

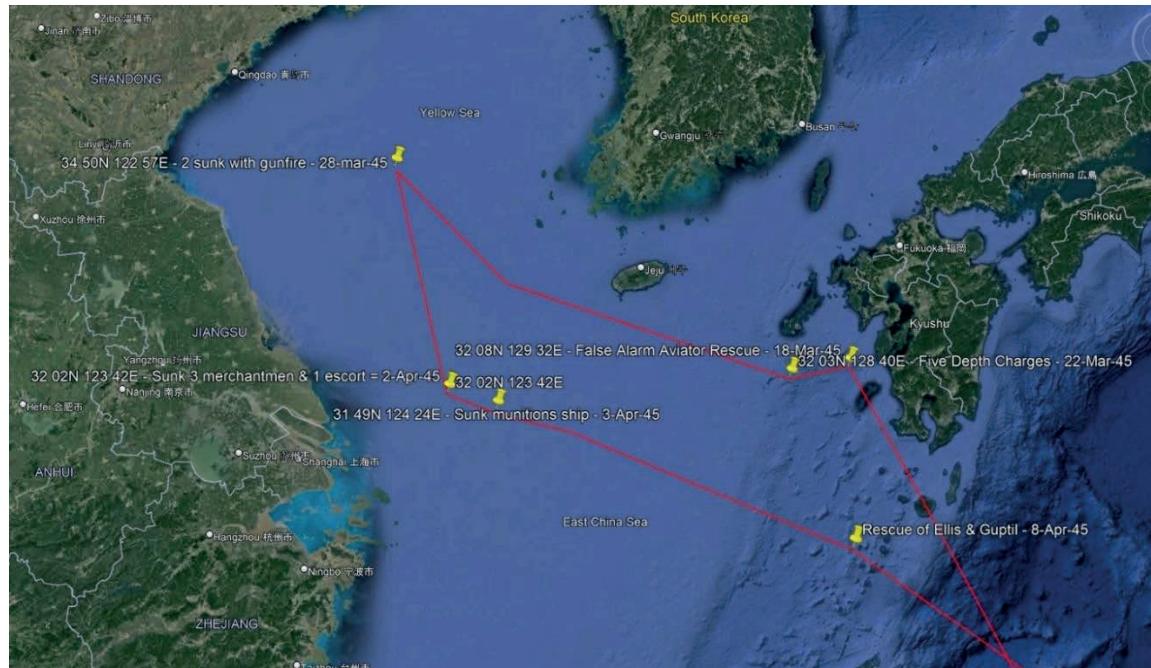
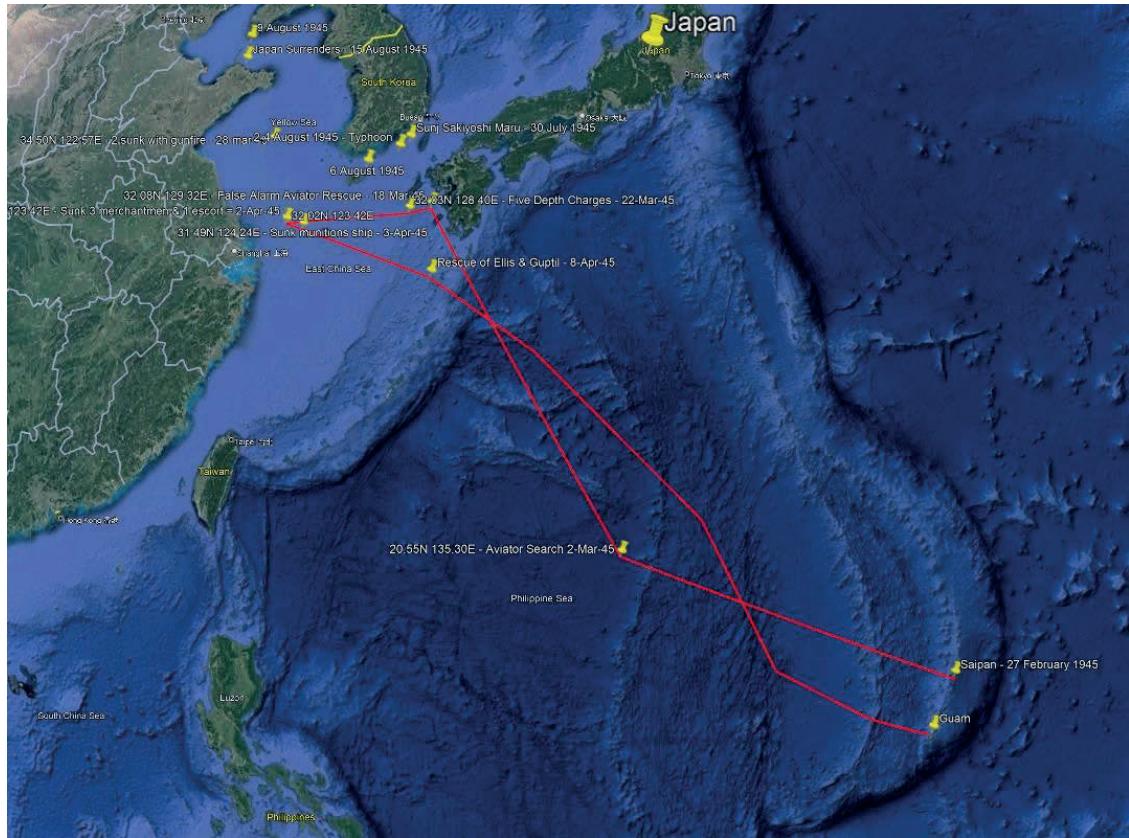
THE FIRST PATROL

On 7 February, 1945, orders came and the Tench departed Pearl Harbor for her first war patrol. The first part was a 3,480 mile, eleven-day sail to Saipan for a fueling stop and to take on Commander Thomas Slack Basket. There was a fueling stop at Saipan where, to assume command of the renowned U.S.S. Haddock, Lt-Cmdr. Strow was detached. Lieut. Turner became “Exec” and Navigator. Here also a wolf-pack, designated “Barney’s Boxers” after Tench’s Captain “Barney” Sieglaff, the pack commander, was formed. U.S.S. Sea Devil, Balao, Grouper and Tench comprised the pack. Patrol was to be made first in the China Sea west of Kyushu, then in the Yellow Sea.



On 27 February 1945 the pack got underway Towards Japan for what would be the first of three patrols for Tench. Her track and actions from leaving Saipan until her return to Guam on 12-April 1945 as reported

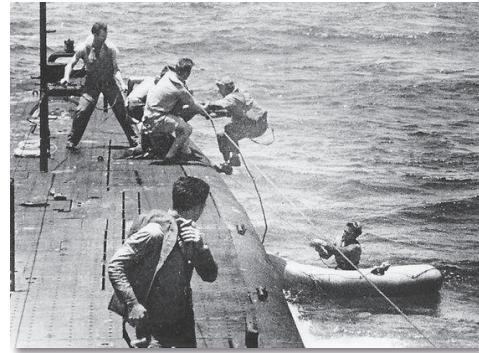
in declassified War Diaries are recorded on these maps (voluminous copies of the declassified War Diaries and Ships logs are attached to this document in appendices) :



Following their first all-day dive in enemy waters, on March 6 They transited Colnett Strait, south of Yaku Shima, and entered the China Sea. It was a stormy night, bitterly cold with driving rain. Their equipment

Showed that Jap radars tracked us through the strait, but the Jap A/S vessels Were not kamikaze; dawn found us passing Danjo Gunto, headed for Saishu To. This was war-patrol. Southeast of us, the Iwo Jima operation was well underway.

The pack was variously engaged in rotating patrol, weather reporting, photographing, and lifeguard duties. In addition to normal reconnaissance and attack duties, submarines were often assigned to monitor the seas below air corridors being used by Allied bombers and their fighter escorts. These assignments, called "lifeguard duties", kept the ships on-call to rescue downed airmen. At last count, nearly 2,400 people can claim that their lives were saved by a U.S. submarine during World War II. Of that number, 523 Allied aviators could claim that distinction after crashing their aircraft into the sea and being saved by a submarine operating in the "Lifeguard League." For the crews of the aircraft, knowing rescues would be quick was a relief. For the crews of the submarines, their elation at making a successful rescue of their fellow soldiers was every bit as strong as it was when they sunk enemy shipping.



Tench, on 18 March, was ordered to take lifeguard station on the west coast of Kyushu as the Fifth Fleet carrier planes were raiding Nagasaki. Late in the morning, search planes told us of sighting a green dye-marker, presumably released by a ditched flyer. The reported position was well inside a bay on the Kyushu coast inside of which was the small town, some manufacturing but mainly a railway junction, of Akune.

Under the protective cover of F6F "Hellcat" fighters, Tench threaded her way cautiously into the shallow waters of the bay. Just after she discovered that the "sighting" had been the result of a reflection of a shoal spot, she received a severe fright. Caught in waters too shallow for her to dive, she proceeded almost helplessly on the surface while a large flight of aircraft approached her from astern. Fortunately, the planes proved to be additional 5th Fleet bombers returning from Nagasaki. Tench stood offshore and watched while they loosed their remaining bombs on installations near Akune: a railroad bridge, a fuel dump, and a factory.

Five minutes later the planes and the Tench were headed for sea.

But the paucity of torpedo targets was frustrating. Much time was spent exploding floating mines which were overly plentiful. It is estimated that Japan laid thousands of mines in the waters around Japan and in the China and Philippines seas during World War II. However, the exact number of mines is difficult to determine with precision as records are incomplete and many of the mines were laid in secret. Additionally, the number of mines laid by Japan varied over time as the war situation changed and different regions became more or less strategically important.





On 28 March they ran down two steam trawlers and sank them with gunfire in an action prolonged by the ship's roll in a heavy sea. The crews came below frozen and soaked with spray, exhausted from clinging to the decks while operating the guns. But jubilant – their first successful offensive action, a big boost for morale.

to alter their intended course considerably, in order to avoid taking water down the conning-tower hatch. Such is the way of fate or luck. That evening, she surfaced once again and soon made radar contact with a good-sized target. Darkness and fog dictated a surface attack. The fact that the enemy ship carried radar-coupled with the appearance of a second target larger than the first, indicted that she was some type of warship escorting a merchantman. For once it was not to prove a sampan or junk.

The larger vessel was their target. One torpedo hit him, setting off a progression of eruptions similar to roman candles; it was impossible to ascertain more hits. The escorts began throwing depth-charges over, but Tench had put her stern to him; he had contact on them in short order and tried hard to overtake the Tench.

He never did!

Tench's report claims that the target, the large cargoman, took one torpedo hit and erupted in a splendid pyrotechnic display. Unfortunately, there is no evidence to confirm the kill.



The Tench received word that the Sea Devil, stationed south of them, had further upheld the pack by sinking three ships and three escorts two days before.

This first war patrol for Tench had begun soon after the invasion of Iwo Jima and continued past the landings on Okinawa. American planners had foreseen the possibility of Japan's attempting to strike back at the Allied forces with what remained of the Imperial surface fleet. Presumably, whatever vessels could still float and shoot would be sent to disrupt the Okinawa landings. They therefore stationed a picket line of submarines off Japan to serve as an early warning system.

Tench received orders to join that group of submarines before concluding this first war patrol. She was on station off the western coast of the Japanese home islands deployed to intercept the Japs' last naval task force reported underway. Tench did not sight the enemy warships because Yamato task force sortied from the Bungo Suido, the eastern exit of Japan to the Inland Sea. That station was assigned to USS Threadfin (SS-410). Seeing no warships to the west, the Tench Commander concluded most of the Japanese planes, subs and the major units were either sunk or irreparably damaged.

When the Threadfin submarine sent her warning, the picket line was disbanded, and each submarine turned to its own individual mission. Some tried to gain advantageous setups on the Yamato force, but Tench cleared the area for an air-sea rescue sweep of the East China Sea before ending her patrol.

On 7 April the Allies had lost several carrier planes in the foray. Tench returned to the China Sea on 8 April to search for downed aviators. The rescue of K.Q. Ellis, Pilot, and F.E. Guptil, Radioman, from a downed dive bomber in the China Sea in 1944, is a remarkable story of bravery and ingenuity.

Lt (jg) Kermit Quentin Ellis and ARM2c Frank Edward Guptill, Jr were attached to Bombing Squadron 83 (VB 83) aboard aircraft carrier USS ESSEX (CV 9). LTGJ Ellis had been flying a Grumman TBF Avenger torpedo bomber mission over Formosa (now Taiwan). The “enemy battleship” noted in the Essex War Diary was Yamato. The War Diary from ESSEX also noted: “Twelve bombers attacked the Japanese battleship Yamato in the East China Sea. Lt (jg) K. Q. Ellis and Guptill, F. E., ARM2c were shot down by anti-aircraft fire.”

They managed to bail out and landed in the sea, but were unable to fully inflate their life raft. They drifted in the open sea for several days, exposed to the elements and with little food and water.

The USS Tench ships log recorded the rescue.



USS Essex



Grumman TBF Avenger

7 April 1945

2300: Received orders from Commander Submarines, Pacific Fleet, for TENCH to search two specific points for aviators

2355: Approaching Kuchino Shima Suido at full speed. Pitch black night 8 April 1945

0231: Completed flank speed transit of Kuchino Shima Suido.

0600: At reported position of downed aviators, vicinity of Gaja Shima, Surface visibility excellent, overcast sky, low ceiling. Began search toward land on reverse bearing of reported position to cover the sector.

0647: Reversed course to return to reported position. Knew current would set life raft to NNE.

0650: At reported position. Commenced search on base course 015°T. Searching on legs 30 degrees to right and left.

0703: Sighted two “Corsairs”. Communicated with them by VHF. They circled and disappeared to the north.

0717: Sighted two life rafts dead ahead. At long last TENCH search attempts rewarded.

0729: Rescued Lieutenant junior grade K. Q. Ellis, USNR, and R. E. Guptill, ARM2c, USN. The former had a bad bump near his eye and the latter a cut on his head. They were cold but very happy. The planes previously sighted had passed right over them without spotting them. They were recovered about 6 miles West of Gaja Shima Light. Both aviation men were off the USS ESSEX, and plane damaged in attack on enemy battleship. They had been in water for about 19 hours.



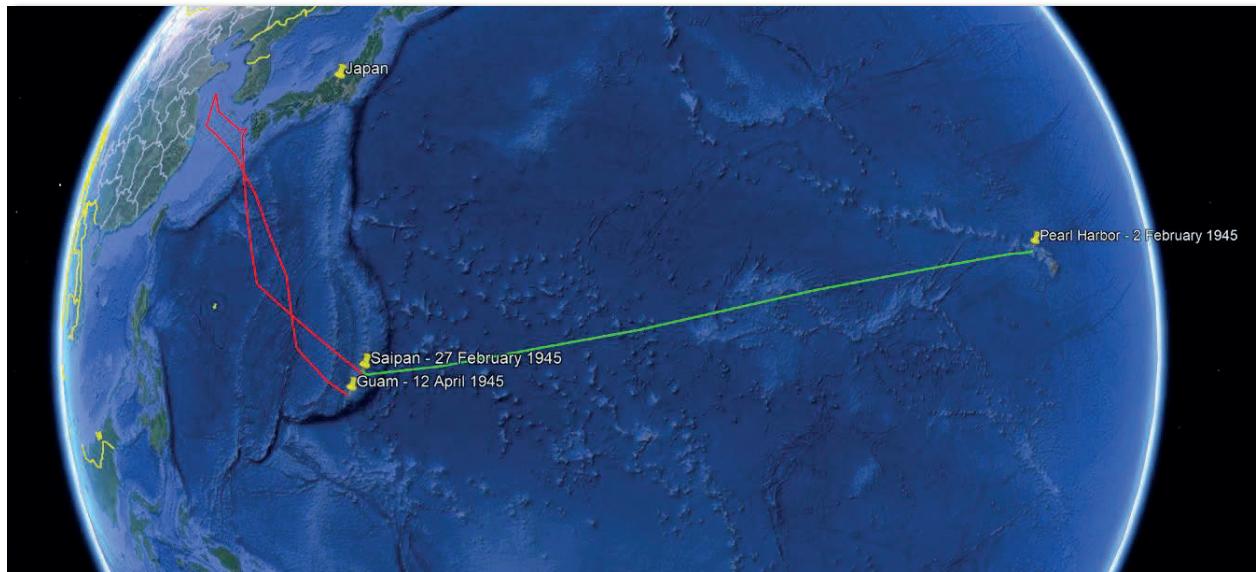
It was not an easy task. Due to the rough seas and the submerged conning tower of the submarine, it was impossible to bring the men on board. The submarine crew came up with an ingenious solution: they constructed a makeshift rescue device using a cargo net and two rubber rafts. The rafts were inflated and secured to the cargo net, which was then lowered into the water. Ellis and Guptil were able to climb onto the rafts and were hoisted aboard the submarine using a winch. They were then given medical attention and transported to safety at Guam.

The Commanding Officer of TENCH put in his narrative:

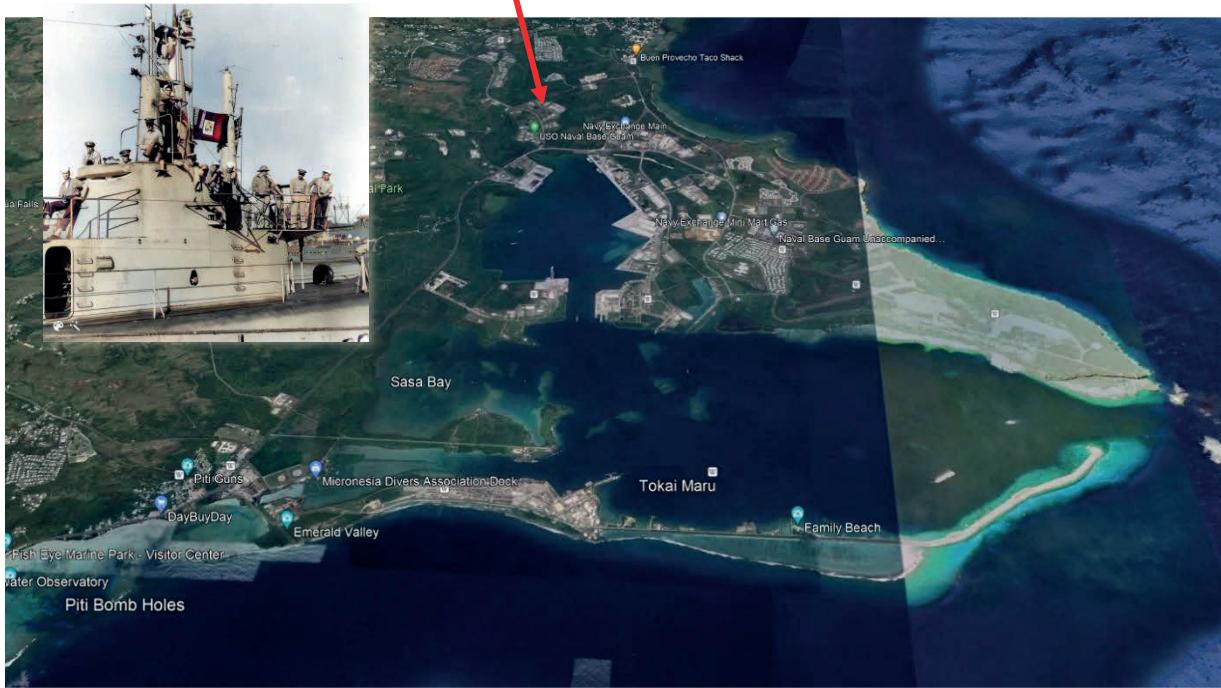
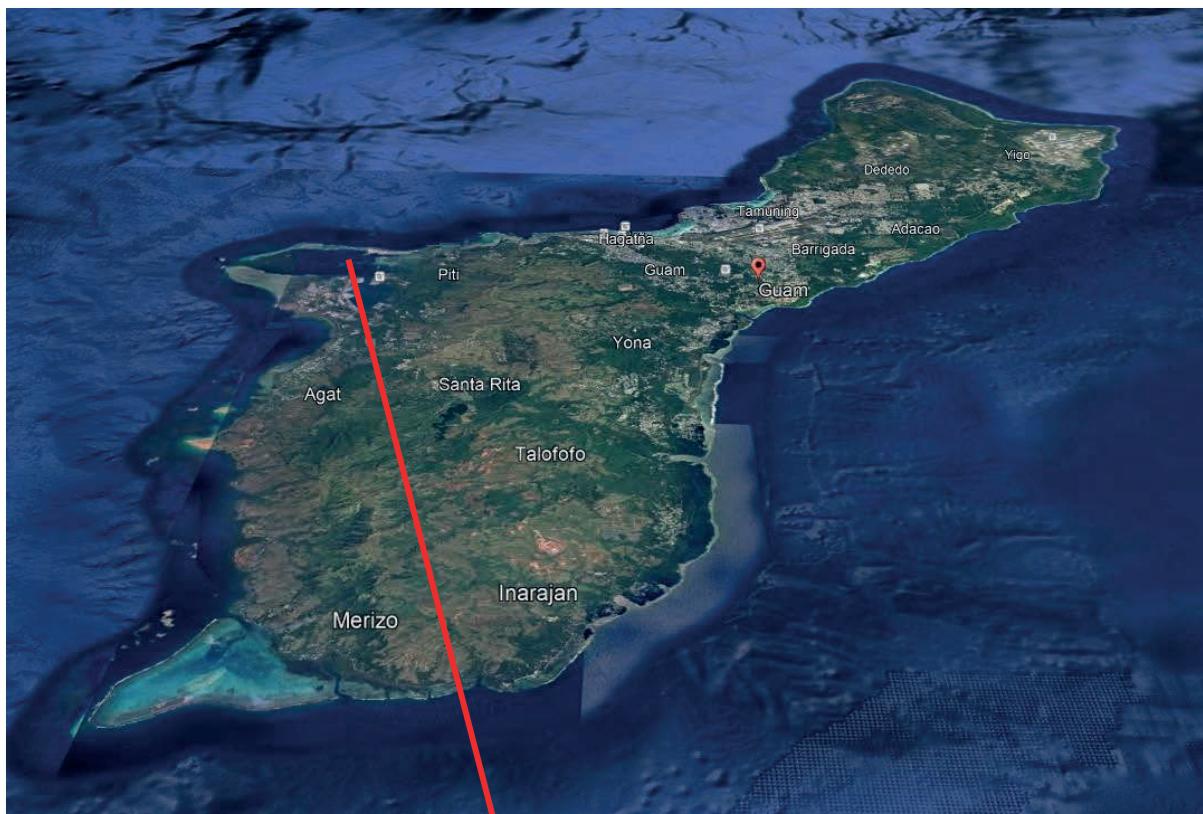
"The satisfaction felt by submariners in rescuing these aviators, of whom so many were picked up in the last year of the war by Lifeguard subs, is really great. It is certainly as great as that derived from a torpedo attack. It is, likely, exceeded only by the sensation of real gratitude felt by the airmen. The success of submariners in lifeguard duty is ironical, for there is no naval vessel so essentially offensive. The big thrill of the TENCH's first patrol was this rescue of Ellis and Guptill."

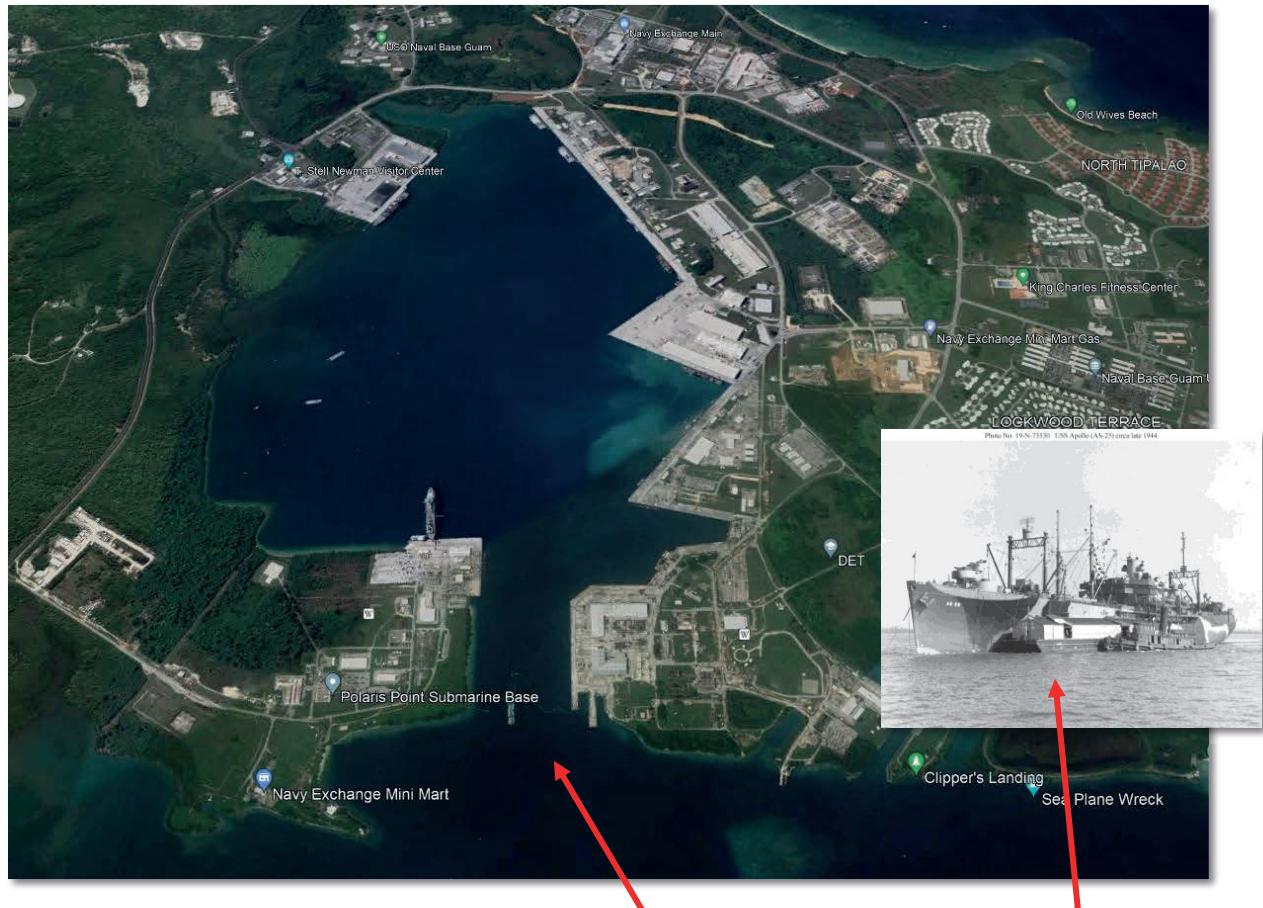
This rescue is a testament to the bravery and resourcefulness of the crew of the submarine, and a reminder of the sacrifices made by all those who served in the armed forces during World War II. The aviators had spent 19 uncertain hours in their partially inflated life-rafts, lashed together, and had sustained minor wounds, but were the world's happiest men when they realized big, beaming, red-headed Jim Wright, standing down on deck, was not a Jap.

While the big thrill of the Tench's first patrol was this rescue of Ellis and Guptil, they were also credited with the sinking of 4250 tons of enemy shipping. A "successful patrol" – sixty-seven days and 15,000 miles had separated their departure from Pearl from their arrival at Guam on 12 April 1945.



GUAM





The Tench was refitted, refueled and reprovisioned in Apra Harbor, Guam, by the U.S.S. Apollo, submarine tender. Meanwhile, Officers and men spent two weeks of rest at Camp Dealey, the submarine recuperation center on Guam.

THE FOUR R'S – CAMP DEALEY, GUAM

Wherever advantageous, the Navy identified certain places in the Pacific where the submarines and their crews could receive the four R's : repair, refit, refuel and rest.

Before Saipan and Guam were in U.S. hands, the U.S. Navy had to use bases in Australia. But by August of 1944, those two islands in the Marianas were now assets of the U.S. From these two islands, American submarines could patrol the waters near Japan in half the time it took to do so from Australia.

In October or November of 1944, the Navy approved the building of a submarine rest camp on Guam. The site chosen was just north of Talofofo, in Ipan by a beach. There, the submarine crew members could rest, relax and recreate in peace and quiet. The camp was built by the crew members of the AS 12 Sperry and christened Camp Dealey.

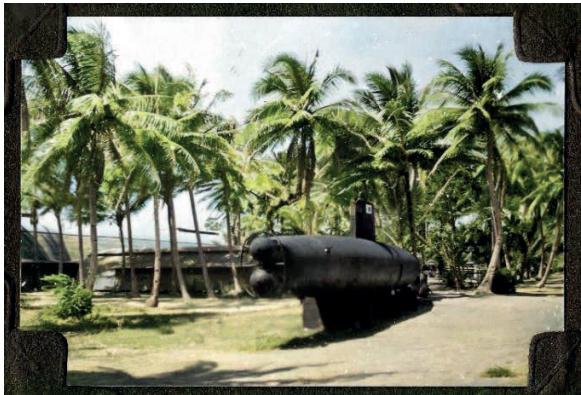
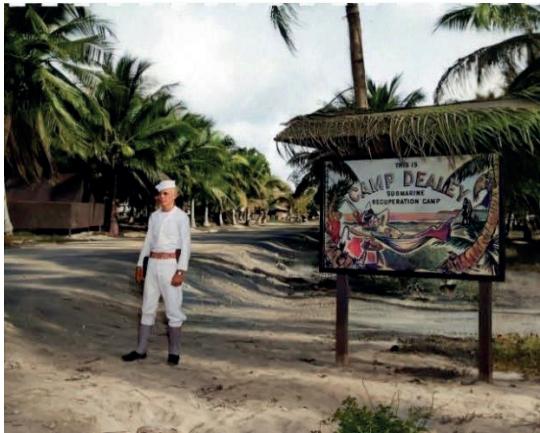
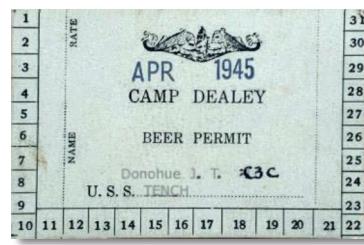


Commander Samuel David Dealey was something of a war hero. He was, at least, a submarine war hero. He won fame for sinking so many Japanese destroyers and was known as the "destroyer killer." Unfortunately, he missed one Japanese vessel and didn't notice it was trailing him. The Japanese fired and he and his entire crew of 78 men perished. It was August of 1944.

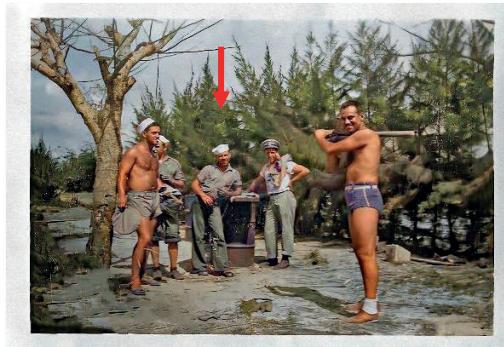
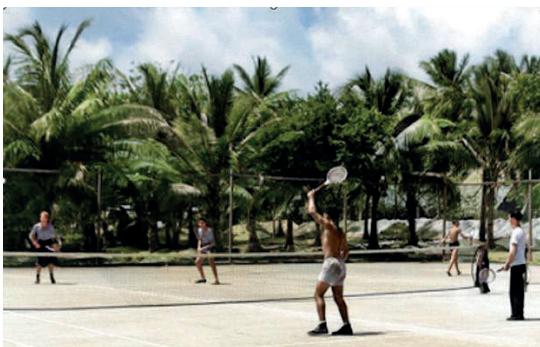
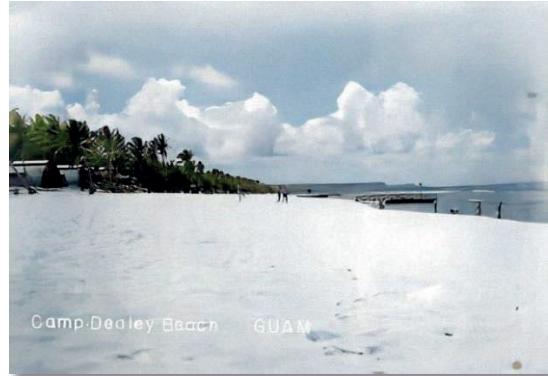


Camp Dealey was not a perfect paradise. Japanese soldiers who refused to surrender hid in the thickly-wooded areas around Ipan and further inland. Some would ultimately hide out or 27 years! Desperate for food, the Japanese would sometimes raid the food pantry at Camp Dealey under the cover of darkness. Once in a while an American would discover the Japanese scavengers and start shooting. A submariner resting at Camp Dealey had as much of a chance of getting killed by one of these trigger-happy fellow Americans as by a Japanese armed with a bamboo spear.

The facilities at the Camp were adequate but not luxurious. There were Quonset huts, tents and small shacks. While at the Camp, you did whatever you wanted. Sleep, write letters, swim, play a game, read. It was a way the submariners kept from losing their sanity, since they spent months underwater many times. Twenty-two cases of beer were dropped off every day at Camp Dealey.



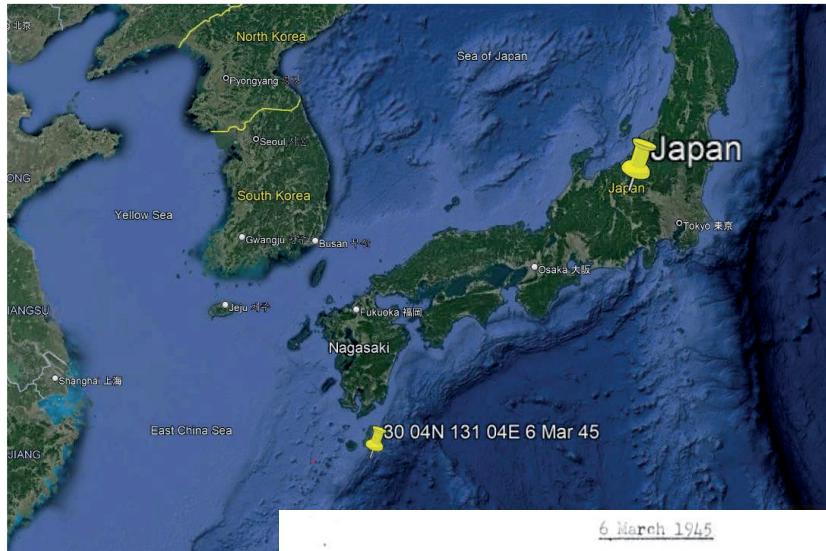
EM2cl John Thomas Donohue – WWII Submariner



Given American Prisoners of War were liberated in various places in Asia, some of them were sent to Camp Dealey on Guam first before heading to the U.S. mainland. Some of the former POWs felt that they needed to gain weight and get back to their former health before they met their families in the States.

Down time at Camp Dealey also enabled the sailors to call home, albeit somewhat briefly and always censored. “Loose lips sink ships” was the phrase of the day. The last time John was physically home was in mid-summer of 1944 after completing his Electrician’s Mate and submarine training at New London, Connecticut, just before his assignment to the Portsmouth Naval Base, mustering as a crew member of the USS Tench and departing for combat. It is highly likely there had been conversations with and letters from home in this period and John would have known Terry was expecting their first child. Once underway and engaged in hostile actions, however, there would be radio silence. Watching the calendar while on his first patrol, John would have guessed he became a father in early March 1945.

On 6 March 1945 Mary Ann was born. John and the crew of the Tench were in very heavy seas 60 miles off the southern coast of mainland Japan, south of Nagasaki. It would be thirty-six days before he would arrive in Guam and hear the news. But hear the news he did, and began counting the days.



6 March 1945

0517(minus 9)

0638(minus 9)

1200(minus 9)

1310(minus 9)

1913(minus 9)

2349(minus 9)

SJ contact on YAKU SHIMA bearing 280°T. distant 40 miles.
Knew SJA DEVIL to be south of us and BALAO astern.

Submerged. Seas and wind strong from N..

Posit: 30 - 04 N. 131 - 04 E.

Sighted YAKU SHIMA ISLAND bearing 305°T. distant 22 miles.
Due to stormy weather unable to sight land prior this time.

Surfaced in heavy sea, 30 to 40 kt wind, 10 miles south of YAKU SHIMA. Commenced transit of TOKARA KAIKYO PASSAGE. Maximum speed 10 kts due to seas. APR-1 indicated strong 150 Mc land radars. Used SJ sparingly for navigation in direction of land.

Well clear of passage.
Commander Submarines, Pacific Fleet ordered SEA CAT to extend patrol with SEGUNDO.

