

U.S.S. Nautilus - The World's First Nuclear-Powered Ship

The fourth *Nautilus*, the first nuclear powered submarine and, because of that, destined to forever be in the annals of history, was launched 21 January 1954; sponsored by Mrs. Dwight D. Eisenhower, wife of President Eisenhower, and commissioned 30 September 1954, Comdr. E. P. Wilkinson in command.

During her shakedown cruise, she remained submerged while going to Puerto Rico, covering 1,381 miles in 89.8 hours, the longest submerged cruise, to that date, by a submarine, and at the highest sustained submerged speed ever recorded for a period of over one hour's duration. Throughout 1955, and into 1957, she investigated the effects of the radically increased submerged speed and endurance, such changes in submerged mobility having virtually wiped out progress in anti-submarine warfare techniques. The airplane and radar, which helped defeat submarines in the Atlantic during World War II, proved ineffective against a vessel which did not need to surface, could clear an area in record time, and swiftly change depth simultaneously.

In 1957, *Nautilus* logged her 60,000th nautical mile to bring to reality the achievements of her fictitious namesake in Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. *Nautilus* returned to New London 21 July and departed again 19 August for her first voyage, of 1,383 miles, under polar pack ice. Thence, she headed for the Eastern Atlantic to participate in NATO exercises and conduct a tour of various British and French ports where she was inspected by defense personnel of those countries.

In 1958, she began her history-making Polar transit, operation "Sunshine," and after 96 hours and 1,830 miles under the ice, she surfaced northeast of Greenland, having completed the first successful voyage across the North Pole. Proceeding from Greenland to Portland, England, she received the Presidential Unit Citation, the first ever issued in peace time.

Following fleet exercises in early 1959, *Nautilus* entered the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, for her first complete overhaul (28 May 1959-15 August 1960). Overhaul was followed by more training and on 24 October she departed New London for her first deployment with the 6th Fleet in the Mediterranean, returning to her home port 16 December.

Nautilus operated in the Atlantic, conducting evaluation tests for ASW improvements, participating in NATO exercises and, during the fall of 1962, in the naval quarantine of Cuba, until she headed east again for a two month Mediterranean tour in August 1963. On her return she joined in fleet exercises until entering the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard for her second overhaul 17 January 1964. On 2 May 1966, *Nautilus* returned to her home port to resume operations with the Atlantic Fleet. For the next year and a quarter she conducted special operations for ComSubLant and then in August 1967, returned to Portsmouth, for another year's stay, following which she conducted exercises off the southeastern seaboard. She returned to New London in December 1968, and into 1970 she continues in operations as a unit of the 2nd Fleet.

Nautilus was decommissioned in 1980 and is now a memorial in Groton, Connecticut. [<http://www.hazegray.org/danfs/submar/ssn571.htm>; <http://www.chinfo>.

