

HIT 'EM HARDER!

THIS HEROIC SUBMARINE AND ITS CREW BECAME KNOWN AS JAPANESE "DESTROYER KILLERS"

BY ROBERT LAWTON

The USS *Harder* (SS-257) was laid down on 1 December 1941 at Groton, Connecticut, by the Electric Boat Company; launched on 19 August 1942; sponsored by Miss Helen M. Shafroth, daughter of R/Adm. John F. Shafroth, Commander, Southeast Pacific Area; and commissioned on 2 December 1942, Cmdr. Samuel D. Dealey in command.

Following shakedown off the East Coast, *Harder* sailed for Coco Solo, Panama Canal Zone, on 26 April 1943.

Steaming in a designated safe transit lane just after noon on 2 May, the submarine sighted a Navy Consolidated PBV-5A Catalina amphibian approximately five miles off her port beam. Unfortunately, the aircraft quickly turned and strafed the boat's starboard side with its .30-caliber machine guns and dropped a bomb

close aboard. Fortunate to escape the encounter, *Harder* moored at the Submarine Base, Coco Solo, two days later at 1425. On the morning of 8 May, the boat transited through the Panama Canal from 0955-1600 and subsequently moored at Pier No. 14, Balboa, Canal Zone, at 1645. After a night's rest, the submarine made for Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii, at 0945 the next morning. *Harder* tied up at Submarine Base, Pearl Harbor just after 1100 on 23 May 1943. Over the next two weeks, dockworkers altered the boat's main engine exhaust valves, installed ready stowage for the submarine's two .50-caliber guns and ammunition, before cleaning, painting and repairing the boat's air tanks. After a three-day training period, the submarine was declared ready for duty.

On 7 June 1943, *Harder* steamed



Insignia of USS *Harder*.



First day cover issued for *Harder's* keel-laying.

Sleek lines of the *Gato*-class USS *Harder* (SS-257) show the wear and tear of combat patrols. The sub was photographed at Mare Island on 7 February 1944 as she underwent overhaul and modifications. The circles indicate areas of work being performed by the Navy yard.