

## U.S.S. Robalo (SS 273)

Keel Laid - October 24, 1942

Launched - May 9, 1943

Commissioned - September 28, 1943

Sponsor - Mrs. E. S. Root - wife of Captain E. S. Root, U.S.N. Retired

U.S.S. Robalo left Fremantle, Australia on June 22, 1944 leaving on her third and last war patrol. It was her last patrol not by choice but by the fortunes of war. It was like the beginning of every other patrol. Every man and officer in the crew knew it might be the last, but did not think about it. Their thoughts were concerned with happenings at the moment, turning valves, watching dials, navigating the ship. Thoughts of not coming back were kept deep down within each man and became only a part of the tension a submariner knows during war patrols.

Little publicized, the submariners go about their dangerous missions with sealed lips and at a great personal risk, inflicting tremendous devastation to the enemy. They are men of the "Silent Service." Silently and unsung, they prey upon enemy waters and when they are lost they go down silently and unseen by the world. In this manner Robalo met her end.

On July 2, 1944 a contact report stated U.S.S. Robalo had sighted two FUSO Class Japanese battleships with air cover and two destroyers for escort. The ship was just east of Borneo. No other messages were ever received from Robalo and when she did not return from patrol, she was presumed lost.

U.S.S. Robalo was sunk July 26, 1944, two miles off the western coast of Palawan Island from an explosion in vicinity of her after battery. It is supposed that the explosion was caused by the submarine striking an enemy mine. Four men swam ashore: an officer and three enlisted men. They were Ensign Samuel L. Tucker; Floyd G. Laughlin, quartermaster, first class; Wallace K. Martin, signalman, third class; and Mason C. Poston, electrician's mate, second class. Military Police captured them and confined them in prison. August 15th they were evacuated by a Japanese destroyer and no other information is known regarding their destination or whereabouts.

It is possible that they were executed by the Japanese or that the destroyer in which they embarked was sunk. In any case, they were never recovered. A grateful nation can only say "God rest their brave souls."

U.S.S. Robalo (SS 273) earned two (2) Battle Stars on the Asiatic-Pacific Area Service Ribbon, one for each of her first two war patrols. Her first patrol was from January 8, to March 6, 1944; and the second from April 10, to May 30, 1944.

