

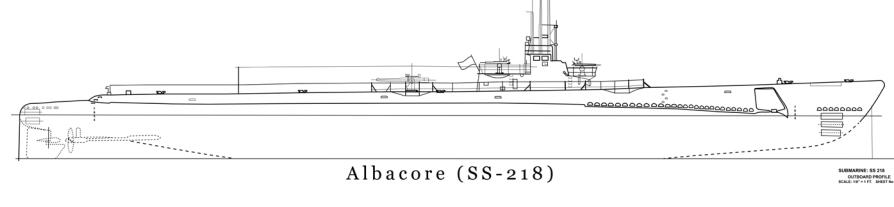
The Day

More Than a Month: Invest in Our Planet **Inside**

SUNDAY, APRIL 16, 2023

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Albacore (SS-218)

CASE CLOSED

OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH
NOT TO BE RELEASED
FOR PUBLICATION
NAVY YARD MARE ISLAND, CALIF.

RESTRICTED



2592-44 (SS218).
BOW ON. ALTERATIONS CIRCLED ON M-1. PHOTOS
NO. 2580-44 TO 2581-44 INC.
MARE ISLAND, CAL. 28 APRIL 1944.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

The USS Albacore is seen during its final overhaul at Mare Island Naval Shipyard in California on April 28, 1944. The work performed at Mare Island was key to identifying the wreckage. The graphic at top is based on a blueprint showing Albacore after its final modifications. Visit [theday.com](#) for more photos and to hear voices from the story.

Wreck of WWII submarine built by EB identified

Story by JOHN RUDDY
Graphics and design by SCOTT RITTER
Day Staff

ON OCT. 28, 1944, a U.S. submarine made a fueling stop at Midway Atoll in the Pacific, then headed west and was never seen again.

Ten days later, an under-water explosion occurred off Japan's Hokkaido Island near a mine barrier.

Those two events have long been thought related, but without physical evidence, there was no way to know for sure.

Now, after 79 years, the story of the Groton-built USS Albacore finally has an ending. Wreckage found last year near the blast site has been identified by the Navy as the missing submarine.

That development, announced in February, completes the biography of a vessel that had stunning success in World War II. The news also adds a detail to Electric Boat's wartime history and brings conclusion for the families of the 85 men lost.



COURTESY SOCIETY LA PLONGÉE FOR DEEP SEA TECHNOLOGY

Visibility was limited to about 10 feet when an ROV took images of the wreck in October. A 1944 overhaul of Albacore at Mare Island Naval Shipyard left visual clues that helped researchers identify the submarine. Strips of teak decking can be seen in the photo above.

For one woman, the wait has been longer than for probably anyone alive.

As the research vessels Nie Maru No. 18 and Takara Maru No. 18 plowed through the waters off Hokkaido last May, Tamaki Ura had every reason

to believe he would find what he was looking for.

A retired professor at the University of Tokyo whose specialty is underwater robotics, Ura has been searching since 2017 for shipwrecks in Japanese waters, which are not well-explored.

"Sunken warship searches ... and recovery technologies have reached levels unimaginable in the past," he has written. "The age of regarding sunken warships as graveyards for lack of search capabilities is over."

As head of the Society La Plongée for Deep Sea Technology, Ura has used remotely operated underwater vehicles (ROVs) to explore 24 scuttled Japanese submarines, identifying them individually. He also discovered the steamship Taiyo Maru, torpedoed by a U.S. submarine with great loss of civilian life.

In a Zoom interview, Ura said he got many suggestions for what vessel he should chase next. But he has limited resources, and much of his support comes from crowdfunding.

Albacore, well-known in Japan for its wartime exploits, presented an easy project, he said. The Nov. 7, 1944,

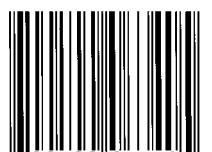
SEE U.S. SUBMARINE PAGE A4

WEATHER

Today, chance for morning showers, mostly cloudy. High 60. Monday, cloudy with showers. High 58. **E6**

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TRUMP'S INDICTMENT SPARKED \$15.4M FUNDRAISING BONANZA

Donald Trump has raised \$15.4 million in the days since his unprecedented indictment by a Manhattan prosecutor, his campaign said, thanks to a surge of support from small-dollar donors.

Almost 98% of the donations since the indictment on March 30 came from donors who gave less than \$200, and 24% came from first-time contributors to Trump, who has raised money continuously since first becoming a candidate in 2015. His average donation over the period was less than \$50.

The surge follows a disappointing start to Trump's fundraising. He raised \$18.8 million in the first quarter, including \$4 million that came the day after a grand jury voted to indict the former president on March 30. That was less than the \$20.4 million he raised in the fourth quarter of 2022, which included \$9.5 million after he announced his third run for the White House on Nov. 15.

— Bloomberg

COPS REALIZED THEY MIGHT BE AT WRONG HOUSE BEFORE KILLING MAN

New Mexico police officers were questioning whether they were at the right house shortly before they fatally shot an armed homeowner this month at what turned out to be the wrong address, according to body-camera video released Friday.

The release of the video comes more than a week after Robert Dotson, 52, was killed by police in Farmington, N.M., on April 5, when officers showed up to the wrong house in response to a domestic violence call. Three officers who fired their weapons have been placed on administrative leave, and the fatal mix-up is being investigated by the New Mexico State Police.

After the officers appeared to laugh at the notion that they mixed up the addresses, police backed away and shined a light on Dotson once he came to the door, video shows. When Dotson opened the screen door and began to raise his firearm, police opened fire on the homeowner, who quickly fell to the ground.

— The Washington Post

Orthodox Easter



MINDAUGAS KULBIS/AP PHOTO
Children wait for a Lithuanian Orthodox priest to bless collected traditional cakes and painted eggs prepared for an Easter celebration Saturday in Vilnius, Lithuania. Orthodox Christians celebrate Easter today.

Abortion bans put GOP in a tough position

Base is happy but party may face 2024 backlash

By STEVE PEOPLES
and ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE
Associated Press

Tallahassee, Fla. — As a new election season begins, the Republican Party is struggling to navigate the politics of abortion.

Allies for leading presidential candidates concede that their hard-line anti-abortion policies may be popular with the conservatives who decide primary elections, but they could ultimately alienate the broader set of voters they need to win the presidency.

The conflict unfolded across America this past week, but nowhere more than Florida, where Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis signed into law one of the nation's toughest abortion bans late Thursday. If the courts ultimately allow the new measure to take effect, it will soon be illegal for Florida women to obtain an abortion after six weeks of pregnancy, which is before most realize they're pregnant.

SEE ABORTION PAGE A7

HOUSING SOLUTIONS LAB

Many affordable housing bills reflect emerging legislative priority

By ELIZABETH REGAN
Day Staff Writer

As numerous bills addressing housing affordability make their way through the state legislature, advocates say it's because more people are recognizing the importance of fixing a broken housing system.

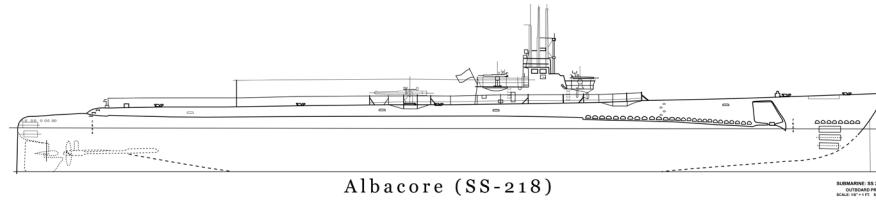
Some of those advocates also say the system could benefit from a more cohesive approach to engaging lawmakers and the public in solutions.

The bills represent priorities from those including Gov. Ned Lamont, leadership in the House and Senate, and two grassroots groups hoping to change the state's housing landscape.

Proposals run the gamut from zoning changes to a plan that would allocate hundreds of millions of dollars to retrofit and remediate old homes and apartment buildings, to piecemeal measures addressing renters' rights.

Beth Sabilia, director of the new Center for Housing Equity and Opportunity in Eastern Connecticut, said the region needs all the tools it can get to address housing challenges

SEE PROPOSALS PAGE A7



U.S. submarine was well-known in Japan for its wartime exploits

FROM A1

explosion, believed to be the sub striking a mine, had witnesses: the crew of a Japanese patrol boat and those in a nearby lighthouse. The positions they reported put the search area at a manageable one square nautical mile. Ura figured he could survey it with sonar in a day.

It didn't even take that long. After two hours, a shape appeared on computers aboard Ura's vessels: something long and narrow, like a submarine.

■ ■ ■

When Albacore's keel was laid at Electric Boat on April 21, 1941, the U.S. was gearing up for involvement in World War II. EB was building six other submarines, and two more were ready for delivery to the Navy.

A week earlier, on the other side of the country, sailor James Teel Porter, 22, married his 18-year-old fiancée, Bette Porter, now Bette Sargent, spoke via Zoom from her home in Seal Beach, Calif. She is 100.

"The first time I saw him, I was 10 years old, and he was on a diving board," she said, "and I told my friend that I was with, I'm going to marry that boy." I thought he was the most gorgeous thing I ever saw."

After Pearl Harbor, her husband, then on a destroyer, volunteered for submarine duty because he knew he'd be sent home for training, she said. In 1942 the couple arrived in New London and lived at 59 Jay St. while James attended submarine school in Groton.

While they were here, the newly commissioned USS Albacore (SS-218) departed for the Pacific. Porter would later join the crew.

By early 1943 Albacore had sunk a Japanese light cruiser and a destroyer. But the sub's career was nearly cut short by an unexpected foe: the U.S. Fifth Air Force. In two friendly-fire incidents that November, American planes inexplicably attacked the sub. One bomb exploded near the bow, knocking out auxiliary power.

"Everything moveable changed location, other objects broke their moorings, and the ship was plunged in darkness," Cmdr. Oscar Hagberg, Albacore's captain, wrote in his report. For two hours, the sub bounced between depths of 30 and 400 feet at various angles while the crew struggled to regain control.

On its next patrol, Albacore sank another destroyer. By then Porter, a motor machinist's mate, had transferred aboard. He was there for the boat's subsequent assignment: an overhaul at Mare Island Naval Shipyard in California.

For Porter, Mare Island was a chance to see his wife. For her, it would mean something she couldn't foresee. Far into the future, work done at the yard would finally make it possible for her, and everyone else, to know Albacore's fate.

■ ■ ■

Aboard Nie Maru No. 18 and Takara Maru No. 18, Ura's team quickly confirmed they had found a submarine. They got a multibeam sonar image and footage with a small ROV. But the vehicle wasn't suited to the 777-foot depth.

In October, Ura went back with a bigger ROV and got better images. Hatch covers, corroded metal and teak decking were visible. To an untrained eye, it didn't look much like a submarine.

But for those who knew what to look for, details were there to nail down the

wreck's identity.

"It was not easy," said David Johnston, a volunteer researcher for the Naval History and Heritage Command who reviewed the footage.

"The wreck is fouled by fishing nets, the water currents are very strong, there's a lot of suspended sediments and marine life in the water; a lot of fishes are swimming around ... and the lighting is terrible," he said. "The visibility is probably only about 10 feet."

The boat is in three pieces, and only the center section was found, Johnston said. One end was probably blown off by the mine, the other severed by implosion damage.

Johnston had previously researched how Gato-class submarines like Albacore were modified during the war. As soon as Gatos were in combat, it became clear that the conning tower fairwater was too big and made the subs a target when surfaced.

"They almost immediately came to the conclusion that it needed to be cut down and made smaller," he said.

By analyzing photos, Johnston established that wartime Gatos existed in four versions: their original design and three successive modifications in which plating was stripped from the fairwater, among other changes.

When Albacore was at Mare Island from February to May 1944, its overhaul included that third modification, which left visual clues to be decoded eight decades later.

The biggest one was a line of vent holes in the superstructure to allow faster diving, Johnston said. Crucially, the holes, which are apparent on the wreck, were known not to be on the four other U.S. submarines that sank in the vicinity.

Based largely on that, Johnston and his fellow researchers, Steve Katona and Yutaka Iwasaki, concluded the wreck was Albacore.

There was also circumstantial evidence. The explosion's witnesses cataloged debris that surfaced, including books, bedding and Lucky Strike cigarettes. A winter jacket was marked "ALB-5," and a pair of white shorts bore the initials ASK.

The researchers found a match on the crew list: Seaman Second Class Arthur Star Kruger. It was mute testimony from one of Albacore's lost.

■ ■ ■

Bette Porter reunited with her husband at Mare Island, where for three months they and their 3-month-old son lived in a Quonset hut.

"It was interesting," Sargent said. "I felt like I suddenly was in the Navy."

As Porter got to know his child, he didn't have much to say about life on a submarine despite his wife's questions. She remembers seeing Albacore being worked on but never went aboard.

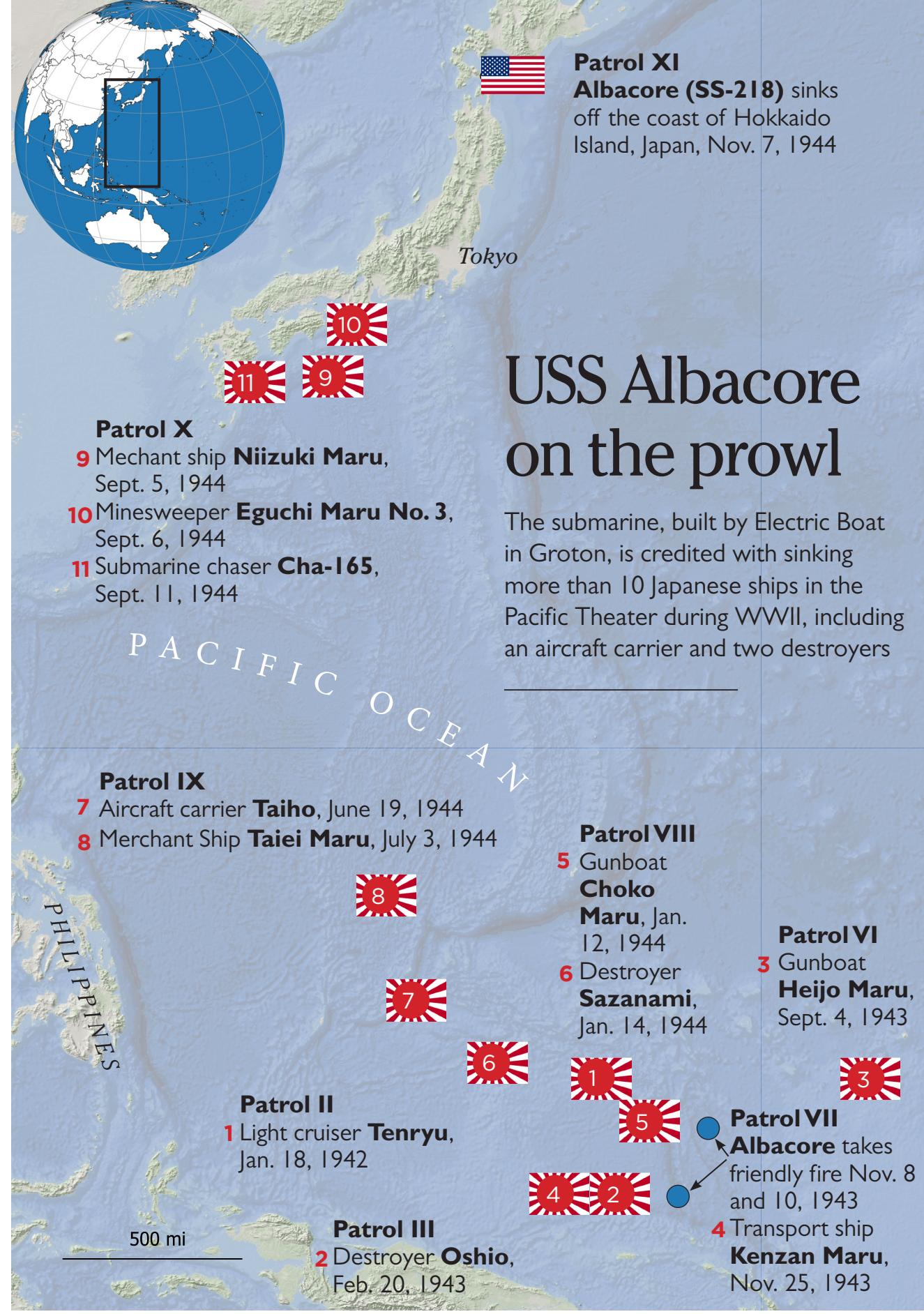
As they socialized with other families, the days went by until it was time to say farewell. Sargent was aware of what the future might hold. On their last morning together, the couple were standing atop a long staircase at a San Francisco hotel.

"I remember the thought going through my head," she said. "I could push him down this and when he got to the end of the stairway ... he wouldn't be able to go back aboard his ship and leave."

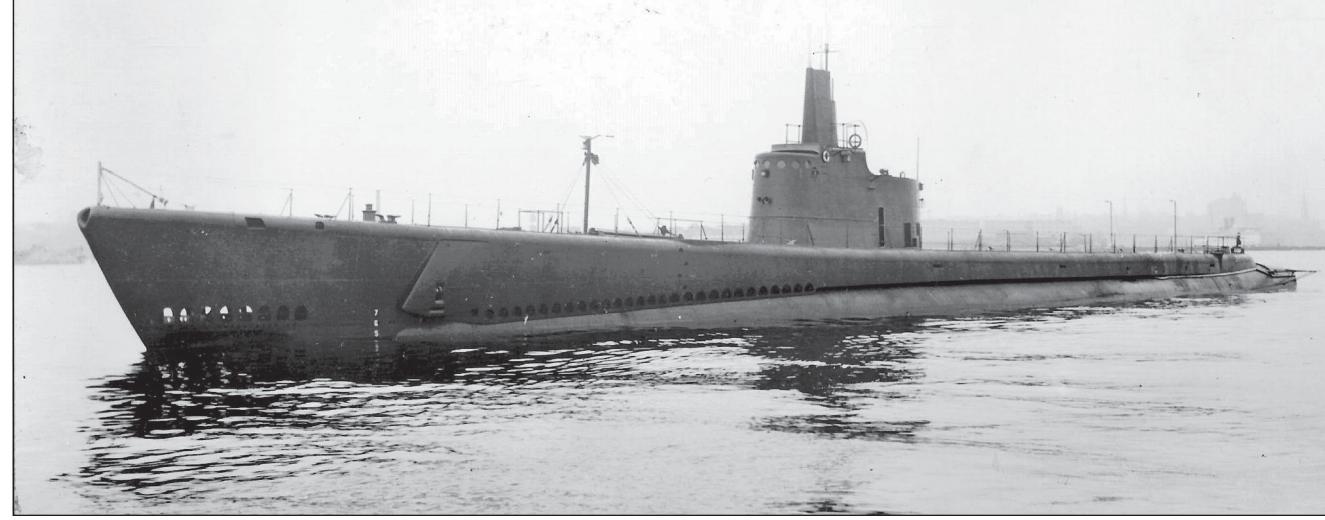
But he did leave, and she never saw him again.

Albacore's biggest triumph was still ahead. On June 19, 1944, during the Battle of the Philippine Sea, the sub got a clear shot at an aircraft car-

SEE NAVY PAGE A6



MAP: SCOTT RITTER AND JOHN RUDDY/THE DAY | DATA: NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND; NATURAL EARTH; ESRI

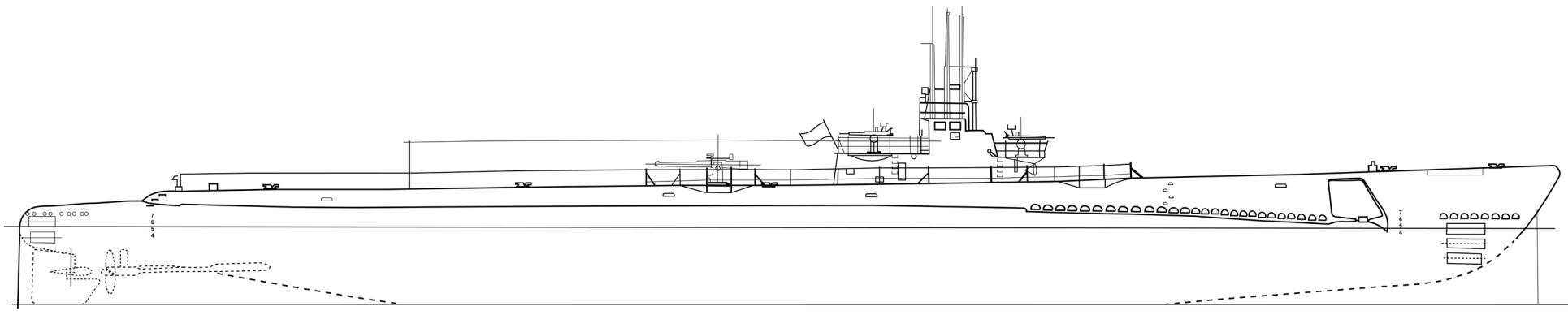


These photos of Albacore, taken two years apart, show the extent of the modifications it underwent during its brief life. Like other Gato-class subs, it had a large conning tower fairwater, the structure amidships, which was seen as a liability in combat. Gatos underwent three modifications to reduce their profile. The top view was taken at Electric Boat on May 9, 1942. Below is how Albacore looked at Mare Island Naval Shipyard after the third modification on April 28, 1944.

SUBMARINE FORCE MUSEUM/NATIONAL ARCHIVES

■ ■ ■

SEE NAVY PAGE A6



Albacore (SS-218)

SUBMARINE: SS 218
OUTBOARD PROFILE
SCALE: 1/8" = 1 FT. SHEET NO 4

Class: Gato
Builder: Electric Boat
Keel laid: April 21, 1941
Launched: Feb. 17, 1942
Commissioned: June 1, 1942
War patrols: 11
Lost: Nov. 7, 1944

Length: 311 feet 9 inches
Beam: 27 feet 3 inches
Draft: 17 feet
Honors:
Presidential Unit Citation, Patrols 2, 3, 8, 9
Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with
nine battle stars

Captains:
Lt. Cmdr. Richard C. Lake, Patrols 1-4
Cmdr. Oscar E. Hagberg, Patrols 5-7
Cmdr. James W. Blanchard, Patrols 8-10
Lt. Cmdr. Hugh R. Rimmer, Patrol 11

"It is the position of the Navy that the sea is a fitting and honorable resting place for its fallen sailors"

IVOR MOLLEMA, AN ARCHAEOLOGIST WITH THE NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND

Navy says submarine's wreckage will be left alone

FROM A4

rier. Submariner and author Edward L. Beach later wrote that Cmdr. James Blanchard, the captain, was about to fire when a light went out on the torpedo data computer, putting the fire-control solution's accuracy in doubt.

"Only one thing to do, if you don't want to let the target get away," Beach wrote. "If you put up the periscope and feed continuous dope into the TDC, perhaps you can keep close enough to the correct solution to go ahead and shoot anyway."

That's what Blanchard did. With the sub at risk from the exposed periscope, Blanchard fired six torpedoes, then dived to avoid onrushing destroyers. The last shot struck the carrier, Taiho, causing minor damage. Hours later, Taiho's crew vented gasoline fumes

from a ruptured fuel tank, and a spark ignited, belatedly dooming the ship.

It might have been Electric Boat's biggest day of the war: A second Groton-built sub, Cavalla, also sank a carrier.

Two days before Christmas 1944, Bette Porter was home in Arizona celebrating her mother's birthday.

"That's when they came to the house with the telegram," she said. Albacore was overdue and presumed lost.

"It suddenly wasn't a party mood anymore. Everybody's

Bette Porter married her husband, James Teel Porter, in 1941 when she was 18. Three years later, she was a widow.

COURTESY MARIA THERESA PORTER



suddenly feeling sorry for me, and at the moment I hadn't even gotten ahold of my own feelings."

She soon remarried, but for a while she kept mentally searching for her first husband.

"It took me four years to get past the point that I was no longer looking for him," she said. "I had finally decided where he was, and I could do nothing but be at peace with what I knew."

By February, the Navy was satisfied the Albacore evidence met its standard for identifying the wreck, said Ivor Mollema, an archaeologist with the Naval History and Heritage Command. The plan for the site is simple: Leave it alone.

"It is the position of the Navy that the sea is a fitting and honorable resting place for its fallen sailors," Mollema said. "The intent is to leave them ... where they are and honor them ... by preserving the site as best we can."

Albacore sank about 50,000 tons of Japanese vessels, more than most U.S. submarines. Of the 52 subs lost in the war, it's the 11th found and the fifth among those built by EB. The others are Flier, Grayback, Grunion and Perch.

When the identification was announced, there was no telegram for Bette Sargent, only a phone call from her daughter-in-law.

"It was a little late for me," she said. "... I just thought, 'So late, so late. Everybody's gone, and it's so late for it to happen.'"

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Albacore officer's niece tells his story in children's book

BY JOHN RUDDY
Day Staff Writer

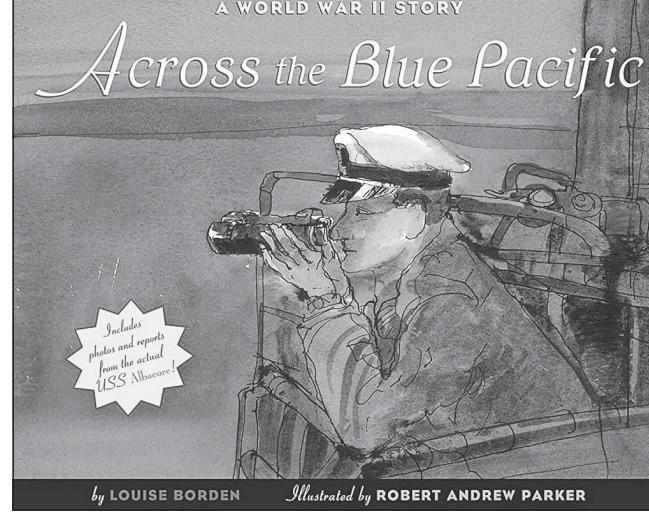
Children's author Louise Borden has been reading aloud in elementary schools for years, but on March 1, the experience was a little different.

For the first time, she read her 2006 book "Across the Blue Pacific," which is about her uncle, an officer lost on the USS Albacore. The event, in Ripley, Ohio, near her Cincinnati home, came just two weeks after news that the wreck of Albacore had been identified.



"I didn't cry, but I was ... a little choked up," said Borden, whose uncle was Lt. Theodore Taylor Walker, Albacore's executive officer.

Borden, who has written on many historical topics, portrayed her uncle, who died before she was born, from the perspective of Molly, a young girl. Molly meets Walker when he is home on leave, and he helps her and her brother build a snowman. Later they write him letters.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LOUISE BORDEN
"Across the Blue Pacific," a children's book about the Albacore, was written by Louise Borden, the niece of the sub's executive officer, Lt. Theodore Taylor Walker, left, who is the focus of the story.

Then, two days before Christmas, they learn that their neighbor, Walker's mother, has gotten a telegram with bad news. Slowly they realize Walker is never coming home.

Borden read "Across the Blue Pacific" as part of "Read Across America," an annual celebration of reading sponsored by the National Education Association.

She said she made a set of cards for students in the fourth-grade class she visited, each with a photo of an Albacore crew member. The photos were from OnEternalPatrol.com, a website dedicated to lost submariners.

"When I handed these cards out ... you would have thought

... that they had a celebrity in their hand. They were so reverential holding this man's picture and showing each other," Borden said.

Walker entered the U.S. Naval Academy at 16 and was just 23 when he served as Albacore's executive officer. He was awarded a Bronze Star posthumously. While attending submarine school in Groton, he became engaged to a Connecticut College student. Borden said she was in touch with the woman while writing the book.

In Borden's childhood, her uncle "was this mysterious person who was missing, and I was just convinced that he was going to come back."

j.ruddy@theday.com

Celebrate Spring!

Make reservations for Mother's Day today!



We have the Perfect Dining Location for your next gathering.
Garden Dining Room • Bar & Lounge • Seasonal Outdoor Patio

Authentic Italian Cuisine with a Tuscan Flare

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