

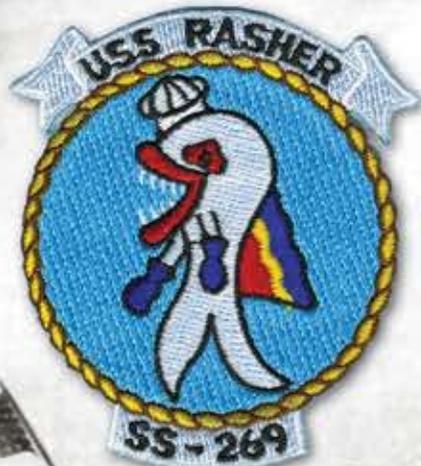
VOYAGES OF THE VENOMOUS VIXEN

THE USS RASHER WOULD STRIKE FEAR INTO THE
HEART OF THE IMPERIAL JAPANESE NAVY

BY KELLY BELL



Employee badge for
Manitowoc Shipbuilding.



Jacket insignia
for SS-269.

The US Navy's attack submarine *Rasher* struck off into her first-ever Pacific war cruise on 24 September 1943. She had slid down the ramp on 20 December 1942, but it took this long to have her birthing mechanical bugs corrected and her crew's training completed. By now, sub and crew were ready for each other.

She was a *Gato*-class boat, her hull number was 269 and — sleek and beautiful as she was — her weight was still an impressive 1806 tons. The 70 men she carried could hardly wait to start firing the 20 greased torpedoes cradled in her racks. (*Rasher* was named

for the rasher, also called the vermilion rockfish, which was a fish found along the California coast.)

Commanded by 39-year-old Cmdr. Edward S. Hutchinson, *Rasher* steamed north from Brisbane, Australia, directly into the volatile Makassar-Celebes region. Ordinarily a rookie crew would be dispatched into a quieter sector, but someone must have sensed the great things in store for this stellar set.

They were off Ambon island on the morning of 9 October when lookouts spied

promising profiles. It was dawn before the Americans were in attack position, but it would be worth the wait. *Rasher* scored her virginal victory when two of her torpedoes sank the 3132-ton cargo/passenger *Kogane Maru*. A second merchantman escaped to shallow water. Knowing this survivor would be filling the airwaves with warnings and calls for help, the submariners returned to the open sea.

Describing an enormous arc in the ocean, the raiders were back off Amdon by the 13th. That afternoon they brazenly ignored two escorting destroyers and an anti-sub Pete floatplane and attacked two large freighters, but the Americans

With a mighty splash, Manitowoc-built USS *Rasher* is side-launched into the water. During the war, four Manitowoc-built boats would be lost: *Golet*, *Kete*, *Lagarto*, and *Robalo* along with 336 men.