

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

HISTORY OF SHIPS NAMED THRESHER

USS THRESHER (SS(N)-593) is the second ship of the Fleet to be named for a shark of the family Alopiidae. Known scientifically as Alopias vulpinus (Bonnaterre), the Thresher is easy to recognize because its tail is longer than the combined length of its head and body, and the first dorsal fin does not extend backward to the pelvic fin. The Thresher derives its name from the supposed habit of using its tail to beat the water or a compact school of fish, stunning some of the fish and eating the injured ones. Harmless to man, the maximum length of the Thresher is more than 20 feet.

The first THRESHER (SS-200) was built by the Electric Boat Company of Groton, Connecticut. Her keel was laid 27 April 1939 and she was launched 27 March 1940, under the sponsorship of Mrs. Claud Jones, wife of Captain Jones under whose supervision THRESHER was constructed. The fleet submarine was commissioned at New London on 21 August 1940, Lieutenant Commander William L. Anderson, USN, in command.

THRESHER was temporarily assigned to the Atlantic Squadron and after local operations, cleared New London on 25 October 1940 for engineering tests in Gravesend Bay, New York, thence by way of Hampton Roads to Pensacola, Florida, for operations off Dry Tortugas Flats. This duty was followed by a visit to Houston, Texas, and shakedown training exercises in the Gulf of San Blas out of Coco Solo, Panama Canal. She returned by way of Savannah, Georgia and Lynhaven Roads to the Portsmouth Navy Yard on 21 December 1940 for final alterations, followed by tests and exercises out to New London off Fort Pond Bay, New York; and, Block Island Sound. A unit of a striking group, she put to sea from New London on 14 February 1941 for a cruise off Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, returning to New London on 23 March for more exercises off Block Island Sound. She visited the Naval Academy at Annapolis where she received Rear Admiral Willson on board as a guest on 30 April 1941 and was underway for sea on 1 May for duty in the Pacific. Transiting the Panama Canal and touching at San Diego (16-26 May), she arrived in Pearl Harbor on the 31st for operations in Hawaiian waters as a unit of Division 61, Squadron 6, Submarines, U. S. Pacific Fleet. On 21 October 1941, in company with submarine TAUTOG, she cleared Pearl Harbor to conduct the first full time, simulated war patrol made by Pacific Submarines. Both THRESHER and TAUTOG carried a full torpedo load as they cruised submerged under war-time conditions off Midway Atoll.

THRESHER was returning from her simulated war patrol to Pearl Harbor, when at 0810, 7 December 1941, she received word that hostile action by the Japanese had commenced with an air raid on Pearl Harbor. Under the escort of destroyer LITCHFIELD, she released that destroyer with intentions of joining a surface task force searching for Yamamoto's Japanese carrier force. As the destroyer faded from view and she was submerging, she picked up a radio dispatch cautioning her not to release her escort and she promptly sent a radio message to LITCHFIELD arranging for a rendezvous point which she reached two hours later. She found a destroyer but soon discovered it was not LITCHFIELD when her conning tower broke the surface and she was met by a hail of gunfire from one of the American destroyers of the keyed-up defense force of Pearl Harbor. She headed for deep water and stayed away from the harbor entrance until the morning of 8 December when she was again driven down, this time by "friendly" planes. Destroyer THORNTON finally steamed out to escort her home and she entered her base after the noon hour of 8 December 1941.

THRESHER departed Pearl Harbor on 30 December 1941 to conduct her second war patrol in waters of the Marshall and Mariana Islands. After reconnaissance of Majuro, Arno and Mili Atoll in the Marshalls (9-23 January 1942), she took station off Guam in the early morning darkness of 4 February for identical mission in the Marianas. A little before daybreak she scored a hit on a freighter about seven miles north of Agaña Harbor. The next six days were spent searching waters between Tinian and Rota Islands and reconnaissance of these and other Marianas Islands. She terminated her second war patrol at Pearl Harbor on 26 February 1942.

By the time of THRESHER's third war patrol, enough data had been gathered by pioneer patrols into waters of the Japanese Empire to facilitate the planning of the first American air strike at the Japanese homeland. Her third patrol was spent in a study of weather conditions which were of vital importance for such an undertaking. She put to sea from Pearl Harbor on 23 March 1942 for Empire waters where she was to act as aerographer and forecaster, and terminated this duty on 10 April with the blast of a single torpedo which broke in two the 3,000-ton Japanese freighter SADO MARU off Yokohama Harbor a few miles south of Tokyo. That enemy went under in less than three minutes after being hit (34°-51' 45" N; 141°-28' 30" E) and THRESHER went deep to escape depth charges apparently dropped by small boats which had accompanied the freighter. She moved to a safer zone to relay her weather observations, of vital interest to aircraft carrier USS HORNET, the "Shangri-La" from whose flight deck Colonel Jimmy Doolittle led his sixteen Army Bombers, the morning of 18 April, for the historic bombing missions over Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka and Kobe. THRESHER returned to Pearl Harbor on 29 April 1942 and entered the Navy Yard for two months of overhaul.

THRESHER spent her fourth war patrol in waters adjacent to the Palau and Marshall Islands. She stood out of Pearl Harbor on 26 June 1942 and moved in on an enemy tanker off Enijun Pass on 6 July. She observed a torpedo hit the target near the stern and dense smoke rose as a muffled explosion was heard and felt. She moved away from two escorts and returned for a second try when she was spotted by enemy aircraft. She dodged twenty-two aerial bombs for the next three hours and continued her search between Kwajalein and Wotje Atolls. At a point midway between these atolls on 9 July, she fired two torpedoes and was rewarded by the sight of the exploding SHINSHO MARU, a 4,836-ton motor torpedo boat tender (08°-43' N; 167°-33' E). Tremendous explosions shook the sea as that enemy went under. THRESHER retired to the southwest to wait out the prowling escorts on the bottom. Within the hour she was shaken by two close depth charge explosions and ten minutes later her men could hear the banging and clanking as a giant grapnel struck the starboard side of THRESHER and moved aft where it caught. She fought for her life in a high-speed run of ten minutes with full right rudder to shake herself free, then went on to deeper water as a depth charge exploded forward of her conning tower. A bending and twisting turn soon left the sound of nearly thirty other exploding depth charges far behind. Shaken but not seriously damaged, THRESHER made minor repairs as she headed towards Truk under the cover of night to reconnoiter the various passes into the lagoon of that enemy fleet base. She missed a freighter when three torpedoes passed under that target the night of 20 July, then surfaced in a rain squall before daybreak of the 21st. Her soundman picked up screws fairly close; soon a patrol vessel was sighted on collision course, 400 yards away. Luck was with THRESHER; the enemy put his rudder hard right to avoid collision and came to parallel course fifty yards from THRESHER who dived for the safety of the deep as a gun salvo hit the water ahead. She escaped by silent running to patrol off the Palau Islands and had a close call with a submarine decoy "Q-ship" off Ambon Island, on 4 August 1942. Two torpedoes fired at this enemy failed to detonate; eight depth charges exploded close to THRESHER before the "Q-ship" gave up the search. THRESHER terminated her fourth war patrol at Fremantle, Australia, where she arrived on 15 August 1942 for duty as a unit of the Southwest Pacific Submarine Force.

THRESHER was one of the first submarines sent out to mine the enemy's waters. Loaded with thirty-two mines, she departed Fremantle on 12 September 1942, headed for the northernmost waters of the Gulf of Siam. Enroute on 19 September, she took time out to attack two freighters north of Lombok Strait for unknown results, and on the night of the 25th, in the Sulu Sea, missed a large ship when a single torpedo passed under that high-speed target. She surfaced an hour before midnight on a course that took her north of Pearl Bank, and in the northernmost reaches of the

Gulf of Siam, on 16 October 1942, made the first mine plant of the Pacific war. These strategic mine plants by THRESHER and other submarines covered important Japanese shipping lanes which had been previously patrolled by submarines of the Southwest Pacific Force. These would be a kind of bridge in the gap of patrols along the coastal waters of Malaya, Siam, and Indo-China while many Southwest Pacific Submarines were diverted to meet the emergency in the Solomon Islands.

THRESHER reconnoitered off Balikpapan, Borneo and the Celebes coast before 29 October 1942 when she found a two-island motor tanker aground on the reef off Kapoposang Island in the Java Sea. She battle-surfaced for a gun attack which left that enemy with decks awash and returned to her base at Fremantle on 12 November 1942.

THRESHER conducted her sixth war patrol in the Makassar Strait, Java and Flores Seas. She got underway from Fremantle on 16 December 1942 and while off Surabaya on 25 December, intercepted a convoy of freighters, escorted by two destroyers, several corvettes, and two aircraft. She slipped past the escorts and sent five torpedoes streaking towards the first three ships in the convoy, hearing two successive torpedo explosions. When she came to periscope depth she observed the second ship in column down by the bow and the entire stern was lifted out of the water with the screws still revolving. A second ship was enveloped in a pall of smoke (6°-38' S; 112°-44' E). The next night she sighted a strong enemy task force and tried to close a first class enemy carrier in a surface chase but was forced to dive and was held down by a prowling destroyer for more than an hour while the task force faded into the night.

THRESHER took up surface chase of the 3000-ton freighter HACHIAN MARU the night of 29 December. She twice sent a spread of torpedoes straight for that target before midnight, only to have them miss or pass under the target. Waiting for the moonrise, she pressed home a surface gun attack, outmaneuvering the enemy who turned to ram, and scoring eight hits amidships near the waterline to stop the target dead in the water. A single torpedo burst into HACHIAN MARU without exploding and she took a heavy list to starboard and went down stern first (4°-45' S; 113°-54' E). THRESHER returned to Fremantle on 10 January 1943.

THRESHER cleared Fremantle on 25 January 1943 to conduct her seventh war patrol. An hour before high noon of 14 February she discovered a Japanese submarine of the I-65 class to the east of Thwartway Island only to have a dud torpedo hit home and another explode on the ocean bottom, well clear of the target. The enemy turned north while firing deck guns at random and was soon lost from sight. On 17 February THRESHER reconnoitered Flying Fish Cove off Christmas Island, accomplishing a special mission which included photographs of docks, houses, phosphate loading

areas, and gun emplacements. Moving on to the Flores Sea, she intercepted a three-ship convoy with two escorts on 21 February and let go with a salvo of two lethal torpedoes which exploded under the 5,724-ton Japanese freighter KUWAYAMA MARU. THRESHER evaded thirteen depth charges, then came back to periscope depth a little more than an hour later to observe her target dead in the water and barges carrying troops from this enemy to a second transport lying to. She closed for the kill as escorts searched the nearby ocean and let go with three torpedoes towards the undamaged transport and dived to the sound of two distant explosions. On 22 February she sighted the abandoned transport she had first attacked, and after being forced down by aerial bombs, finished off that enemy with a torpedo which broke the target in two and sent KUWAYAMA MARU to the bottom in a "V" shape inside of three minutes ($8^{\circ} - 15' S$; $119^{\circ} - 15' E$).

THRESHER intercepted a tanker and a freighter on 2 March 1943, scoring a hit with a single torpedo in the stern of the 5,232-ton tanker TOEN MARU. As that enemy settled beneath the water ($3^{\circ} - 29' S$; $117^{\circ} - 17' E$) THRESHER turned her attention to the freighter who spotted the torpedo wakes and dodged to avoid being hit. The latter enemy escaped while THRESHER was held at bay by an escort. She returned to Fremantle the morning of 10 March 1943.

THRESHER got underway from Fremantle on 4 April 1943 to spend much of her eighth war patrol off Surabaya and in the traffic lanes in the vicinity of Saleier Island. She searched Wajo Bay of Buton Island on 27 April without finding signs of the enemy and missed a small freighter as it headed through Buton Passage the next day. She cleared the Timor area on 20 May and returned to Fremantle on 23 May 1943.

THRESHER departed Fremantle on 19 June 1943 on her ninth war patrol and set course for the coast of Balikpapan, Borneo. She closed three ships under escort of a destroyer the night of 30 June and went unrewarded after a try with three torpedoes. Dodging the depth charges of the escort, she continued tracking with radar and moved in for two hits which left a tanker ablaze from stem to stern and sent the 5,274-ton passenger-freighter YONEYAMA MARU to the bottom ($00^{\circ} - 20' N$; $119^{\circ} - 32' E$).

On the morning of 5 July 1943 THRESHER was headed for Tambu Bay, tracking a tanker which was under the watchful eye of an escort. She chased this target along the Celebes coast to the northeast, and when the destroyer escort left the tanker, she closed to fire a spread of three torpedoes. One hit resounded in the bow of that enemy who held THRESHER at bay with her deck gun and finally escaped at high speed. On 9 July 1943 THRESHER arrived off Catmon Point of Negros Island. During the cover of night she delivered five hundred pounds of stores, and 40,000 rounds of ammunition to commandos, her crew voluntarily giving

their rations of cigarettes, matches, soap, candy and other personal gear to these brave men. She received intelligence documents in return and was underway a few hours before midnight to resume her patrol. She touched at Midway (26 July) and at Pearl Harbor (30 July-1 August), bound for the Mare Island Navy Yard where she arrived on 8 August for a major overhaul. She steamed out of San Francisco Bay on 8 October and entered Pearl Harbor on 15 October 1943 to prepare for her tenth war patrol.

THRESHER stood out of Pearl Harbor on 1 November 1943 for her tenth war patrol and topped off with fuel and water at Johnston Island on 3 November before heading for waters to the north of Truk, Caroline Islands. She commenced chase of a five-ship convoy the morning of 12 November and slipped past two prowling escorts fifteen minutes after midnight to press home her attack. She was rewarded by three hits from a spread of three torpedoes which sank the 4,862-ton Japanese transport MUKO MARU ($8^{\circ}-57' N$; $152^{\circ}-36' E$). One minute later she let go with three torpedoes at another freighter but they missed. The escorts hunted for her in vain and dropped twenty depth charges in the distant sea. Trouble with her hydraulic system forced her to terminate this patrol. She returned to Midway Island on 29 November 1943 to effect repairs.

THRESHER put to sea from Midway on 30 December 1943 to conduct her eleventh war patrol. In the Luzon Straits on 10 January 1944 she destroyed a 150-ton trawler with gunfire, then searched on the Empire-Singapore traffic lanes. On 15 January she closed an aircraft carrier but was detected upon her approach and held down by a destroyer. Three hours later she sighted a four-ship convoy guarded by a single submarine chaser. She trailed this enemy convoy until the dark of night then closed in on the surface and fired a salvo of four torpedoes. Two hits blew off the stern of one target which went down like a rock. Five minutes later THRESHER scored three hits on another target which was blown to bits. These victims were the 6,960-ton freighter TATSUNO MARU and the 4,092-ton freighter TCHO MARU, sunk in (Latitude $19^{\circ}-45' N$; $120^{\circ}-40' E$). On 26 January she scored another double on the Taiwan-Palau route when she sent to the bottom the 1,266-ton freighter KIKUZUKI MARU and the 2,205-ton KOSEI MARU ($22^{\circ}-11' N$; $119^{\circ}-12' E$). The remaining ship of this convoy bent on frantic speed and sent five-inch shells in all directions as THRESHER lined up another target and slowed her down with a hit, followed by a tremendous explosion. The impact of the explosion actuated THRESHER's four main engines' overspeed trips, cork flew, lights broke, clocks stopped, and water poured down her antenna trunk. By the time she was back in commission the target was far to the south.

THRESHER abandoned the chase as a clear dawn broke and found her only ninety miles from the coast of Takao where an intensive air and surface search was highly probable. The surface patrols of the enemy reached her area by noon but gave up after only three hours of churning the distant sea

with depth charges. THRESHER touched at Midway on 14 February and terminated her eleventh war patrol on 18 February 1944 at Pearl Harbor.

THRESHER departed Pearl Harbor for her twelfth war patrol on 18 March 1944 setting course for the Caroline Islands. She arrived on her assigned lifeguard station fifty miles south of Truk on 18 March 1944 to watch for downed aviators during the air strikes on that enemy bastion until 4 April, then conducted photographic reconnaissance of the Nomoi Islands from 5 to 8 April 1944. She took photographs of Oruluk Island on 11 April and bombarded the beach area in the vicinity of an observation tower without drawing return fire of the enemy. During further reconnaissance she found military development on Satawan Island. She took lifeguard station for the air strikes on Satawan the 19th of April, then shifted to lifeguard station on 27 April and terminated her twelfth war patrol at Pearl Harbor on 8 May 1944.

THRESHER formed a coordinated attack group with PIRANHA, APOGON and GUARDFISH on her thirteenth war patrol. Known as the "Micky Finns", this wolf pack left Pearl Harbor on 14 June 1944, heading for "Convoy College" a newly established patrol area laying across principal convoy routes between Formosa, Luzon and the Asiatic mainland.

On 16 July THRESHER, acting on contact report from PIRANHA, intercepted a four-ship convoy under escort of two destroyers. In quick succession she let go with three torpedoes at the escort, three at a leading freighter, then swung to send four torpedoes streaking for a second freighter in column. She heard six timed explosions as she maneuvered to avoid counterattack, moving in again after midnight to finish the job. She fired two torpedoes at a destroyer, three at a freighter and three more at a target believed to be an oiler. She again heard six explosions but her targets remained afloat and she again went deep to escape exploding depth charges. Some five hours before the daybreak of 17 July she made her final play, scoring two hits on one target which sank immediately, while a second target lit up the area with tremendous flames, and after several explosions, also went under. In these attacks, THRESHER was officially credited with the sinking of the 2,205-ton freighter SANEI MARU and the 2,838-ton freighter SHOZAN MARU (19°-04' N; 119°-26' E). She returned to Midway on 27 July 1944 and was awarded the Navy Unit Commendation.

THRESHER put to sea from Midway on 23 August 1944 to conduct her fourteenth war patrol off the Japanese home islands. She reached her station off Kyushu on 3 September and on 18 September scored a hit on a freighter despite the presence of an air escort overhead. She escaped without damage from five aerial bombs and went on to attack a convoy of one freighter, one cruiser and three escorts the night of 18 September 1944. Three hours before midnight she sent a salvo of six torpedoes for the cruiser but these ran ahead of the intended target. A second salvo hit the 6,854-ton

freighter GYOKU MARU which broke in two (35°-05' N; 124°-33' E), the stern section going down immediately and the bow section slowly sinking into the sea. THRESHER missed a destroyer with four torpedoes before 0100 19 September and fired four others during the night of 26 September to sink the 1,468-ton freighter NISSEI MARU (37°-32' N; 124°-33' E). She expended the last of her torpedoes in the early morning darkness on 26 September 1944 when she sank the 873-ton freighter KOETSU MARU (37°-13' N; 123°-48' E). THRESHER returned to Pearl Harbor on 12 October 1944 for an extensive overhaul which was completed on 8 January 1945.

THRESHER put to sea for her fifteenth and last war patrol on 31 January 1945. Steaming from Pearl Harbor in a wolf pack which included PETO and SHAD, she touched at Saipan Harbor, 12-13 February, then set course for patrol area north of Luzon, Philippine Islands. Only two contacts could be developed for torpedo attack during this patrol, one missing because of the shallow draft of the target, and the other missing when the target made a nimble maneuver. She shelled the docks of the town of Basco, Bataan Island, on 28 March 1945, touched at Saipan (4-5 April), and returned to Pearl Harbor on 25 April 1945.

THRESHER steamed out of Pearl Harbor on 30 April 1945 to commence a schedule of special target training exercises with aircraft and surface units in the Hawaiian area until 10 July when she put to sea for identical training duty while based at Eniwetok Atoll of the Marshall Islands (20 July-16 September 1945). She got underway from Eniwetok on 16 September 1945 and steamed by way of Pearl Harbor (22-26 September) for return to the United States. She arrived in San Francisco, California on 3 October 1945 and visited Oakland (15-31 October) before setting course for the east coast by way of the Panama Canal. She entered the Portsmouth Navy Yard, New Hampshire, on 20 November and reported for inactivation. She was placed out of commission on 13 December 1945 and recommissioned in the Portsmouth Navy Yard on 6 February 1946, Commander Harry M. Lindsay, Jr., USN, in command. She remained at her berth with a reduced complement of men who were engaged in preservation work on the Target Group submarines in the Portsmouth Navy Yard and was decommissioned for the final time on 12 July 1946. Her name was stricken from the Navy list on 23 December 1947 and she was sold for scrapping on 18 March 1948 to Max Siegel of Everett, Massachusetts.

THRESHER (SS-200) earned the Navy Unit Commendation and fifteen battle stars for the operations listed below:

1 Star/PEARL HARBOR-MIDWAY: 7 Dec 1941

1 Star/SECOND WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 30 Dec 1941-28 Feb 1942

1 Star/THIRD WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 23 Mar 1942-30 Apr 1942

- 1 Star/FOURTH WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 26 Jun 1942-15 Aug 1942
- 1 Star/FIFTH WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 9 Sep 1942-12 Nov 1942
- 1 Star/SIXTH WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 3 Dec 1942-10 Jan 1943
- 1 Star/SEVENTH WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 26 Jan 1943-10 Mar 1943
- 1 Star/NINTH WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 19 Jun 1943-30 Jul 1943
- 1 Star/TENTH WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 1-29 Nov 1943
- 1 Star/ELEVENTH WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 30 Dec 1943-18 Feb 1944
- 1 Star/TWELFTH WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 18 Mar 1944-8 May 1944
- 1 Star/THIRTEENTH WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 14 Jun 1944-27 Jul 1944
- 1 Star/FOURTEENTH WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 23 Aug-12 Oct 1944
- 1 Star/IWO JIMA OPERATION:
Assault and Occupation of Iwo Jima: 19 Feb-16 Mar 1945
- 1 Star/OKINAWA GUNTO OPERATION:
Assault and Occupation of Okinawa Gunto: 17-29 Mar 1945
- NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION:
14 Jun-27 Jul 1944 - 13th War Patrol, Luzon Strait area

LIST OF COMMANDING OFFICERS

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|---|-------------------------|
| Lieutenant Commander William L. Anderson, USN: | 27 Aug 1940-22 Jun 1942 |
| Lieutenant Commander William J. Millican, USN: | 22 Jun 1942-10 Mar 1943 |
| Lieutenant Commander Harry Hull, USN: | 10 Mar 1943-21 Dec 1943 |
| Commander Duncan C. MacMillan, USN: | 21 Dec 1943-24 Jul 1944 |
| Lieutenant Commander John R. Middleton, Jr., USN: | 24 Jul 1944-11 May 1945 |
| Lieutenant Commander Douglas N. Syerson, USN: | 11 May 1945-13 Dec 1945 |
| Commander Harry M. Lindsay, Jr., USN: | 6 Feb 1946-12 Jul 1946 |

The second THRESHER (SS(N)-593), lead ship or prototype of the Navy's newest class of nuclear-powered attack submarines, was built by the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Her keel was laid 28 May 1958 and she was launched 9 July 1960, under the sponsorship of Mrs. Frederick B. Warder, wife of Rear Admiral Warder, USN, Commandant of the Eighth Naval District and former Commander Submarine Force, U. S. Atlantic Fleet.

THRESHER was commissioned on 3 August 1961 at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. Commander Deane W. Axene, USN, a Bronze Star winner, assumed command of the new submarine in traditional ceremonies before several hundred invited guests, Navy officials, and employees of the shipyard. Rear Admiral Carle F. Espe, USN, Commandant, First Naval District, commissioned THRESHER. Others participating in the ceremonies included Vice Admiral Harold T. Deutermann, USN, Chief of Staff and Aide to NATO's Supreme Allied Commander; Vice Admiral Elton W. Grenfell, USN, Commander, Submarine Force, U. S. Atlantic Fleet; and Rear Admiral Charles J. Palmer, USN, Commander Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. Admiral Deutermann was the principal speaker at the commissioning ceremonies.

THRESHER, the lead ship of an advanced class of nuclear attack submarines, was equipped with the latest in sonar and weapons, that gave her unusual flexibility, maneuverability, speed and stealth. Her Albacore-type hull design helped her develop extremely high speed and deep-depth operations. Her equipment included a new remote control torpedo firing and handling system with torpedo tubes amidships instead of bow and stern. Prior to her commissioning in May 1961, in sea trials she set a new diving record for United States submarines. THRESHER was capable of diving deeper and running more quietly at high speed than any United States submarine previously built. She cruised 2900 miles during four sets of sea trials prior to commissioning.

On 10 August 1961 THRESHER departed Portsmouth for self and radiated noise trails which took up the balance of the month. These trials were followed by Torpedo Tube Acceptance Trials out of Newport, Rhode Island, participation in Fleet nuclear submarine versus submarine exercises and a three-week availability in the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard which ended in October 1961.

THRESHER again departed Portsmouth on 18 October 1961 for shakedown training that included an operational visit to San Juan, Puerto Rico. She next conducted Bureau of Ships Standardization and Stability and Control Trials and test firings of her torpedo system. She returned to the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard on 29 November 1961 for a restricted availability that gave her crew opportunity for Christmas and New Year's holiday leaves. In seven months of operations which had followed her initial sea trials, THRESHER had spent over 2100 hours underway and steamed nearly 18,400 miles.

On 8 February 1962 THRESHER commenced a special two week evaluation of her advanced sonar system. She then proceeded to the Naval Ammunition Depot at Earle, New Jersey, to take part in an evaluation of the logistic support required for the submarine rocket missile. During the month of March 1962, she participated in two important exercises. The first of these was an exercise with Task Force Alfa, one of the Navy's special anti-submarine hunter-killer forces. The second half of March was spent in a submarine versus submarine exercise designed to improve the tactical anti-submarine warfare capabilities of nuclear submarines.

In April 1962 THRESHER gave a demonstration of her unique combat potential for the U. S. Naval Anti-submarine Warfare Council, a board of senior officers headed by Vice Admiral Robert B. Pirie, USN. Following this demonstration, on 10 April, she provided the climax of the 62nd anniversary of United States Submarine Operations. She participated in exercises in Charleston, South Carolina which allowed local officials, including Commander Submarine Flotilla Four, the Commander, Charleston Naval Shipyard, the Commandant of the Sixth Naval District, and the Lieutenant Governor of South Carolina, to observe the unique qualities of the Navy's newest attack submarine.

Upon her return to New London from Charleston, THRESHER underwent a one month restricted availability at Electric Boat in preparation for firing trials of the submarine rocket missile at Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

On Sunday morning 3 June 1962, one of the tugs assisting THRESHER in mooring at Port Canaveral suffered a failure of her engine control system and holed one of THRESHER's port ballast tanks.

Following repairs at Electric Boat, THRESHER conducted trials for gathering data that would help keep her the Navy's quietest submarine. She next proceeded to Key West, Florida to undergo a series of trials and tests.

On 16 July 1962 THRESHER returned to the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard for post-shakedown availability to be completed in the Spring of 1963. She left the yard the morning of 9 April 1963 for post-repair trials which would include deep diving.

On the morning of 10 April 1963, THRESHER, escorted by submarine rescue ship SKYLARK, went down for a test dive in waters some 220 miles east of Boston. In addition to sixteen officers and 96 men, she carried seventeen civilian technicians. She was under command of Lieutenant Commander John Harvey, USN, who had served in the nuclear-powered submarine NAUTILUS during her first historic cruise under the North Pole.

Less than a quarter of an hour after reaching test depth, THRESHER messaged SKYLARK of minor difficulty, followed by notification that she had a positive "up angle" and was attempting to surface. A noise like the rush of air into airtanks was followed by a garbled report which included the words "test depth." Efforts to re-establish communications between the submarine and SKYLARK were in vain as THRESHER went down in waters some 1400 fathoms deep. The submarine rescue ship RECOVERY later found and followed an oil slick, picking up debris which included cork and plastic which was identified as material used in the internal construction of submarines of THRESHER's type. Among other items found in the area were two yellow gloves, two bottles containing liquid and a tube of "Baker's Flavoring." Seven ships probed the depths without success as the Nation mourned the loss of her valiant submariners.

The grief and tribute of the Nation was mirrored by Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral George W. Anderson when he stated: "129 gallant Navy men, operators and builders alike, went down to the sea for their last voyage Wednesday in THRESHER. That the rest of us might profit by the dedication, experience and selfless sacrifice, I propose that in our Easter Sunday Services throughout the world, afloat and ashore, on ship and stations of our Navy, we give thanks that such men did serve in this the greatest Navy on earth. Further, I would have us pray for the strength and understanding now needed by those loved ones left ashore." Thousands joined in memorial services to the valiant submariners on Easter Sunday as Secretary of the Navy Fred W. Korth brought condolences from the Defense Department. "The entire nation and the people of the Free World as well mourn the brave men of the THRESHER," he said. So as people over the world prayed for one hundred twenty-nine defenders of freedom and liberty, a Navy plane circled the last known position of THRESHER, dropping in tribute a floral replica of the lost submarine.

Throughout the world, nations, newspapers, and individuals paid tribute to these brave men who represent all their shipmates who go down to the dangers of the sea. One of the most moving was in a newspaper illustration of the vast empty sea with these verses written across it: "The soul stands shivering on the ridge of life; with what a dreadful curiosity does she launch out into the sea of vast Eternity."

| | (SS-200) | (SS(N)-593) |
|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| LENGTH OVERALL: | 307 feet, 2 inches | 278 feet, 6 inches |
| EXTREME BEAM: (Hull) | 27 feet, 3 inches | 31 feet, 8 inches |
| STANDARD DISPLACEMENT: | | |
| Tons: | 1,475 | 3,750 |
| Mean Draft: | 13 feet, 3 inches | 24 feet, 6 inches |
| SUBMERGED DISPLACEMENT: | | |
| Tons: | 2370 | 4300 |
| DESIGNED DEPTH: | 250 feet | Classified |
| DESIGNED SPEED: | | |
| Surfaced: | 20 knots | Classified |
| Submerged: | 8.75 knots | Classified |
| DESIGNED COMPLEMENT: | | |
| Officers: | 5 | 12 |
| Enlisted: | 54 | 87 |
| ARMAMENT: | | |
| Torpedo Tubes: | (10) 21-inch | |
| Secondary: | (1) 3-inch .50 caliber | Classified |
| | (2) .50 caliber | |
| | (2) .30 caliber | |
| TORPEDOES: | 24 | Classified |











USS THRESHER
COMBAT MUSEUM - 1971
MAY 11, 1940
USS THRESHER, SS-595

