

# SUGAR BOAT AT WAR

TOTALLY OBSOLETE AT THE TIME OF PEARL HARBOR,  
THE S-CLASS SUBMARINES DID THEIR PART TO HELP DEFEAT THE ENEMY  
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They called them "Sugar Boats." The reason was simple—they were the S-class submarines and sailors just used the then-contemporary phonetic alphabet and S was for Sugar. The S-class comprised the bulk of interwar US Navy submarines and they were found in every theater of operations. The S-class was also the first Navy sub capable of open ocean operation but the Navy did not classify them as fleet boats. Previous Navy subs were basically utilized to defend harbors and to patrol coastlines but the S-class would give the Navy a vessel with heavier armament and improved habitability for the crew.

The intelligence arm of the Navy was keeping watch on German U-Boat development during the Great War. These vessels were far exceeding the capabilities of the American Navy's then-current -H-, -K-, -L-, and -N-classes. If Great Britain collapsed, the US Navy's subs would not be able to cross the



S-42 rather inelegantly meets the water upon being launched at the Bethlehem Shipbuilding Corporation by Mrs. Henry A. Hutchins.

Atlantic nor fight if they got there. These failures were the parameters that drove the design that would become the S-class. The Navy wanted a boat of 800 tons, a speed of eleven to 14 knots, and a range of 3400 to 5400 nautical miles.

The S-class would be armed with four 21-inch torpedo tubes and a 4-inch deck gun. The Navy went to its traditional



Jacket patch for S-42/SS-153.



An interesting view taken during the 1930s of S-42 in the foreground with S-44 behind her. Designed during the Great War, the subs were intended for ocean operation and not coastal patrol as had earlier US Navy submarines.