

CHRISTMAS SALVOPS

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The salvage forces of Service Squadron Five spent their Christmas holiday engaged in the recovery of the nuclear-powered attack submarine USS *Guardfish* near Pearl Harbor.

Guardfish was returning home from operations on Christmas Eve when she grounded in darkness on a reef some 500 yards east of the Pearl Harbor channel entrance just after 8 p.m.

Less than three hours later, salvage ship USS *Current*, ServRon Five's ready duty ship, and Commander John B. Orem, ComServPac Fleet and Force Salvage Officer, were on the scene. High seas prevented immediate efforts to refloat the ship. The rest of that night and early Christmas morning were spent in further preparations.

At first light, a task group commanded by Captain Leon Grabowsky, ComServRon Five, and composed of salvage ships *Current* and *Grapple* and naval station harbor tugs, was at work. *Current* and *Grapple* laid beach gear. On Christmas night, at high tide, the 3,800-ton *Guardfish* budged and moved about 200 feet to seaward.

The next morning another unit of ServRon Five

joined the task group, fleet tug *Arikara*.

As preparations were being made to make the final pull, divers making an underwater inspection astern of the submarine found what appeared to be a bomb. Fortunately, this proved to be a 25-pound World War II practice bomb which was nothing more than a steel weight.

The pulling effort commenced following the removal of the "bomb" and the *Guardfish* slid off the reef at noon.

Having completed what was believed to be the first salvage of a nuclear-powered ship in the history of the United States Navy, the tired salvage forces returned to port to catch up on Christmas.

From his headquarters overlooking Pearl Harbor, Admiral John J. Hyland, Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet, commended all hands who participated in the salvage effort.

Commander Submarine Force, Pacific, Rear Admiral John H. Maurer, whose ship had been recovered, expressed his appreciation with the words: "During hours of darkness, heavy seas and winds, and especially over the period of the Christmas holiday, these men and their ships performed this important mission with enthusiasm marked with spirit, skill, ingenuity and devotion to duty which was in the highest traditions of the Naval Service. Well done!"

NUKE AGROUND -- ServPac salvage ship USS Current and harbor tugs sortie from Pearl Harbor Christmas morning to begin salvage efforts on nuclear powered sub USS Guardfish.

