

The Thresher

Words & Music:
Phil Ochs

Bm G F# Bm Em A F#

Bm G F# Bm Em A F#
In Portsmouth town on the eastern shore where many a fine ship was born.
Bm G F# Bm
The Thresher was built and the Thresher was launched
Em A F#
And the crew of the Thresher was sworn.

Bm G F# Bm
She was shaped like a tear. She was built like a shark.
Em A F#
She was made to run fast and free.

Bm G F# Bm
And the builders shook their hands and the builders shared their wine,
Em A F#
And thought that they had mastered the sea.

CHORUS:

Bm F# Em F#
Yes, she'll always run silent and she'll always run deep
Em Bm A F#
Though the ocean has no pity; though the waves will never weep.
Bm
They'll never weep.

And they marvelled at her speed, marvelled at her depth,
Aarvelled at her deadly design.
And they sailed to every land, and they sailed to every port,
Just to see what faults they could find.
Then they put her on the land for nine months to stand
And they worked on her from stem to stern.
But they could never see it was their coffin to be
For the sea was waiting for their return.

CHORUS:

On a cold Wednesday morn, they put her her out to sea
When the waves they were nine feet high.
And they dove beneath the waves and they dove to their graves
And they never said a last goodbye.
And its deeper and deeper and deeper they dove
Just to see what their ship could stand.
But the hull gave a moan and the hull gave a groan
And they plunged to the deepest darkest sand.

Now she lies in the depths of the darkened ocean floor,
Covered by the waters cold and still.
Oh, can't you see the wrong? She was a death ship all along.
Died before she had a chance to kill.

CHORUS:

[Alternate final verse from an early Broadside tape]
And it's 8000 fathoms of the water above and over 100 men below.
And sealed in their tomb, is the cause of their doom
That only the sea will ever know.

Notes from the official Phil Ochs lyrics site:

On the morning of April 10, 1963, the USS Thresher (SSN 593) proceeded to conduct sea trials about 200 miles off the coast of Cape Cod. At 9:13 a.m., the USS Skylark (a surface vessel assigned to assist Thresher) received a signal, via underwater telephone, indicating that the submarine was experiencing minor difficulties, have positive up-angle, attempting to blow.

Shortly afterward, the Skylark received a series of garbled, undecipherable message fragments from the Thresher. At 9:18 a.m., the Skylark's sonar picked up the sounds of the submarine breaking apart. All 129 hands were lost -- 112 military and 17 civilian technicians.

*Text from <http://www.csp.navy.mil/centennial/589-593.htm> For further info see the NOVA show *Submarines, Secrets, and Spies* for more *Thresher* and *Scorpion* (which departed and never returned) info.*