed successful and all hands received the combat pin, in addition to which, Comdr. IRVING was awarded the Silver Star Medal.

The ship was ready for her sixth war patrol on 14 August, 1945 and departed from Pearl Harbor Submarine Base at the exact hour that the announcement of the Japanese surrender was officially made. After 14 hours enroute, orders to return were received, and her war career was ended. She was sent to EL PASO, to join her own command and thence to San Francisco to join the Pacific Reserve Fleet.

SUMMARY OF PATROL RESULTS

Patrol Number	Number of Ships sunk	Total Tonnage sunk	Ships Damaged	Tonnage Damaged	Aviators Rescued
1	1 AC 1 AK	17,000	0	0	0
2	0	0	0	0	0
3	0	0	2 SHK	8000	0
4	1 J	100	0	0	0
5	1 AC 1 IC 3 SC 3 loggers	10,000	1 SC	100	0
Total	4 large 7 small	27,900	2 large 1 small	8100	0

SS389

U. S. S. PIRANHA SS-389

Serial

Care of Fleet Post Office,

San Francisco, California.

SHIP'S HISTORY of

U.S.S. PIRANHA

Construction was started on the PIRANHA (SS389) when her keel was laid on the main building ways of the Portsmouth Navy Yard, July, 1943. She was launched at a triple ceremony, in company with the PCMFRET and the STERLET, on NAVY DAY, October 27, 1943. Her sponsor was Mrs. William S. Farber, wife of Rear Admiral Farber. After the customary fitting-out period, she was commissioned on February 5, 1944. At the same time that Lieut. Comdr. Harold E. RUBLE took command of the vessel, Captain C. W. WILKINS broke his pennant as Commander Submarine Division 242, of which U.S.S. PIRANHA was flagship for the following year and a half.

The shakedown period was conducted in the bitter weather off Portsmouth and New London during February and March of 1944. On the 1 April she sailed to Key West, Florida, for two weeks advanced training, and then on to Panama. A short period at Balboa was followed by the long trip to Hawaii, where she arrived at Pearl Harbor in May, 1944.

A month was spent at the Sub Base, Pearl Harbor, adjusting the propeller shafts and in intensive pre-patrol and wolf-pack tactics. On 14 June, 1944, U.S.S. PIRANHA set sail on her first war patrol, in company with U.S.S. GUARDFISH and THRESHES, in the wolfpack known as the "Mickey Finns". The U.S.S. APOGON joined up later. The first patrol was conducted in the Luzon Straits Area, under the Command of Lt. Cdr. RUBLE. The patrol lasted 55 days, during which the PIRANHA sank by torpedoes one loaded 10,000 ton tanker and one loaded 10,000 ton transport out of two separate convoys attacked. PIRANHA's contact report on the second convoy enabled the THRESHES and GUARDFISH to make devastating attacks. After a few depth charge attacks, PIRANHA returned to the advanced base at MAJURO for her first refit. This patrol was deemed successful and all hands received the combat pin from Captain G. E. RUSSELL, CSS 10. Lt. Cdr. RUBLE was awarded the Bronze Star Medal.

The second patrol under Lt. Cdr. RUBLE's command was conducted in the Philippine Sea Area between Palau and Luzon and Okinawa. PIRANHA was part of a scouting line composed of the eleven boats in WILKIN'S ZOO, under command of Captain C. W. WILKINS. After several weeks of fruitless patrolling for the Japanese fleet, she was sent to Luzon Straits for one week. Nothing was found, however, except a few depth charges, so the patrol was deemed unsuccessful. All hands were awarded a bronze star for the area ribbon for the Western Carolines Operation. The second patrol lasted about 58 days, PIRANHA returning to Sub Base, Pearl Harbor for refit.

The third patrol, Lt. Cdr. RUBLE in command, was conducted in the East China Sea off the western coast of Kyushu. Lifeguard services to B-29 strikes were rendered twice. Nothing was received except one Jap bomb. This highly productive area proved dry for PIRANHA until the last night on station, when a convoy was contacted in the rain. A night surface attack resulted in at least damaging two unknown ships. The other members of the pack "BENNET'S BLAZERS", SEA OWL and SEA POACHER, were too far away to get in on the contact. PIRANHA returned to GUAM for refit after a 62 day patrol. Comdr. RUBLE was relieved by Comdr. D. G. IRVINE. This patrol was deemed

In reply refer to:

SS389/

Serial:

San Francisco, California
U. S. S. PIRANHA (SS389)

Care of Fleet Post Office,

6 November 1945.

From: The Commanding Officer.
To : The Secretary of the Navy
(Public Information Office)
Subject: Personnel Data Supplement to Ship's History.
Reference: (a) Alpac 278.

1. In accordance with Alpac 278, the following information is hereby submitted.

(A) List of Commanding Officers.

First, second and third war patrols:
Lieutenant Commander Harold E. RUBLE, U.S. Navy.

Fourth and fifth war patrols
Commander Donald G. IRVINE, U.S. Navy.

- (B) Lt-Comdr. H. E. RUBLE - U.S. Navy - Bronze star medal for sinking 17,800 tons of enemy shipping including one (1) transport and one (1) tanker.
Lt-Comdr. H. E. RUBLE - U.S. Navy - Bronze star medal for damaging 8,000 tons of enemy shipping.
Comdr. D. G. IRVINE - U.S. Navy - Silver star medal for sinking over 10,000 tons of enemy shipping including one (1) tanker, one (1) frigate and three (3) anti-submarine vessels and three (3) luggers.

Others personnel recommended for awards as follows:

Lt. C. B. BISHOP, U.S.N. - 37 Trumbull St., New Haven, Conn. Bronze star medal for duties as Assistant Approach Officer on war patrol.

In reply refer to:

(51)

SS389/

Serial:

SAN FRANCISCO (SS389)

Care of Fleet Post Office,

Lt(jg) A.G. O'LEARY, jr, USN - Wickford, Rhode Island - Letter of Commendation with ribbon for duties as Torpedo and Gunnery officer on war patrol.

Lt(jg) H.N. EKERN, USNR - Mexico, Missouri - Letter of Commendation with ribbon for duties as 40MM gun pointer on war patrol.

HUGHES, Leo T., CRT, USN - 705 South 9th Ave., Yakima, Wash. Bronze star medal for duties as battle radar operator and CPC in charge of electronic equipment., on war patrol.

LEWIS, Donald L., CMOMM, USN 3 San Diego, California. Letter of Commendation with ribbon for duties as CPC in charge of engine rooms on war patrol.

GUNN, Thomas P., TMLc, USN Forest Hills, Long Island, N.Y. Letter of Commendation with ribbon for duties as petty officer in charge of after torpedo room on war patrol.

D. G. IRVINE

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