

WAR PATROLS OF THE USS BARB

THIS SUBMARINE AND HER SKIPPER WOULD FIGHT THEIR WAY
INTO WORLD WAR TWO'S HISTORY BOOKS
BY ANDREW TAYLOR

The sleek shape of the USS *Barb* (SS-220) was commissioned on 8 July 1942, at Groton, Connecticut. With America's entry into the Second World War barely eight months old, *Barb* was desperately needed in the fight against what seemed to be unstoppable Axis forces. After her shakedown, *Barb* crossed the Atlantic and participated in Operation *Torch* — the invasion of North Africa and carried out her first through fifth war patrols. However, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Ernest J. King ordered *Barb* to the Pacific during the spring of 1943. The sub

received an extensive refitting while the crew was subjected to intensive training and by fall of 1943 she was on her way to the Pacific. However, her first Pacific war patrol (her sixth overall) was uneventful and this left the officers and men of the *Barb* wondering if they had missed out on all the action — they hadn't.

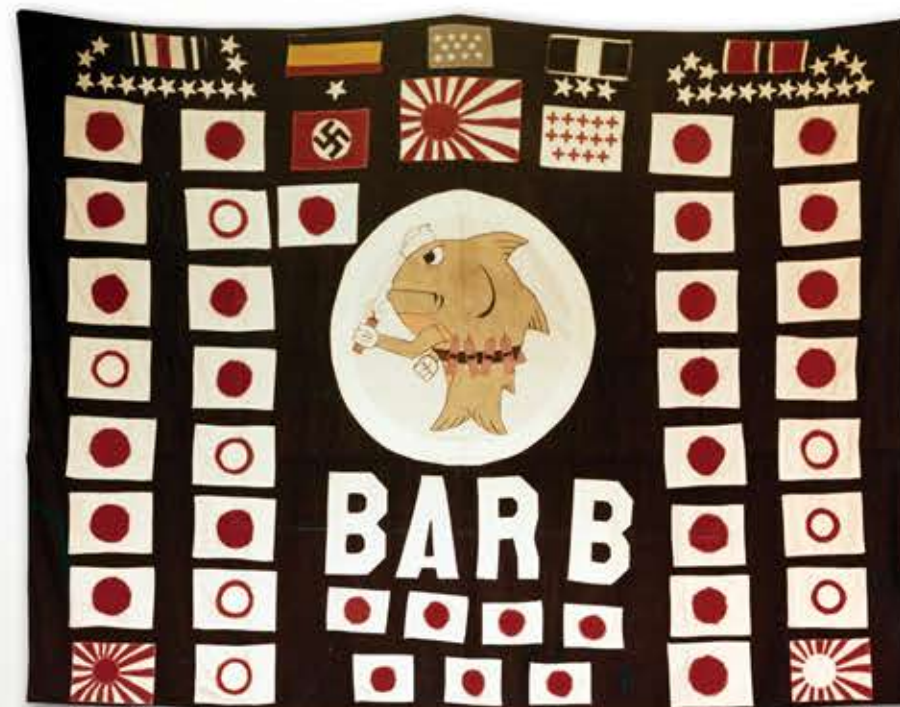
Back for an overhaul and more training, *Barb* set course for the rich shipping lanes west of the Marianas and east of Formosa. Raising her periscope on 28 March 1944, *Barb* spotted the *Fukusei Maru* carrying a load of supplies desperately needed by the Japanese army. Unleashing three torpedoes, the

cargo ship literally jumped out of the water with the explosions. Her back was broken and she sank in a matter of minutes. The crew of the *Barb* was elated — they were now in the war and doing their part to avenge Pearl Harbor.

During the same patrol, *Barb* joined with USS *Steelhead* (SS-280) and the two subs staged a successful bombardment of Rasa Island in the Philippines, blasting a congested industrial area, much to the surprise of the enemy. A direct hit was scored on a phosphate plant, resulting in a massive explosion. More explosions occurred when munition and chemical facilities were hit. With the area in flames, the two subs quietly slipped away

before the enemy could react.

This action was followed by another extensive refit and *Barb* once again got underway, but with a new skipper — Cmdr. Eugene B. "Lucky" Fluckey (a 1935 graduate of the Naval Academy, Fluckey had already undertaken five war patrols with the USS *Bonita*). The submarine headed out to patrol the hostile waters along the Kuril Island chain, the north coast of Hokkaido, and the Sea of Okhotsk. Torpedoes and gun fire sent two sampans and five ships to the bottom. On 31 May, the cargo ship *Koto Maru* was blown out of the water and then *Barb* immediately spotted and attacked the *Madras Maru*, also sending that cargo ship to the bottom with three torpedoes. On 2 June, a lone ship was spotted and attacked, but this enemy was aggressive and outmaneuvered the torpedoes and then attacked the sub with depth charges and gun fire. *Barb* escaped under the ice fields of the northern



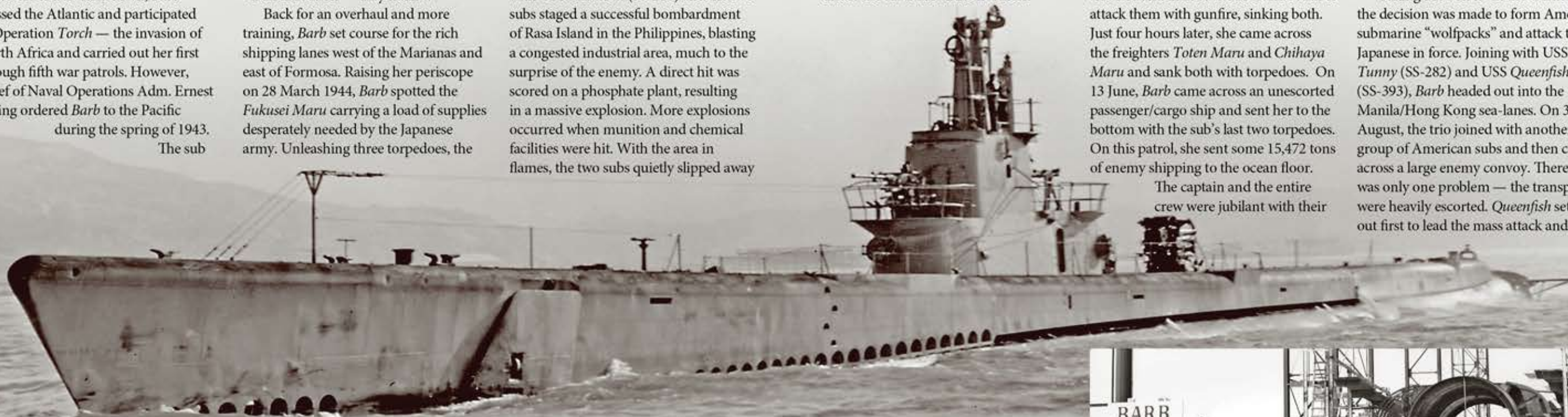
Barb's Battle Flag when SS-220 was commanded by Cmdr. Eugene B. Fluckey.

Kurils. On 11 June, the sub tracked two trawlers and then rose out of the ocean to attack them with gunfire, sinking both. Just four hours later, she came across the freighters *Toten Maru* and *Chihaya Maru* and sank both with torpedoes. On 13 June, *Barb* came across an unescorted passenger/cargo ship and sent her to the bottom with the sub's last two torpedoes. On this patrol, she sent some 15,472 tons of enemy shipping to the ocean floor.

The captain and the entire crew were jubilant with their

victories as they sailed back for refitting.

Taking a lesson from the Germans, the decision was made to form American submarine "wolfpacks" and attack the Japanese in force. Joining with USS *Tunny* (SS-282) and USS *Queenfish* (SS-393), *Barb* headed out into the Manila/Hong Kong sea-lanes. On 31 August, the trio joined with another group of American subs and then came across a large enemy convoy. There was only one problem — the transports were heavily escorted. *Queenfish* set out first to lead the mass attack and fire



Construction begins on *Barb*.

USS *Barb* was laid down on 7 June 1941 at the Electric Boat Company in Groton, Connecticut. Launched on 2 April 1942, she was commissioned on 8 July 1942.