

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: E.O. 13526

By: NDC NARA Date: Dec 31, 2012

USS S-44

On 7 October 1943, the S-44 was conducting a war patrol about ten miles off Araido To, Kuril Islands. At about 2030, one blast of the diving alarm was sounded, the pre-arranged signal for a night surface attack. DUVA, Ernest Arthur, CTM, USN, (served aboard the S-44, and was liberated from a Japanese prisoner of war camp) immediately proceeded to his battle station in the control room and noticed that the gun crews were scrambling up the conning tower ladders to man the deck guns. A minute or so later he heard the guns commence firing. The target began firing at the submarine about the same time. The Captain was heard to shout, "Gun crew below, stand by to dive." As the men were coming below through the Conning Tower, the first shell hit it. The next shell struck the control room, and in the meantime numerous 20mm shells were hitting rapidly and the Captain ordered "Abandon Ship." All hands immediately proceeded to the torpedo room and the hatch was raised.

The target proved to be a destroyer about 300 yards on the port beam. The destroyer's searchlight was playing on the submarine and machine gun fire was being layed across the submarine's deck. The submarine sank very rapidly and DUVA, WHITEMORE and the others all jumped or were washed overboard.

The temperature of the water at the time the submarine sank was 47^o F. and the sea was very rough. There was no debris in the water capable of keeping a man afloat. There were apparantly no other ships in the area.

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The S-44 was off Paramushiro in the Kuriles and she made a night attack with guns on what they thought was a small patrol vessel, but the small patrol vessel turned on her searchlights and it turned out to be a large destroyer which smothered the S-44 with gunfire, knocked several holes in her. They finally abandoned ship, and the two survivors said they saw about eight other people. Of course, it was very cold and they drowned very quickly, but these two survivors were picked up by the destroyer.

Taken from Press Conference of 1 February 1946 by Vice Admiral C.A. Lockwood