

18 April, 1942

50. S.S. AXTELL J. BYLES

U.S. Tanker; built, 1927; 8,955 gross tons; load, crude and fuel oil.

Departed Port Arthur, Texas, 11 April, 1942, for New York.

Torpedoed 18 April, 1942, 1835 EWT, 3 miles off Wimble Shoals Gas Buoy #10.

Weather, clear; sea, choppy; wind, fresh North Northeast.

On board, 37; saved, 37.

Vessel: salvaged, made port under own power.

The vessel was lead ship in the starboard column of a two column convoy at the time of the torpedoing, and was escorted by the USCG DIONE and four small Coast Guard boats, and an airplane. The wake of the torpedo was seen 300 yards off the starboard quarter when the aircraft drew attention to it by maneuvering and diving at the trail. The wheel was immediately put hard left, but the torpedo struck just forward of the bridge on the starboard side, tearing a large hole in the ship's side and another in the deck, practically demolishing the bridge and quarters amidships.

The ship settled by the head, but did not sink, and was brought into Hampton Roads successfully at 1700 EWT, 19 April, 1942. None of the crew was injured.

