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USS SC-449

By Bob Filipowski

Recently, I came across a brief story about an obscure experiment conducted during WWII by the US Navy. At the time the United States was preparing for the invasion of Japan. With the lessons learned by the Pacific Fleet at Okinawa, every possible means of minimizing the loss of ships and personnel was being explored.

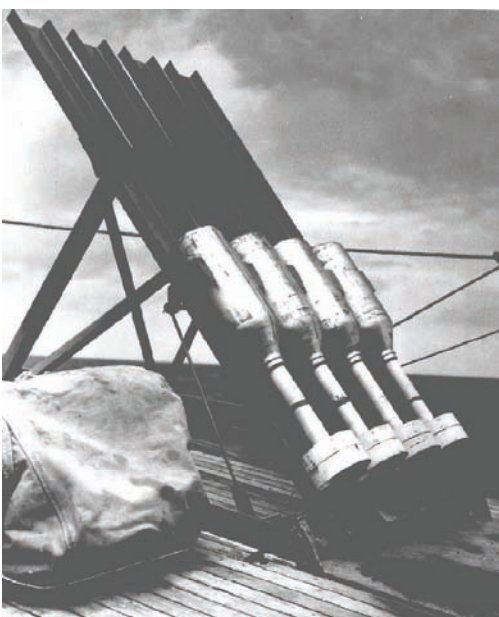
One such experiment involved the **USS SC-449**. Laid



down 10 July 1939 as **PC-449** by the Luders Marine Construction Co., Stamford, CT; she was launched, 14 May 1940, and commissioned **USS SC-449**. This vessel was one of three Submarine Chasers built in a design competition. Although she possessed 50% more stability than the other prototypes, the contract would eventually be awarded to another firm, thus making her a one-of-a-kind.

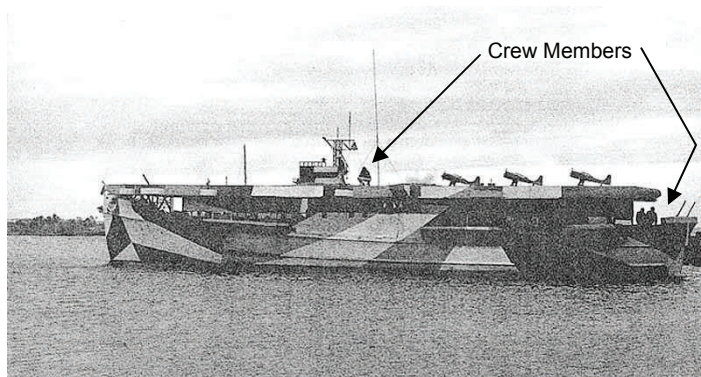
She would spend most of the war developing new weapon systems and tactics that could be conducive to vessels of her type. One such weapon was

an anti submarine rocket. It would be the proto-type for the later Mouse Traps and Hedge Hog rockets. A 30 lb. charge of TNT was carried in the war head with a contact detonator on top. The rocket charge was carried in the tail pipe. Most of the time they ignited, but once in awhile they didn't. Then



some poor sailor had to go forward, and throw it over-board!

In early 1945, **USS SC-449** was selected by the Navy to be converted into a mock CVE-9 Class *Escort Aircraft Carrier* to be used in the invasion of the Japanese home islands. It was "449's" stability that made her desirable for this conversion. Her deck was stripped and rebuilt with plywood to look like a CVE, and three scaled down aircraft were installed on her "flight deck". At a length of 110



feet, the net result was a craft only about 1/5th the size of an actual jeep carrier. You get some sense of scale from the above photo. Three crewmen can be seen, with one of them crouching on the flight deck.

Never the less, the Navy liked what they saw, but tests showed that she was too top-heavy, so the idea was shelved. Not too long after that the atom bomb was dropped, and the war was over.

No mention is made as to how these vessels would have been used, but it's probably safe to assume that the Navy hoped that enemy pilots would mistakenly give up their lives and aircraft trying to destroy these decoys. You can't help but wonder whether these craft would have been remote controlled since the chances of a crew surviving such an attack would have been slim and none!

Sold and struck from the Navy Register on 29 July 1949, she worked as an *Oceanographic Research Vessel* at Texas A&M Marine Department until being purchased by Service Marine Inc. of Galena,

TX for use as quarters for dredge crews. The former **SC-449** was eventually scrapped in 1974.

