



Like hounds around fox, ships surround stricken sub. Navy gobs pile down hatch to close valves. Sub founders as towing begins. Crew breathes easier; sub is secured.

Captured: One



by Jack Glasner



Impossible to take a German submarine on the high seas? It was—until the Navy did it in one of the most daring episodes of World War II.

Adm. Gallery, who led operation, stands in conning tower of German sub, first enemy man-o'-war captured since 1815. Inset photo shows German crew, now prisoners of war, climbing aboard rescue ship after they were pulled from the sea.



SINKING SLOWLY as water poured in, her decks raked by gunfire, the Nazi submarine U-505 was boarded and captured by American sailors in the waning days of World War II—the first such capture of an enemy man-o'-war since 1815.

The capture gave the Allies the key to the German naval code and invaluable information on U-boat operations during the invasion of Europe, when vital supplies had to be kept flowing to the Normandy beachhead.

Boarding and taking enemy vessels was commonplace in the days of sailing ships, but with airplanes, sonar, radar, and all the mechanics of modern war, it's unheard of today—except, of course, the capture of the U-505.

Here's how that prize was taken. In May, 1944, an American task force consisting of the escort carrier *U.S.S. Guadalcanal* and five destroyer escorts steamed out of Norfolk, Va. It was a "hunter-killer" group, specifically designed to search out submarines.

Capt. Daniel V. Gallery, now a rear admiral, commanded the task force from the *Guadalcanal*. He had a plan to capture a sub if one was forced to the surface, and boarding parties ran through drill after drill, waiting for the chance in a million to board a U-boat before it sank.

About noon on Sunday, June 4, a destroyer picked up a sub on its sound apparatus. The task force closed in with depth charges as fighters went aloft to mark the sub's position with machine-gun fire.

Rocked by the depth charges, the sub frantically tried to evade the attack.

Listen to the words of one of the German crew: "Whole series of depth charges exploded with their hard, steely, and nerve-killing noise quite near us. The U-505 went down like a dive bomber. The lights went out and the steering was out of control. We went deeper and deeper.

"... Thank goodness, the air pipes were still in order and we got to the surface where the planes came over us like a pack of dogs, firing with their machine guns from all sides while we were trying to leave the boat. Our commander was wounded, another killed. But we managed to leave the U-505."

THE MINUTE the sub surfaced, Gallery put his capture plan into effect. Three destroyer escorts closed in, sweeping the U-505's decks with small-arms fire while Wildcat fighters overhead poured in machine-gun fire, trying to force the Germans to flee before they could destroy their ship.

A nine-man boarding party led by Lt. Albert L. David shoved off from the destroyer *U.S.S. Pillsbury*. The sub, its rudder jammed and motors still running, slowly moved in a circle. The boarding party reached the sub and found its decks deserted except for one crewman's body—the only fatality of the fight.

Tumbling aboard the sub and down the conning-tower hatch, the American sailors didn't know how long the sub would stay afloat; she was already foundering. They had their guns ready in case any