

Amazing Story of George Rocek - A WWII US Submarine Veteran Who Survived Against Incredible Odds

He left Chicago at the age of 18, and returned after an incredible ordeal to live a normal life

NASHUA, NH, UNITED STATES, June 25, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- This story is taken from the book "Sub Tales - Stories That Seldom Surface" by Charles and Frank Hood.

George Rocek was an ordinary American teen-ager in the summer of 1941. He was on his high school's baseball team. He listened and danced to Big Band music. He lived what most people would describe as an "ordinary" life.



George as he was in 1943

Then came Pearl Harbor in December of 1941, and George, like many of his contemporaries, volunteered for duty in the US Armed Forces.

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The story of George Rocek is one of the strong will to survive, surviving the sinking of the 2 ships he was on and POW Camp during WWII.”

Frank Hood

George joined the Navy, and was sent from his home in Rockford, IL to nearby Great Lake Naval Training Center on the North Side of Chicago for Boot Camp.

While there, he was selected as eligible to volunteer for submarine duty, and he accepted. He went to Submarine School in Groton, CT, and spent 6 months in what was called "Spritz's Navy" after "Adm" Chief Torpedoman's

Mate Charlie Spritz, who ran Sub School with a tight fist and did not hesitate those whom he considered "unfit" on to the regular Navy.

George did graduate, and was assigned to the USS Sculpin (SS 191) on her 9th War Patrol out of Pearl Harbor in early November 1943.

They weren't on station long when they came across a Japanese convoy. They attacked and were involved in 9 hours of combat, when on the surface, a shell from the Japanese Destroyer Yamagumo hit the Sculpin directly on the conning tower, killing all who were topside, including the Captain.

The XO (Executive Officer - 2nd in Command) then assumed Command and ordered an Abandon Ship. He and other officers had to go down with the sinking boat because of sensitive material that they were carrying.

George jumped overboard and was rescued a few hours later by the Yamagumo. Each of the 41 men who survived was blindfolded and placed in a solitary cell. They were given 1 cup of rice and a few oz of water every day as they steamed toward Truk, where a temporary POW Camp was located.

While in Truk they endured severe interrogations and deprivations and after 10 days were loaded onto a Japanese carrier, the Chuyo, for transport to the mainland and another POW work camp.

On the way, the USS Sailfish (SS 192) sank the Japanese carrier. Even though they were below the flight deck, they managed to escape and get to the Flight Deck, even though they had to fight intense smoke, fire, and water intrusion.

The Chuyo sank and George and one other man slid down the Flight Deck into the ocean. Surviving several days, they were picked up by another Japanese Destroyer, the Urakaze. The



Showing the medals he won



When Chuyo torpedoed, he was 3 decks below - locked in a small cell

Urakaze threw a Jacob's Ladder over and only took onboard any man who could climb. Other's were shot on the spot.

George was the only man who did survive out of his group of 21 on the carrier, and he spent all of 1944 and 1945, until V-J Day, in 2 POW work camps. They worked 10 hours a day, 7 days a week, and many did not survive that hardship.

He only knew the war was over when a B-25 Mitchell bomber flew over his camp on V-J Day.

He was liberated, spent several months in Navy Hospitals, before he returned to Rockford and found work in the insurance industry.

George actually live until 2006, and very few of his friends and acquaintances knew of his story.

Someone gave a lead to Charles Hood, author of 9 books of true and similar stories from the US Submarine Force, and Charles talked to those who knew George, and did research to fill in context, as he did for all stories in the 9 book series.

You can see all 9 books here - subtales.com.

George is a true American Hero, like many others who fought and won WWII along with our Allies.

The video below gives some more details.

Frank Hood

Sub Tales - True Sub Stories

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