

17 July, 1942

From: Commanding Officer, YP-251.
To: Commandant, 13th Naval District.
Via: District Coast Guard Officer, Ketchikan, 13th Naval District.
Subject: War Diary - 4 July, 1942 to 12 July, 1942, inclusive.
4 July, 1942

1305, departed from Standard Oil Company dock at Ketchikan, Alaska and headed north in Tongass Narrows on assigned patrol duty. Informed just before departure by the District Commander that he suspected enemy submarines to be operating in the patrol area to which we are assigned. The assigned patrol is Cape Ommaney to Forrester Island and to proceed there via Snow Passage and Cape Decision. 1330, mustered crew on forward deck, told them of submarine possibility in patrol area, and that no play and all work was the program. Set watches four on and four off. 1615, Ship Island light abeam. 1835, Patz Harbor abeam. 1940, Lincoln Rock Lightstation abeam, flew ship's call letters. 2120, transiting Snow Passage, with a strong favorable current. 2345, rounding Helm Rock Lighted Buoy in Summer Strait. Weather good, visibility excellent. Held general quarters each watch.

5 July, 1942

0110, General quarters, stopped and identified the fishing boat, "AGNA II" of Ketchikan off Beauclerc Light. 0215, Point St. Albans Buoy abeam. 0342, Cape Decision Light abeam, hoisted ship's call letters. 0345, set course on 850 degrees magnetic. 0445, general quarters, U. S. Navy plane passed overhead, exchanged signals, notified QUAJ by flash message. (0745, stopped engines to repair broken generator belt which was caused by water leaking through main deck into engine room. Drifting in outer patrol area. It gets so that every time you see an engineer on deck, that he wants to stop for something or another.) 0925, general quarters, identified U.S. Navy plane on course 225 degrees true. Notified QUAJ by flash message. 1100, (engines repaired,) set course 120 degrees magnetic and followed 100 fathom line and maintaining double sea and sky lookouts. 1459, Hazy Islands abeam and approximately ten miles off. 1905, changed course to 140 degrees magnetic so as to follow the extreme outer edge of the patrol area. It is believed that our mission is better accomplished by patrolling the outside of our area, as the shoreline is covered by trolling vessels at this time of the year. 2020, changed course to 60 degrees magnetic, stopped all engines and auxiliaries except the degaussing motor. In this manner we can drift silently during the darkest hours and can hear the exhaust of diesel engines for many miles. Drifting until 2400.

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5 July, 1942

0000, to 0350, drifting with all engines and auxiliaries shut down. 0350, underway on zig-sag courses making good 120 degrees magnetic. 0600, making good a course of 160 degrees magnetic. 0650, general quarters, all batteries manned and ready in 28 seconds. 0940, reduced speed to 270 RPM because of heavy spray over bow. The thought uppermost in the minds of each man on board is the total absence of aircraft and surface craft. We all feel that enemy submarines could operate in schools here without fear of detection, and at the same time we are aware of the vast areas to be patrolled. All hands are very keen for some sort of action. The vessel rolls much and is most uncomfortable. It is apparent that most ship's work will have to be done in port. As it takes fourteen men at general quarters stations and we have a crew of sixteen, we will be doing well just to stand watches and maintain the patrol. The crew has been instructed to keep all their clothes on in the night, and undress only in the daytime. Our rest period will have to be during the day, with added alertness at night. 1010, sighted U.S. Navy plane about three miles to port flying low and towards Forrester Island. He made no attempt to identify us or be identified. Some day, one of them will get a blast of shrapnel for certain. Notified QUAD of presence of plane. 1015, in my cabin writing up the log when WILLIAM M. Cox, in charge of the watch rushes into my cabin and reports the periscope of a submarine on our starboard bow. All hands are already at battle stations. About 1000 yards 60 degrees on the starboard bow is what appears to be an upright floating pile. It is very steady in spite of the swell and the thought occurs that it would be a perfect disguise for a periscope, especially in these waters. With the District Commander's words in mind as to the presence of enemy submarines we cannot take any chances. We head directly for it on zig-sag courses, with half the gun crew in their underwear. Most of the crew believe it to be a periscope and there is a tense nervousness. At 800 yards we open fire with all batteries over alternate bows. Before we were within 200 yards of it and verified it to be a pile floating upright eleven rounds of three inch had been fired and it was riddled with 30 and 50 caliber bullets. The pile is about five feet out of the water and about five inches in diameter. At least the boys are no longer gunshy and it has been good for all of them. They had the main battery going like a machine gun, and the problem here will be to slow them down. We are all a little sad about the ammunition, but I feel that it was well spent. Notified QUAD of the gunfire, as it may have been heard by Forrester Island. We have learned much by this morning experience. Even the engineer below has had his bit of excitement while waiting for some retaliation from whatever we were firing at. Much of the tenseness which existed has disappeared. We know now that;

1. We can hit with our main battery, but need instruction in firing on the uproll.
2. We cannot fire directly ahead with any degree of accuracy.
3. The ammunition forward must be stowed differently. The forward and after ready boxes must be stowed with half shrapnel and half common.
4. We need better signals to control the firing, until we can get the sound powered telephones connected.
5. The Commanding Officer's station must be on the top of the pilot house where he can get a better view and also control the after batteries. A speaking tube to the pilot house should be installed.
6. The fifty calibers are a very potent weapon against surface craft.
7. The fifty calibers when firing at surface craft must not be allowed to fire across the ship. It is dangerous to personnel on the opposite machine gun.
8. That our starboard backstay has been shot neatly away.

1200 to 1600, underway on course 90 degrees magnetic at 200 R/M. 1412, changed course to 105 degrees magnetic. 1428, changed course to 135 degrees magnetic. 1615, changed course to 280 degrees magnetic. 1715, intercepted plain language message on 2670 from some cannery to NKJ as follows: "submarine periscope sighted off Cape Addington about a thousand yards off the beach. There is no doubt about it, it is a submarine". 1718, proceeding at top speed towards Cape Addington on course 340 degrees magnetic. Notified QUAJ of same. General quarters in lifebelts and lifeboats made ready. All codes and confidential matter placed in a weighted pillow-case and placed in my bunk in the pilot house. All hands at battle stations throughout the night. 2300, off reported submarine position off Cape Addington and zig-zagging over area. Engineers have been coming up for the past hour telling me that the engines should be stopped so that we can clear the bilge pumps, but somehow we have kept going. Have had several men in the bilges all the time, keeping the suctions clear. 2330, engines finally had to be stopped to clear the bilges, stopped and drifting off Addington with all auxiliaries shut down and listening for enemy diesels. There is a possibility that he may be taking water or fuel in one of these coves and will attempt to sneak out before daylight.

7 July, 1942

0307, bilges temporarily cleared, underway at 200 R/M off Cape Addington. The engineer says we must go to port to repair the bilge pumps. I have told him that in some way we must get by the best we can, as we cannot return to port while we are on this assigned duty. Sent six men in the bilges to bail out the water from forward to aft so that it can be pumped out with the hand pump. There is so much oil in the bilges that the galley tables and deck are filthy with it. What a mess, the water is leaking badly through the stern bearing due to the whipping of the shaft which is slightly out of line. What a relief it will be not to have to worry about the engine. 0400, searching all the coves in and around Cape Addington on the supposition that the Submarine may be taking water hereabouts. This particular section of the coast has hundreds of coves where an enemy could be refueled without being detected. 0800, stopped and identified the fishing vessel "Rosaland" of Ketchikan, #31A226. Owner is an alien Filipino named Alfredo Torres, who has license to operate #1406. He also had identification card. This man should be investigated further, acted rather dumb - perhaps too dumb. 0815, saw No Lane stopping another trolling boat off Addington. 0820, headed west from Cape Addington on zig-zag courses keeping close watch for reported submarine. 1000, searching area 15 miles due west of Cape Addington, excellent visibility. No radio communication, assume that there is a radio silence on. 1015, engineer again reports that the bilge pumps are clogged and that we must stop. Stopped the ship and sent six men down to bail and clear the bilges, what a headache, and at this time too. The vessel is taking quite a bit of water through the stern bearing and the engineer says we just can't go any longer than another hour or two. Decided to go into Steamboat Bay and get vessel in shape, can't be stopping every fifteen minutes when we are searching for enemy submarines. 1100, headed towards Steamboat Bay. 1300, received radio message from QUAJ to examine all fishing vessels encountered and evaluate report of submarine being seen off Addington. Sent a radio message to QUAJ for information of NRAD giving our position and also the area which we had searched to date. 1440, a Canadian twin-motored bomber passed low overhead and identification signals were exchanged. Have noticed that the Canadian planes fly low over the water when they are on patrol whereas the American planes are so high that I don't see how they can see anything. 1442, underway on zig-zag courses making towards Cape Addington, sharp lookout kept for submarines.

130
1. engineers request to reduce speed to 200 RPM. as water and oil is being thrown about by the flywheel. 1850, docked at the oil dock at Steamboat Bay. All hands turned to in the ship's engine room bilges, clearing the suction and washing them down. Took on water and overhauled the machine guns. Interviewed several trollers on board this ship concerning the reported submarine. The troller Coast, owner Ranch said he was in same area that afternoon and believes that the reported submarine was a sea lion. He said that thirty or more trollers had been trolling in that vicinity all day without seeing anything suspicious. Inclined to doubt that it was a submarine and notified QUAJ to that effect. 1150, finished with the bilges, all hands taking a shower ashore at the cannery preparatory to going to sea to resume patrol.

8 July, 1942

0030, message on radio from HMAJ which we are unable to properly receive. Sent a man ashore to have the coast guard radioman, Gilbert, get the message on his set. 0112, message received and deciphered. Message states that a submarine was bombed by a plane in Vernon nine this afternoon. That is practically the same spot in which we operating at 1400 yesterday. 0115, underway on search. Plotted position of bombing of submarine on chart #8002, Dixon Entrance to Cape St. Elias. To the northwest of this position is a spot with only fifty-two fathoms over it. There are about 100 to 150 fathoms of water in the bombed area. It is logical to assume that if the submarine is damaged or if he suspects that a search will be made for him, that he will seek the nearest spot where he can lie on the ocean bottom with his engines shut off so as to evade detection. Before proceeding to that area we will proceed to the cove off Addington where he apparently was reconnoitering the day before on the chance that he may also try to reach some cove there. All hands at general quarters. 0645, arrived in Vernon nine and Mc Lane came alongside for orders. Ordered Mc Lane to take station two miles on beam and commenced search pattern working towards the north. Rough seas and rain. 0900, Canadian mine sweeper joined search taking station two miles on opposite beam heading on easterly leg of pattern. Courses and speeds given by flag hoist. 1000, spoke Canadian minesweeper and exchanged information, learned nothing of value. Changed course to north. 1020, Canadian mine-sweeper departed to the southward. Did not deem it advisable to transmit information concerning the minesweeper to QUAJ over radio, it may be of value to the enemy. Have evolved a search pattern which seems worth trying. The method is to make squares steering for example, four miles east, then four miles north, then four miles West, then six miles south, then six miles east and so on, enlarging the squares as we go along. The Mc Lane is to stay two miles or so on the inside of me on all courses, as she has a listening device. This seems a good way to use both vessels to best advantage. In this manner we can always surround the original search area and should the submarine be on the inside of me my noisy engines will drive him in head out, then we will catch him on our next circle. I doubt if he will attempt to go very far as he has been below for some time already. 1700, search area covered without trace of wreckage - notified QUAJ. As the most of our messages are for the information of HRPD, I relay the messages through her. This vessel rolls and pitches something fierce, most of the men sea-sick, several tough passes. 1800, notified Mc Lane that we would work north to the shallow area given on the small scale chart. 2000, position Ralph ten. 2100, changed course, Mc Lane 500 yards distant. Decided to have a little battle practice to see how vessels work together. Sounded general quarters and hoisted emergency pennant and going into a zig-zag. The Mc Lane behaved nicely, following right along at battle stations, good teamwork. 2110, called the Mc Lane alongside and gave night orders, also checked as to what emergency signals we would use for the night. 2115, resumed search courses, following the square pattern, changes of course relayed to Mc Lane during the day by flaghoist, at night by blinker.

9 July, 1942

0100, signalled Mc Lane to change course to north true. Low visibility throughout the night, weather moderating. 0400, McLane called on radio telephone and requested course steered. Her Commanding Officer stated that his compass was not correct. Gave her our course since 0100. 0430, fixed ship's position by good bearings of Eazy Islands. Changed course to 193 degrees true to locate McLane. 0445, sighted McLane on port bow. 0505, U.S. Navy plane passed overhead in direction 330 true. Notified QUAJ by flash. 0510, resumed search with McLane on the port beam heading for the shallow search area given on chart #8002. Course 180 degrees true. 0800, position Sara eight. 0850, McLane seen to be out of formation and acting strangely. About-ship and towards her at top speed. General quarters, standing by for radio message. 0930, within one mile of McLane, stopped engine and all auxiliaries so as not to interfere with McLane's listening devices. Sent signal hoist to McLane notifying her all engines and auxiliaries stopped. McLane hoists emergency pennant. 0950, McLane signals that she had good submarine contact. We are keeping all engines stopped and have put over a 750 foot drift lead so as to determine speed and direction of drift. 1045, McLane alongside and said she had good submarine contact and dropped depth charge which did not explode. Sent urgent notification to QUAJ and asked WHEE to standby for messages from us. Ordered McLane to continue search of area while we drift and maintain a check on the original position of contact, all engines and auxiliaries stopped, battle stations. 1140 ascertained drift to be 360 degrees true and about one knot per hour, light to fresh southerly wind and light chop, weather improving. 1325, sent brief summary of events to QUAJ as urgent priority traffic. 1400, McLane alongside and we gave her information that the original contact position was five miles due south. She proceeded to that position and continued search. 1600, proceeded to position of McLane eight miles due south. 1615, U.S. Navy seaplane passed overhead bound due south, exchanged signals. 1700, another Navy plane joined search. 1720, McLane coming up astern. 1730, McLane astern of this vessel, 25 yards distant, went aft on poop to talk to Commanding Officer of the McLane. Commanding Officer of the McLane says that he had good contact 1-1/2 hour ago. I understood him to say that he had dropped four depth charges and that they did not explode." 1735, air-driven torpedo passed between the bow of the McLane and the stern of this vessel. A stream of air and water like a tall feather about fifteen feet in front of the McLane. Full ahead, wheel hard left. We were lying in the trough with the wing dead abeam on our port side. I noticed that the torpedo came directly downwind. When the ship had passed through 180 degrees (she would then be on the torpedo line of bearing) I swung directly up into the wind about 1000 yards when a periscope popped up momentarily almost directly ahead a ship length or so. 1748, dropped depth charge set at 150 feet and released smoke bomb at the same time to call McLane's attention and also planes. Put wheel full left and before the vessel had passed through 180 degrees of her turning circle the vessel hit some object with a heavy jar amidships. A fifteen foot patch of oil and bubbles visible. 1800, dropped another smoke bomb and McLane came over position and dropped several depth charges. 1817, large heavy explosion shook ship. 1830, dropped float with red flag to windward of depthcharged area. McLane listening at point of contact, this vessel circling McLane several miles distant to drive submarine into area of McLane. The engineer was just up, says that the engines will not stand the strain of turning over 340 RPM instead of her regular 288. We have been turning that during this action - slowed her down. Thank heavens we left the pilot house control on her in the shipyard.

6

We have just the right size crew on this vessel. That one doesn't think of the
 other doesn't occur to us though every petty officer has a timely suggestion just
 when we need it. It is within 1820, Molane dropping more depth charges.
 The last one had been below the surface over thirty hours and was no doubt waiting
 for the chance we gave him, a perfect downwind target and right close together. No
 stations could find the Molane while she listens with her "JK". Looks like fine
 weather tonight and we should be able to keep him below the surface. 1930, Molane
 signals that she has had no further contact since the depth charging. Both vessels
 secure the search pattern followed earlier with the Molane approximately 1/4 mile
 distant on starboard quarter. 1945, sighted periscope on the starboard bow. It
 was seen almost simultaneously by the men on the wheel, the signalman and myself.
 It seemed to be in no hurry to submerge and is about thirty degrees on the bow about
 100 to 200 yards distant. Green in color and moving slowly to the starboard. After
 seeing the other one, there is no mistaking it this time. Helm put full over right
 and when supposedly right periscope let go depth charge at 150 foot depth. Stood away,
 dropping smoke bomb on position, so that Molane could depth charge same area. 1958,
 Molane dropping depth charges in pattern over position and bringing up much oil and
 bilge. This vessel again stood off to circle area about the Molane several miles
 distant. 2010, second plane arrived on scene to assist search. Both vessels arose and
 searched for the remainder of the day. 2300, notified Molane that we will cruise
 about the area four miles apart on parallel courses and to use flares if any wreckage
 was sighted. Instructed her to change her course to 30 degrees from our course
 if no more planes to fire upon an unidentified vessel loaded and
 degrees true. 0315, vessel 10 July 1948 took and gave identification signal. Molane
 call for Molane - instructed her to proceed. The Molane then proceeded on a
 1000, received dispatch from QUAJ that large bubbles had been sighted by plane five
 miles north of Cape Smyth and for one vessel to proceed and investigate. 0100,
 Molane to proceed to Smyth and investigate. He is faster and has listen-
 ing devices. There is every reason to believe that we have destroyed the submarine.
 In this area and we will continue to patrol. The weather is fine and clear and we
 are sag over the area at battle stations as there is a strong probability that there
 is a submarine just one submarine. 0100, searching area, visibility excellent, no
 word more than just one submarine. 0150, a U.S. Navy plane flew low overhead and signalled that a
 large enemy submarine was surfaced due west and to follow him. Changed course to
 that west and followed plane, weather fine and clear, sea smooth. Notified QUAJ of
 report and that we were proceeding. 0600, crew getting up more ammunition from the
 magazines and opening cases. 0700, plane disappeared headed due west and was no longer
 seen. (Naval personnel deny sending any such signals later. This signal was repeated
 and read by three of the crew of this vessel). 1100, no signs of planes, submarines,
 sent message to QUAJ and continued on course of west. None of the men want to turn back
 in case there might be a submarine on the horizon. The crew is pretty worn, not
 having slept below for almost four days. I have made all the gunners turn in, as
 they will need a steady hand and eye. Never saw such a fighting bunch, can't get
 the cook to cook, or the engineer to engineer. They all want to be at their general
 quarters stations. Have started to zig-zag as the weather is fine and clear and the
 compass 1230, about one hundred miles due west of the coast, and the ocean looks
 pretty big and lonely and we don't feel quite so tough without the plane. Everyone
 wishes the sub would show up so we could get some sleep. 1250, received dispatch
 ordering us to return to original combat area. Reversed course and went to sleep.

1600, boys called me for supper. They are putting a gold star on the foremast. 7
They say one for every submarine and are very enthusiastic. Said nothing, let them have there star (and keep it polished). 1800, received dispatch from QUAJ requesting full report on activity and present position. 1930, sent dispatch to QUAJ for information of NRPD. 2100, U.S. Navy plane passed overhead headed 60 degrees true. Sent flash to QUAJ. 2130, sent dispatch to NRPD informing him that we have returned to patrol area and to send us his position and any other action information. 2200, general quarters. 2300, received dispatch from QUAJ congratulating us on good work and assuring relief tomorrow. Read congratulations to the crew at muster. All hands will be glad to get in no one has had there clothes off for days and I have been in my cabin only to get into the safe. 2345, Abeam Cape Addington and headed towards Forrester Island at half speed. Battle stations throughout the night, we may be the hunted instead of the hunter tonight.

11 July, 1942

Day comes in patrolling area between Forrester Island and Cape Bartolome. 0305, sighted low dark vessel without lights on a southerly course and about six miles distant. Full speed ahead and all guns warmed and ready. 0310, unidentified vessel drawing away from us on course 120 degrees true, gave her identification signal without getting reply. Called all ships and stations to stand by. Called McLane on the radio and instructed her to change her course to 300 degrees true and give identification signal as we were about to fire upon an unidentified vessel headed 120 degrees true. 0315, vessel ahead swung about and gave identification signal. Class call for McLane - instructed her to proceed. The lookout, CLIFTON, A.S. sighted the McLane about six miles away at night which was good work. He is the lad who has not eaten for about six days on account of seasickness. 0800, all quiet the past four hours, choppy sea and small swell. Position fifteen miles west of Forrester Island. I am proud of this crew, not a man but who did his very best through it all. It takes all hands to man our battle stations. First they were 24 hours without sleep, then they all went into the bilges for four hours and then another 72 hours at battle stations. Some of the sea-sick ones had to be assisted on deck at times. The antics of our two comedians, Bauer and Miltunen did a great deal to keep up the spirits of the crew. They clowned constantly at the "B" on the forecastle head. Particularly commendable was their actions as we were heading out to sea to meet as they supposed, a large enemy submarine with superior fire power. It never bothered them a bit as they lugged up case after case of 50 caliber ammunition. One would have thought that we were a heavy cruiser from their conversation. 0830, reported position of vessel as Gerald nine, standing north about fifteen miles southwest of Forrester Island. 1200, received dispatch from QUAJ instructing us to return to port at 2000 tonight. General quarters. 2000, headed for home from position Isaac nine, should be in in the morning. Sharp lookout throughout the day had the boys remove the gold star from the mast and instructed the crew to keep silent as to the events of the patrol, until instructed otherwise by the District Commander. 2300, met McLane off Cape Chacon and learned that we still have four hours of patrol to do, about ship and headed back to patrol area off Luzon. We'd all like to get in and get some sleep.

12 July, 1942

0200, patrolling west of Cape Muzon. 0400, relieved of patrol fifteen miles west of Cape Muzon, headed for Ketchikan repair base. 0800, Cape Chacon abeam, O/C to 352 degrees true. 1115, Point Mc Carty abeam. 1315, tied up at City Float, Ketchikan, Alaska. 1320, reported to District Commander and was informed that crew was to be allowed ashore and that this was to be considered our in-port period. End of patrol, home and turned in. The entire patrol still seems like some fantastic dream.

- ADDENDUM -

I wish to describe the search pattern which was followed by the two vessels and which proved successful in this instance. It is particularly applicable where but one vessel is equipped with listening device. It consists of making ever-widening squares, commencing from the suspected position of the submarine. The vessel with the listening device takes station one or more miles on the inside beam of the vessel without the device and remains one-half mile or more astern. The noise of the outside vessels propellers will drive the submarine in or out of the pattern being made. If the submarine heads in, she will be picked up by the listening device of the inside vessel, and if she heads out, she will be caught on the next wider square. This pattern also serves to maintain the same position, which is valuable when out of sight of bearings from ashore, as East, West and North, South courses can be made. In this instance the search was conducted in this pattern for twenty-four hours before the first contact was made and the diameter of the square had reached 16 miles.

Note: There is question which one will perhaps ask, "why did the submarine not leave the area during those thirty hours". I believe that the answer lies in the examination of the two charts of the area. The small scale chart 18002, Dixon Entrance to Cape St. Elias shows a 52 fathom spot ten miles northwest of the position where the submarine was first bombed by the plane. That was the area which was concentrated upon during the search. A later and close examination of another chart, the large scale chart 18152, discloses that there is no such shallow spot and that the small scale chart is in error. It may be assumed that the submarine was operating on chart 18002 and that he was searching for the 52 fathom spot when he was contacted. This could account for his reluctance to leave that area during the thirty-six hour period of search and attack.

H. P. Thomsen
H. P. THOMSEN

601 CONFIDENTIAL

1st Indorsement

Ketchikan, Alaska
20 July, 1942

From: District Coast Guard Officer, Ketchikan, 13th Naval District.
To: Commandant, 13th Naval District.

1. Forwarded. Attention is invited to the contact report. The YP-251 has been thoroughly gone over during this recent inport period.

F. A. ZEUSLER

2010.023.007