



---

Contact: [blevinst@gmail.com](mailto:blevinst@gmail.com)

---



# BLOW NEGATIVE

---

VETERANS FREE PRESS

*Special Edition*

*Publisher/Editor Timothy Blevins*

---



The Official Newsletter of  
**South Lake Florida**  
Chartered chapter of USSVI  
**USS Darter (SS-227)**  
**November 1944**

## USS Darter (SS-227)

*Darter* (SS-227) was laid down on 20 October 1942 at New London, Ct., by the Electric Boat Co.; launched on 6 June 1943; and sponsored by Mrs. Louise Wheeler, wife of Mr. Edwin B. Wheeler, Shipbuilding Manager of Electric Boat Co., and commissioned on 7 September 1943, Cmdr. William S. Stovall, Jr., in command.

*Darter* worked up in the waters off New London and underwent post-commissioning repairs at Submarine Base, New London (9-28 September). After her initial work up, she steamed for Bar



Harbor, Maine (29 September-2 October). After her arrival, she assisted the Bureau of Ordnance and tested exploder mechanisms by firing nineteen torpedoes (3-5 October). After she completed weapons testing, she returned to New London, where she arrived the next day. After her arrival at the submarine base, workers installed chrome plated liners in her main engines (6-12 October). After the completion of this work, she underwent over two weeks of training (13-30 October). She steamed for Pearl Harbor via the Panama Canal the next day.

After her arrival in the Hawaiian Islands on 26 November 1943, she underwent another significant period of repairs. Workers installed a Plan-Position Indicator (PPI)

periscope and a new high-powered antenna for her SJ radar. On 15 December, the armature blower on her no. 3 engine unexpectedly sheared through its holding bolts and disconnected from the shaft. Workers completed repairs six days later and the Navy declared the boat ready for duty.

*Darter* stood out from Pearl Harbor en route to Johnston Atoll at 1300 on 21 December 1943. During the two-day voyage, she conducted training dives and drills. The submarine reached the atoll and began taking on fuel at 1115 on 23 December. She completed refueling and proceeded out to sea at 1645.

After an uneventful Christmas Eve 1943 spent conducting training dives and drills, a ¾-inch steel pipe plug blew out of the bronze equalizing line between her rudder ram tubes, causing a leak in her after trim during a training dive to 300 feet at 0553 on Christmas morning. Approximately three hours later, she determined that the leak was beyond her capacity to repair at sea and set course for Pearl Harbor. She arrived at the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard on 29 December and immediately entered Dry Dock No. 1 for repairs. Dockworkers repaired the damage, and she exited dry dock and refueled on 2 January 1944.

The next day, *Darter* stood out once again for Johnston Atoll at 1230. She moored to the fueling pier in the atoll and took on fuel at 1045 on 5 January 1944. After topping off her fuel, she set course for Eniwetok Atoll, Marshall Islands at 1305. She conducted training dives and drills en route to

the atoll from 6-10 January. Ahead of schedule despite encountering heavy seas, she submerged for routine torpedo maintenance from 0627-1830 the next evening. As she steamed approximately 15 miles from Eniwetok, *Darter* dove at 0555 and began closing on the atoll. A little over six hours later, a periscope sweep determined there were not any Japanese vessels anchored there or transiting through the East Channel. She surfaced at 1847 and cleared the area.

*Darter* dove at 0625 on 14 January 1944 and began patrolling between Ponape and Truk in the Caroline Islands. Approximately four hours after she surfaced for the night at 1903, Commander, Task Force (CTF) 72, ordered the submarine to proceed to her designated patrol area.

At 2300 the next evening *Darter* received a report from *Blackfin* (SS-322) of a Japanese convoy in proximity. Despite making several course changes throughout the day on 16 January 1944, the submarine failed to locate any enemy vessels. At 0800 on 16 January, she gave up the chase and steamed to her patrol area located west of Helene Shoal.

*Darter* reached her assigned patrol area two days later. On 20 January 1944, she received a message from CTF-72 ordering her southward with *Albacore* (SS-218) on 23 January. After another two uneventful days, she steamed for the planned rendezvous at 0055 on 22 January. The two submarines exchanged recognition signals at 0655 the next day. Again, despite several

course changes over the next couple of days, *Darter* was unable to locate the enemy. Running low on fuel, she set course for Tulagi, Solomon Islands, at 0400 on 25 January.

As she steamed for Tulagi early the next morning, *Darter* detected and began tracking a Japanese convoy at 0450. Unfortunately, as the submarine closed to within 4,700 yards at 0603, her radar failed. In the seventeen minutes it took to repair, the convoy widened its range to 15,000 yards. Because of the rapidly approaching daylight and her diminishing fuel, she reluctantly chose to break off pursuit at 0620.

Several hours later, at 1324, *Darter* sighted and began closing on a Japanese tanker and two destroyer escorts sailing at a range of approximately 25,000 yards. Despite several course changes over the next five and a half hours, she was not able to maneuver into a firing position. She eventually lost sight of the convoy at 1908. With only approximately 3,000-4,000 gallons of fuel remaining, she resumed her planned voyage to Tulagi at 2000.

At 0750 on 30 January 1944, *Darter* joined with the submarine chaser *SC-701*, which escorted her into Tulagi. With only approximately 2,000 gallons of fuel remaining, she moored starboard of the self-propelled gasoline barge *YOG-41* and began taking on fuel at 1330. As she took on fuel, Capt. James Fife, Jr., Commander Task Force Seventy-Two and Capt. Eliot H. Bryant, Commander Submarine Squadron (ComSubRon) 18 came on board the submarine at 1330. Prior to going ashore at 1500, they ordered *Darter* to remain at Tulagi

for radar repairs.

*Darter* completed refueling at 0852 on 31 January 1944. After mooring at Government Dock, Tulagi, at



1148, the submarine notified CTF-72 she now suffered from a malfunctioning gyrocompass. To facilitate replacement of that item, early the next morning *Darter* moved from Government Dock and moored in Purvis Bay, alongside the destroyer tender *Whitney* (AD-4) at 0845. In response to new orders from CTF-72, the submarine stood out for Milne Bay, Papua New Guinea immediately after sailors completed installing a new gyro at 1230 on 2 February. Two days later, the corvette HMAS *Ararat* (K.34) escorted *Darter* into Milne Bay at 0832. She moored starboard side to submarine tender *Fulton* (AS-11) at 1533.

Over the next two days (5-7 February 1944), the tender's skilled artificer repaired *Darter's* directional SJ radar system as well as her master and auxiliary gyros. In addition to the repairs, the submarine received new equipment for her Mk. III Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) system, new communications equipment and a new 40-millimeter gun in place of her forward 20-millimeter Oerlikon.

Repairs completed, *Darter* stood out of Milne Bay in company with the submarine chaser *PC-1121* en route to Dreger Harbor, Papua New Guinea, at 0700 on 8 February 1944. The submarine conducted multiple drills and training exercises over the next two days. She arrived in the harbor, moored starboard side to motor torpedo boat tender *Portunis* (AGP-4) and began taking on fuel at 1127 on 9 February. After she completed refueling at 1518, *Darter* proceeded to her patrol area south of Truk Lagoon in accordance with CTF-72 operation order S7-44.

As she proceeded to her patrol area early on 11 February 1944, *Darter* received Operation Plan A-44, which ordered her to a new patrol area located southwest of Truk. At 1142 the next morning, she sighted an American submarine she assumed to be *Peto* (SS-265), bearing 142°T eight miles distant.

Less than a full day later, at 0855 on 13 February 1944, *Darter* began tracking two enemy vessels, initially identified only as a "large ship" with a lone escort bearing 119°T at a range of ten miles. After determining the two enemy ships base course and speed, the submarine maneuvered into a position 26,000 yards ahead, submerged and crept toward her prey. During her approach, she determined the convoy consisted of a large cargo ship escorted by a patrol craft and three converted fishing trawlers. As she steamed between two of the escorts at 1429, *Darter* fired her six bow torpedo tubes at the merchantman. Unfortunately, all six missed. The submarine quickly turned and fired her four stern

tubes at 1431. Approximately 25 seconds later, she heard a torpedo strike the merchant vessel "about half way between stack and stern." At 1435, the Japanese escorts dropped the first of 21 depth charges. During the midst of the depth charge attack, at approximately 1445, *Darter* detected "a gurgling cracking noise," characteristic of a sinking ship.

Japanese and U.S. sources examined after the war identify *Darter's* target as a convoy of three Japanese fleet oilers escorted by two warships and refute the submarine's claim of a successful attack. According to Japanese convoy records as well as declassified American intelligence intercepts, none of the Japanese vessels were successfully attacked during their voyage from Ulithi to Truk.

In the midst of a rainstorm, *Darter* surfaced northeast of the attack point at 1838 and began searching for wreckage from the merchant vessel. After a fruitless two-hour search, she came to course 084°T and proceeded to her assigned patrol area, which she reached early the next morning.

In support of Operation *Hailstone*, the American raid on the Japanese anchorage in Truk lagoon, at 0100 on 17 February 1944, *Darter* came to course 326°T and steamed to a position 30 miles northwest of the atoll. After arriving on station, she submerged at 0636 to lie in wait for Japanese vessels attempting to escape to the west. Approximately two hours later, the submarine sighted a small Japanese trawler bearing 226°T, approximately 10,000 yards distant. Because of the trawler's small size, she came

to course 260°T and awaited larger, more significant, prey.

After a morning marked by an absence of enemy contacts, at 1230 *Darter* came to course 111°T and proceeded to an area south of the lagoon. Unfortunately, she found the new zone similarly barren. At 1950, she surfaced at 6°55'N, 151°14'E and began working her way "out of what seemed to be a considerable portion of the U.S. fleet."

At 1015 the next morning, she sighted a large ship bearing 343°T, 18,000 yards distant. Unfortunately, she was unable to close on the target and broke off contact an hour later. She began working her way to the southwest during the late afternoon and surfaced at 1953.

In accordance with instructions from CTF-72, *Darter* exited her patrol area at 1941 on 19 February 1944, and proceeded to a new hunting ground, designated V-15 N, located approximately 720 nautical miles northeast of Papua New Guinea. She reached her new patrol area early the next morning.

In response to a report of an enemy seaplane tender in the area, *Darter* came to course 335°T at 1720 on 20 February 1944. She detected aviation auxiliary, escorted by two destroyers, early the next morning. Unfortunately, the enemy convoy made several course changes over the next hour, and prevented the submarine from generating an accurate firing solution. At 0600, she broke off the attack, surfaced and proceeded ahead of the convoy. At 0725, she sighted a single-engine Japanese floatplane flying overhead four miles distant. The submarine quickly dove to 150

feet and changed course to 180°. She remained submerged until 1303. Later that evening at 2111, CTF-72 ordered *Darter* to head to Milne Bay.

*Darter* exited her patrol area en route to Milne Bay early on 22 February. She crossed the equator at 2050 and entered the safety lane off Papua New Guinea at 2130. As she proceeded through the safety lane at 0145 on 24 February, she detected *Dace* (SS-247) bearing 181°T, 13,000 yards distant. Later that morning, she joined up with the destroyer *Welles* (DD-628). *Dace* joined the formation at 0844. The two submarines released their escort and proceeded together at 1505.

As the two submarines continued their voyage through the safety lane, at 0530 on 25 February 1944, *Darter* detected and changed course to avoid a contact "the size and silhouette of a corvette," bearing 174°T, 15,000 yards distant. Five hours later, she sighted her escort, *PC-1124*. She ended her first war patrol moored alongside *Fulton* at 1537.

The next day *Darter* stood out of Milne Bay, en route to Brisbane, Australia, where she arrived three days later. On 1 March, Submarine Repair Unit Brisbane began a two-week refit of the submarine. During the maintenance period, she received a new deep well trim pump and a new SJ-1A radar transmitter.

Maintenance completed, *Darter* steamed back to the bay at 0700 on 17 March 1944. During the four-day voyage, the submarine held numerous drills and training exercises. She arrived at Milne Bay at midday on

21 March.

Ordered to report to Commander, Task Force 76 (CTF-76) for a special mission, *Darter* got underway 0700 on 22 March 1944 and proceeded to Langemak Bay, Papua New Guinea. She moored at the fuel jetty and received her special mission from (CTF-76) at 1300 the next afternoon. Unfortunately, the Navy cancelled the mission, and, escorted by *SC-743*, *Darter* got underway for her patrol area at 1300 on 25 March.

*Darter* crossed the equator and came to course 289°T at 0200 on 29 March 1944. As she continued toward her patrol area late that evening, she sighted and maneuvered to avoid a periscope at 0°47', 135°49'E. She reached the eastern edge of her patrol area at 2143.

At 0107 the next morning, *Darter* began tracking a large cargo ship escorted by a patrol boat approximately 18,200 yards distant. With the target silhouetted against the horizon and a rainsquall behind her, the submarine began maneuvering into a firing position at 0259. Approximately ten minutes later, she fired her bow tubes. Her first two torpedoes struck the 2,829-ton cargo ship *Fujikawa Maru* near her stern, a third struck just forward of the amidships superstructure and bridge, and a fourth struck amidships. *Darter* set course 240°T at 312 and watched as the Japanese vessel sank three minutes later. Just over an hour later at 0422, *Darter* detected and maneuvered to avoid a small patrol craft.

Early on 1 April 1944, she shifted to the operational control of CTF-71, which ordered her to an area

south of Davao, Philippine Islands. She submerged and proceeded to her new area at 0655. Over the next several hours, she made repairs to her hydraulic plant and radar system. With both systems in satisfactory condition, she surfaced for the night at 1947.

At 0238 on 6 April 1944, *Darter* detected and began tracking a convoy of three cruisers and four destroyers bearing 350°T, 25,000 yards distant. Expecting the enemy vessels to change course and sail around the southern end of Mindanao, Philippine Islands, the submarine came to course 180°T at 0244. Unfortunately, six minutes later the enemy ships changed to course 210°T and increased their speed to 22 knots. At 0340, *Darter* sighted and began steering various courses to avoid *Scamp* (SS-277) as she attacked the convoy. Several hours later at 2200, *Darter* received orders to sail eastward and return to the operational control of CTF-72.

Unfortunately, *Darter* only sighted two enemy contacts over the next five days, both of which she determined too insignificant to engage. On 7 April 1944, she sighted and proceeded towards smoke at bearing 180°T. After a nearly six-hour chase, she identified the source as a small gunboat. She immediately broke contact and steamed into a rainsquall. Four days later on 11 April, *Darter* detected another small Japanese patrol craft near the Asia Islands, Papua New Guinea. Again, rather than engage such a small target she broke contact and steamed away toward the southwest.

In response to orders from CTF-

72, at 1400 on 14 April 1944, *Darter* set course 305°T en route to a new patrol area. She reached her new hunting ground and began patrolling the next morning. Unfortunately, *Darter* did not detect any Japanese vessels for the next ten days. Early on 25 April, she set a course for the Molucca passage, en route to the submarine base in Darwin Harbor, Australia.

At 0627 on 29 April, HMAS *ML 429* escorted *Darter* into the harbor. She moored and took on fuel, fresh water and stores at 0905. As their boat refueled, the ship's company overhauled her SJ radar and hydraulic plant. She stood out of Darwin en route back to her patrol area at 1800. As she transited the Manipa Strait at 2345 on 2 May, *Darter* detected and maneuvered to avoid a Japanese patrol boat. She reentered her assigned patrol area two days later.

At 0532 on 6 May, *Darter* detected and began tracking a convoy of two tankers escorted by two destroyers. Approximately an hour later, she proceeded ahead of the convoy to position herself for a daylight periscope attack. She dove and began approaching the convoy at 0730. Unfortunately, the convoy increased its speed and changed course at 0743. Intent on chasing the convoy, *Darter* surfaced at 1300. She abandoned the effort after being forced to dive to avoid being spotted by a Japanese aircraft at 1449.

*Darter* detected only one additional Japanese vessel during the remainder of her patrol. At 2330 on 13 May 1944, she identified and avoided a picket boat patrolling between Morotai

and Halmahera, Maluku Islands.

At 2000 on 19 May 1944, *Darter* set course for Manus Island, Admiralty Islands. As she proceeded through the safety lane off the Admiralties on 21 May, she sighted and exchanged recognition signals with a PV-1 *Ventura* patrol bomber and a B-24 *Liberator* heavy bomber. The next day, she fired flares and dove to avoid unidentified aircraft at 1225 and 1444. She joined her escort submarine rescue ship *Coucal* (ASR-8) and proceeded toward the harbor at 0522. She moored in Seeadler Harbor approximately six hours later.

At 0920 on 29 May 1944, *Darter* shifted position in the harbor and moored alongside *Euryale* (AS-22). Immediately after she moored, sailors from the tender and the Submarine Division (SubDiv) 181 Relief Crew began the submarine's post deployment refit. Upon completion of her refit on 11 June, she began a four-day training period under Cmdr. Robert J. Foley, the relief crew's commanding officer. During the training period, the submarine conducted multiple test dives and fired four exercise torpedoes.

Escorted by *PC-982*, *Darter* got underway on her third war patrol at 0900 on 21 June 1944. At 1445 that afternoon, she conducted target practice. Approximately six hours later, she released her escort and proceeded toward her patrol area alone.

At 1706 on 24 June 1944, *Darter* sighted diesel smoke bearing 070°. She submerged shortly thereafter and began tracking "a periscope like mast."

Unfortunately, she was unable to develop the contact further and surfaced at 1738.

*Darter* made her second contact of the patrol at 0207 the next morning. Six minutes later, she identified the contact as *Bream* (SS-243). The two submarines exchanged messages from 0230-0248, after which *Darter* continued toward her patrol area.

At 0629 on 26 June 1944, *Darter* submerged for a patrol off the northeast coast of Halmahera, Maluku Islands. At 0755, she sighted and began tracking an enemy submarine chaser. Rather than give away her position for such a small target, she broke contact and dove deeper. Four hours later, she sighted and proceeded toward smoke bearing 144°. As she headed toward the new contact, at 1226 she sighted a Mitsubishi Ki-21 *Sally* medium bomber. As the submarine dove to 90 feet a minute later, the aircraft dropped three bombs, all of which exploded well clear of *Darter*. The bomber dropped a fourth near the submarine's position at 1230. She remained submerged as she proceeded toward a new target, a floatplane and mast bearing 142° approximately six miles distant.

At 1245, *Darter* sighted what she believed to be two Nakajima Type 97 *Adam* seaplanes, flying ahead of a convoy of an approximately 2,000-ton two-mast freighter, escorted by two submarine chasers and a "spit-kit" wooden boat. As she began closing on her prey, the convoy dropped the first of 22 depth charges. The depth charge attack and the convoy's turn to the southwest prevented the submarine from closing closer

than 12,000 yards. She broke contact and secured battle stations at 1502.

At 0617 on 29 June 1944, *Darter* submerged for a patrol north of Morotai Strait. A little over six hours later at 1249, she heard echo ranging bearing 135°T. As she proceeded toward the contact, at 1314 she sighted and quickly dove to avoid a Nakajima B5N1 Type 97 *Kate* carrier attack airplane. Ten minutes later, she sighted an as yet unidentified Japanese warship. *Darter* continued her pursuit into the patrol area assigned to *Bashaw* (SS-241) and closed to within 1,400 yards at 1349. Over the next ten minutes, she identified her target as the 4,330-ton minelayer *Tsugaru*. As she reached position 2°19'N, 127°57'E at 1424, she fired a six torpedo spread at the minelayer. Immediately after firing, she dove deeper and rigged for depth charges. As she did so, the submarine heard two torpedoes strike *Tsugaru* at 1426, followed by sounds of a ship breaking apart.

As *Darter* leveled off at 280 feet, she heard the first depth charge explode above her at 1433. After a salvo of three depth charges exploded a minute later, she began descending to 350 ft. After four more explosions around her, at 1436 she attempted to clear the strait to the northeast. Unfortunately, the heavy current prevented the submarine from turning. Thankfully, a minute later, one of her two unidentified attackers broke contact and proceeded to render assistance to *Tsugaru's* crew. The remaining submarine chaser launched six more depth charges from 1442-1444. At 1450, *Darter* successfully

put the Japanese vessel astern. However, the submarine chaser continued to fire depth charges until 1517. *Darter* rose to periscope depth 12,000 yards from the site of her attack on the minelayer 1734. Three hours later, she began a patrol off Morotai.

At 0636, the next morning *Darter* submerged to conduct routine maintenance on her torpedoes. During the maintenance period, she discovered that the Mk. 6 Mod 5 exploder mechanisms on five of her Mk. 14 torpedoes flooded when she made her tubes ready but did not fire. Four of the five mechanisms sustained enough damage to cause short circuits. The submariners removed, cleaned and dried the mechanisms as well as the detonators and boosters. She also found that initially tight fitting exploder gaskets had worked themselves loose. In her patrol report, she recommended that all boats tighten the exploder gaskets every five days. At 2020, *Darter* surfaced and proceeded north to a new patrol area located at 5° to 7°30'N, 127°30' to 130°E. She entered her assigned patrol area at 0633 on 1 July 1944.

After a brief trim dive at 0657, *Darter* surfaced and patrolled across the East Indies-Palaus shipping lane for remainder of the day and throughout the night and early morning on 2 July 1944.

At 0732 on 3 July 1944, *Darter* began a three-day patrol of the shipping lane between Davao and the Palaus. Unfortunately, she did not encounter any enemy surface vessels in the shipping lane. However, she sighted and

submerged to avoid contact with multiple Mitsubishi G4M1 Navy Type 1 *Betty* attack bombers throughout the patrol, as well as a formation of eight Mitsubishi A6M Type 0 *Zeke* fighters that flew within two and a half miles of her position off Mindanao at 1344 on 4 July. In her post-patrol report, *Darter* wrote that the "advisability of surface patrol here is doubtful since they sight us every time we try to stay up, and no doubt route traffic clear of us."

*Darter* proceeded to a new patrol area off the southeast coast of Mindanao at 2016 on 10 July 1944. Unfortunately, she also found enemy air activity quite heavy in her new hunting ground. During her patrol off the coast of Cape San Agustin, Mindanao, on 11 July, the submarine sighted and maneuvered to avoid a Kawanishi H6K Type 97 *Mavis* flying boat and two fighter aircraft she believed were Nakajima SKT-97 Type 97 *Adam* seaplanes. After surfacing at 2043, she patrolled an area south of Davao Gulf throughout the night.

The next morning at 0622, she submerged and began patrolling off Calinan Point, Mindanao, in an effort to intercept enemy vessels traveling to and from Davao. However, with the exception of three Mitsubishi Ki-21 Type 97 *Sally* heavy bombers sighted in the mid-afternoon, *Darter* found the area devoid of enemy activity. She surfaced and returned to Cape San Agustin at 0340 on 13 July 1944.

At 0641 on 13 July 1944, *Darter* sighted a patrol boat bearing 255°T approximately 2,000 yards distant. A minute later, she went to battle stations, submerged and rigged for depth

charges. The enemy patrol boat steamed directly overhead of the submarine at 0648. Fortunately, the enemy vessel failed to detect her and did not attack. Approximately ten minutes later, the submarine came to course 230°T and maneuvered southwest across Davao Gulf.

Early on 17 July 1944, *Darter* detected and began tracking a contact bearing 167°T 26,000 yards distant. Her war patrol report notes that after a short chase, she discovered her target was Palmas Island, Netherlands East Indies, "speed zero." She broke contact at 0618 and continued working southwest for the next three days.

At 1930 on 20 July 1944, *Darter* received *Dace's* report of an enemy tanker sailing eastward from Port Lebak, Mindanao. Based on this report, she estimated that the enemy vessel had either already taken refuge in Sarangani Bay for the night, or would shortly transit Sarangani Strait en route to Davao Gulf. Approximately an hour and a half later, she began a surface patrol in the strait approximately four to five miles off Los Baños Point, Mindanao.

*Darter* submerged and continued her patrol at 0618 the next morning. At 1030, she detected four underwater explosions followed approximately 45 minutes later by the sound of echo ranging. At 1123, she went to battle stations and proceeded toward smoke on the horizon. Less than an hour later, she sighted the source of the smoke, a 15,450-ton *Shiretoko*-class fleet oiler, escorted by two *Tomozuru*-class torpedo boats and four patrol craft en route to Davao. Unfortunately, she was

unable to maneuver closer than 5,600 yards and broke off contact at 1431.

As she patrolled off Point Baños, Mindanao, at 1220 on 22 July 1944, *Darter* sighted and proceeded toward smoke on the horizon at bearing 325°T. As the boat steamed to the northwest toward a potential target, she detected ten underwater explosions from 1226-1232, which she assumed were the sounds of *Bluegill* (SS-242) undergoing a retaliatory depth charge attack after a successful torpedo strike on an enemy vessel.

As *Bluegill* steamed into Davao Gulf approximately 23 nautical miles to the north at 1218, she launched a three-torpedo spread at a 1,000-ton steamship. Unfortunately, all ran harmlessly under the target and exploded at the end of their run. Alerted by the sudden blast, an unidentified submarine chaser furiously launched nine depth charges from 1226-1233. Fortunately, none damaged the boat. While her sister ship suffered through the counterattack, *Darter* crept closer to the convoy but was unable to close to within a suitable attack range before it "seemed to go back 'over the hill' toward the coastline at 1337.

A little less than four hours later at 1722, *Darter* sighted smoke to the north-northwest. As she came to bearing 344°T and closed on another potential target, Lt. Cmdr. David McClintock, her commanding officer, watched as an exploding depth charge produced a 500-foot geyser just ahead of his boat at 1734. Unfortunately, the smoke dissipated at 1750 and *Darter* broke off the hunt four

minutes later.

At 2400 on 26-27 July 1944, *Darter* set course for Seeadler Harbor. Four days later at 2055 on 31 July, she detected and began tracking a large contact bearing 100°T, 21,000 yards distant. Approximately twenty minutes later, she determined the contact to be an unidentified large cargo ship and an escort. Despite repeated attempts, she was unable to send a contact report to SubRon 18 and continued to close on the target. As she closed to nearly within gun range at 2224, the convoy escort finally successfully answered *Darter's* challenge and the submarine broke contact.

*Darter* joined with her escort, the submarine chaser *SC-747* at 2400 on 31 July-1 August 1944. Nearly twelve hours later, she moored alongside *Euryale*. After refueling, she and her escort stood out en route to Brisbane, Australia at 1617. Approximately three hours later, she released the submarine chaser and proceeded alone. At 0900 on 2 August, she joined the corvette HMAS *Strahan* (J.363) that escorted her through the Vitiaz Strait. As she proceeded toward Brisbane, the submarine exchanged signals with an Allied cargo vessel escorted by the destroyer *O'Bannon* (DD-450) at 0715 on 3 August, and HMAS *Gascoyne* (K.354) two days later at 0357. She ended her third war patrol moored to New Farm Warf, Brisbane Harbor at 1032 on 8 August.

*Darter's* crew enjoyed two weeks of leave as the SubDiv 182 relief crew and Submarine Repair Unit Brisbane overhauled their boat. During her overhaul, sailors applied the new Measure 32

Design 9ss "dark gray" camouflage paint scheme to the submarine. On 28 August 1944, the relief crew successfully completed a deep test dive and fired two torpedoes off Caloundra Head, Australia.

*Darter* got underway on her fourth war patrol in company with *Dace* at 1412 on 1 September 1944. At 1800, the corvettes HMAS *Whyalla* (J.153) and *Warrnambool* (J.202) joined the American submarines. As the convoy steamed en route to Darwin, the two boats conducted multiple training exercises. *Warrnambool* departed the convoy at 1742 on 4 September. *Whyalla* departed at 1545 the next day.

During the two boats four-day transit of Torres Strait (5-9 September 1944) they conducted multiple training dives and drills. They joined with their escort, the motor launch HMAS *ML 807* at 0604, and moored starboard side to *Coucal* at 0844 on 10 September. *Darter* refueled and underwent minor voyage repairs over the next several hours. The two submarines stood out en route to their patrol area at 1608.

Just after midnight on 13 September 1944, *Darter* detected and began tracking a contact at 036°T, 7,000 yards distant. She closed to within 4,500 yards at 0140 and identified the contact as a small patrol boat. Ten minutes later, she broke contact in favor of a new target bearing 154°T, 9,500 yards distant. After a five-hour chase, she determined the contact was actually her coordinated attack group partner, *Dace*.

At 0800 the next morning, *Darter* arrived on station

and began patrolling on a reconnaissance line north of Celebes [Sulawesi] Island, Netherlands East Indies. At 1043, she sighted and destroyed several Japanese fishing stakes with her 20-millimeter and 40-millimeter guns. Several hours later, she sighted and destroyed a floating tree stump with her .30 and .50 caliber machine guns. After briefly submerging from 2312-2332 to wash oil out of her No. 4 main ballast tank, she proceeded northeast.

From 15-23 September 1944, *Darter* supported Operation *Stalemate II*, the American invasion of Peleliu. At 1617 on 19 September, she detected an unidentified aircraft on radar and submerged. Four minutes later, two explosions caused by Japanese bombs or depth charges shook the submarine. Fortunately, she surfaced unharmed at 1856. The next evening at 1714, she destroyed a floating mine with .30 caliber fire at a range of 150 yards.

On 23 September 1944, the final day of her reconnaissance patrol in support of the invasion, *Darter* submerged at 0625 to conduct repairs on an air line in one of her engines. Unfortunately, CMM(AA) Thomas R. James sustained a head injury during the repair effort. She ended her reconnaissance patrol and set course for Biak, Netherlands East Indies [Indonesia] at 0812 the next morning. Fortunately, James recovered from the injury and continued serving on the boat until ordered to Mare Island to await a new assignment on 21 November.

As *Darter* made 19 knots north of Morotai on 25 September 1944,

she struck a submerged log at 2102. Less than 24-hours later at 1700, the electric battery of a Mk. 18-1 torpedo loaded in her No. 10 tube exploded. The explosion damaged the torpedo's warhead, several battery cell caps and sent a small amount of torpex from the warhead into the forward battery compartment. Despite the damage sustained in both incidents, she continued toward Biak, where she moored port side to *Dace* and began taking on fuel at 0830 on 27 September. As she refueled, Capt. Haber H. McLean, ComSubRon 16, came on board the submarine.

With Capt. McLean on board, *Darter* got underway at 1657 en route to Advanced Base Able at Mios Woendi, Schouten Islands. She moored starboard side to *Paddle* (SS-263), outboard of *Orion* (AS-18) at 1750. Upon doing so, she transferred to the operational control of CTG-71.

As *Darter's* crew rested for the next three days (28-30 September 1944), *Orion* completed minor repairs on their boat and replaced its electric torpedoes with four Mk. 14-3A and four Mk. 23 "wet heaters," powered by combustion and a steam turbine with a compressed air tank.

*Darter* stood out of Advanced Base Able for training in company with *Dace* and two unidentified frigates at 0800 on 1 October 1944. The two submarines completed training at 1300. After a brief test of their voice communication systems, they proceeded en route to their patrol area an hour later.

As she steamed westward, *Darter* encountered numerous American aircraft, which necessitated the firing of several

recognition flares. At 1518 on 3 October 1944, she sighted a "hunter-killer" group of three destroyer escorts. After firing five recognition flares and sending radio messages "for what seemed like an hour, [she] heard the DE's say over the voice radio, 'believe this submarine is American!'" Just after 0200 on 5 October, she sighted and "narrowly missed" a mine floating just outside the Sibutu Passage between the Celebes and Sulu seas. She finally entered her assigned patrol area, known as Dog-6, at 0400 on 9 October.

Early the next morning, *Darter* received contact reports from *Becuna* (SS-319) and *Cavalla* (SS-244) on a Japanese convoy sighted at the north end of the Palawan Passage. During a rendezvous with *Dace* at 0450, the two submarines agreed to pursue the convoy together. The two boats unsuccessfully searched for the convoy for the next two days.

At 0619 on 12 October 1944, *Darter* heard echo ranging at bearing 030°T. Less than ten minutes later, she sighted and proceeded toward seven columns of smoke on the same bearing. At 0924, she closed to within 6,000 yards and fired four low-power Mk. 14s from her forward tubes at the 5,993-ton oiler *Nittetsu Maru* and an unidentified second ship sailing close aboard. Six minutes later, she heard three torpedoes explode. She claimed two struck the oiler and one struck the unidentified ship sailing nearby. Over the next 45 minutes, she avoided an echo ranging search conducted by the convoy's escort vessels and maneuvered out of the area. Unfortunately, according to

Japanese records examined after the war, *Nittetsu Maru* sighted torpedo tracks and sent a warning signal in time for the convoy to execute an emergency turn to starboard and avoid damage.

As she continued her patrol to the southwest, *Darter* received a contact report and proceeded toward *Dace's* position inside the Borneo Barrier reef. At 0110 on 14 October 1944, she arrived in position in Gaya Bay, Malaya and watched as *Dace* attacked a convoy of seven large ships escorted by three destroyers. In response to the attack, a Japanese destroyer steamed in *Darter's* direction, forcing her to retreat several miles northward. After shaking off her pursuer, she proceeded toward the ore carrier *Taizen Maru* sailing off Gaya Bay escorted by two destroyers. Unable to close beyond 9,000 without alerting the Japanese warships and with dawn only one hour away, she broke contact and made for deep water.

During the evening of 18 October 1944, *Darter* received a report of a convoy steaming southward through the Palawan Passage. She set an intercept course and proceeded northward from her current position in the Balabac Strait. At 1009 the next morning, she sighted two *Fubuki*-class destroyers to the northeast. As the two enemy warships "zigged" away at 1040, she came hard right and fired her four stern tubes at 1042. Unfortunately, a minute later the target turned away and all four torpedoes missed. Unable to turn quickly enough to fire her bow tubes for a "down the throat" shot, *Darter* dove deep and quickly vacated the area. She surfaced at 1830 and began

patrolling the west side of the passage.

At midnight on 21 October 1944, *Darter* received a radio news broadcast report of the Sixth Army landings on Leyte, Philippine Islands, the previous day. She immediately proceeded to her assigned patrol area in the Balabac Strait. She arrived in the strait and began patrolling at 0815. Later that night at 2350, she detected and began tracking three targets at bearing 261°T 26,000 yards distant. As she closed on the targets through an area marked ominously on charts as "Dangerous Ground," she sent *Dace* and CTF-71 reports of her possible contact with three enemy heavy cruisers. Unfortunately, she lost contact with the enemy vessels at 0507. A little over an hour later at 0625, *Darter* sighted and began tracking what she believed to be an enemy battleship 38,000 yards distant. Again, she was unable to close on the target and broke contact at 0659. She patrolled through the Dangerous Ground for the remainder of the day.

*Darter* met with *Dace* to plan the remainder of their coordinated patrol from 0000-0016 the next morning. At 0017, her radar detected a contact at bearing 131°T 30,000 yards distant and she called to *Dace*, "We have radar contact. Let's go!" The two boats chased the contact, eventually identified as a task force of eleven heavy Japanese warships, up the Palawan Passage for the next five hours. At 0509, *Darter* submerged and began her approach on the force's port column. Just after she readied her tubes at 0527, she identified the column as four heavy cruisers

and a battleship. Five minutes later, she fired her bow tubes at Vice Adm. Takeo Kurita's flagship, the heavy cruiser *Atago*. She subsequently swung hard to port and brought her stern tubes to bear against the second ship in the column, the heavy cruiser *Takao*. After firing her stern tubes, *Darter* "whipped [her] periscope back to the first target to see the sight of a lifetime. [*Atago*] was a mass of billowing black smoke from [her no. 1] turret to the stern. No superstructure could be seen. Bright orange flames shot out the side along the main deck from the bow to the after turret." The heavy cruiser sank approximately 30 minutes later at position 09°24'N, 117°11'E.

As *Darter* turned to the southwest on course 220°T at 0534, her four stern torpedoes struck *Takao*, severely damaging the enemy heavy cruiser's engine and navigation system. Five minutes later, enemy destroyers began echo ranging and an inaccurate depth charge attack. Over the next hour, the noise from exploding depth charges combined with breaking up noises, "which increased in intensity until they seemed to be right overhead and shook the [boat] violently." Finally, she came to periscope depth and observed her prey dead in the water and listing slightly to starboard at bearing 019°T. She secured from battle stations and began reloading her tubes in preparation for a second attack on the heavy cruiser at 0900.

Two hours later at 1100, *Darter* began closing on the stricken *Takao*. As she came to within 8,000 yards of the heavy cruiser's port side at 1300, the submarine sighted two patrolling

enemy destroyers assisted by four aircraft circling overhead. Rather than attempt to outwit the destroyers, she broke off her approach and began working around toward the heavy cruiser's bow. An hour and a half later, both enemy destroyers detected the submarine as she closed to within 7,000 yards. Rather than attack the oncoming destroyers with any of her six remaining torpedoes, she broke off the attack.

At 2245, *Darter* attempted a third attack on *Takao*. Unfortunately, as she worked around to starboard of the heavy cruiser, she grounded on Bombay Shoal at 0005 on 23 October 1944. As the submarine attempted to lighten herself in an effort to float off the shoal with the high tide, a Japanese destroyer began closing on her position at 0015. After closing to within 12,100 yards and appearing to man her guns, the enemy vessel broke contact and rejoined *Takao* at 0030.

Just after the beginning of high tide, *Darter* briefly attempted to back off the reef from 0146-0149 without success. A second attempt from 0210-0230 also failed. As high tide receded, she concentrated her efforts on the destruction of classified documents and equipment. In addition to her deck log and other publications, she destroyed her Bathythermograph, gyroscope, radio system and SD and SJ radar systems.

At 0245, *Dace* approached to within 50 yards and passed over a messenger line to the stricken submarine. Approximately twenty minutes later, most of *Darter's* crew transferred using the two submarines rubber boats. With demolition charges rigged, at

0435, McClintock was the last sailor to abandon ship.

Safely on board *Dace*, he watched topside as the demolition charges detonated at 0455. Unfortunately, they failed to damage *Darter's* hull. Fifteen minutes later *Dace* fired two torpedoes in an effort to destroy the grounded submarine, both of which struck the shoal. At 0530, she fired a second two-torpedo spread. Again, both missed their intended target. Unwilling to expend additional torpedoes, *Dace* fired 21 .50-caliber rounds from her 3-inch gun into *Darter's* hull, which did little damage. An incoming Mitsubishi G4M Type 1 *Betty* land attack aircraft forced her to quickly submerge and maneuver away from the shoal. As she backed away from the shoal, the submarine heard two explosions, which she believed to indicate the *Betty* attacked *Darter*.



At 0805, *Dace* surfaced and sent a message to CTF-71 requesting assistance in destroying *Darter*. Despite repeated attempts, she proved unable to make contact with anyone. Just before 1000, she detected an enemy aircraft nine miles distant and submerged. Approximately twenty minutes later, she heard a surface ship begin echo ranging. At 1036, she sighted an enemy destroyer approach the shoal and lay to off *Darter*.

After the Japanese vacated the area, *Dace* surfaced and closed on *Darter* at 1830. She detected and slowly approached the

submarine at 2001, intent on dispatching a boarding party to destroy her with demolition charges. Despite receiving orders notifying her that *Rock* (SS-274) had been ordered to destroy the grounded boat, *Dace* continued to close on her target for another hour. As she closed to within 2,000 yards at 2112, the submarine detected what she believed to have been an enemy submarine echo ranging in preparation for an attack. She immediately cleared the area near Bombay Shoal at high speed. At 0600 on 25 October 1944, CTF-71 ordered her to return to the submarine base at Fremantle, Australia.

*Rock* sighted and began closing on *Darter* at 0125 on 27 October 1944. A little over an hour later at 0255, she determined the submarine lay grounded on the shoal at position 220°T and chose to postpone her attack on the wreck until after daybreak. She went to battle stations and once again closed on *Darter* at 0440. The submarine maneuvered into position and fired six Mk. 23 torpedoes from her bow tubes from 0523-0539. All six shots "ran erratically" and missed. Rather than attempt a second attack, she broke contact at 0542. Shortly thereafter, she submerged and patrolled the area for the next six hours.

*Rock* came to periscope depth at 1038 and proceeded toward *Darter* approximately an hour and a half later at 1200. She arrived off Bombay Shoal and swung her stern toward the grounded submarine at 1854. From 1908-1913, the submarine fired a spread of three Mk. 18 torpedoes from her no. 8-10 tubes. She judged that all three struck

either *Darter* or the shoal. She retired from the area at 1925 and resumed her patrol off Palawan at 2012.

At 1907 on 29 October 1944, CTF-72 ordered *Nautilus* (SS-168) to depart from her patrol in the Mindoro Strait, proceed to Bombay Shoal and destroy *Darter*. She sighted and set an approach course toward her intended target at 0924 on 31 October. The submarine took station off the shoal and surfaced a little over an hour and a half later at 1100. From 1113-1131, she used her 6-inch/53-caliber deck guns to fire 44 rounds each of Common Mk. 24 and High Capacity Mk. 34 shells into *Darter*. After she ceased fire, *Nautilus* concluded that, "it is very doubtful that any equipment . . . would be of any value to Japan-except as scrap."

While the Navy repeatedly attempted to destroy their boat, *Darter's* crew proceeded

### Epilogue

It must be realized that Commander McClintock understood fully the dangers involved in the end around maneuver in which DARTER grounded-indeed, the incident is a classic example of calculated risk, and he was not held in any way at fault in the incident. It was simply one of the unfortunate tactical losses which must be expected in wartime, but which, in this case, was minimized by the fact that DARTER's full complement of personnel was saved. In order to keep this fighting and successful crew together the entire DARTER crew was ordered to take over the submarine MENCHADEN, then building at Manitowoc, Wisconsin.<sup>1, 2</sup>

toward Australia on board *Dace*, which moored port side to *Euryale* in Fremantle Harbor at 0535 on 6 November 1944.

*Darter* was stricken from the Naval Register on 27 November 1944.

A little less than three months later on 21 February 1945, the Navy awarded McClintock the Navy Cross for his "extraordinary heroism" on *Darter's* fourth war patrol. On 24 July, the submarine earned a Navy Unit Commendation for her "outstanding heroism in action during a war patrol against enemy Japanese Fleet units."

Nearly seven years after the Navy struck her from its register, on 2 January 1952, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Philippines (ComNavPhil) ordered the removal of classified material and the destruction of the seven torpedoes and four mines reportedly on board the ex-*Darter*.

Five days later, a demolition team attached to the Thirteenth Air Force arrived off Bombay Shoal on board the light cargo ship *Mark* (AKL-12) and tow *LCM-107*. A search of the boat located torpedoes in tubes no. 1-3, 5, and 6 as well as one laying on the port side of the forward torpedo room. After completing their search, the demolition team placed 96 pounds of composition C3 explosive and 150 feet of Primacord on the submarine.

The fuse was set alight at 1450, with *LCM-107* taking up a position approximately two miles from the shoal to observe the explosion, which occurred at 1530. The landing craft subsequently returned to the shoal to inspect the wreckage, which left "little doubt" the blast had destroyed all six torpedoes.

*Darter* earned four battle stars for her service during World War II.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oneternalpatrol.com/uss-darter-227-loss.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <https://pacificwrecks.com/sub/SS-227.html>