

2 July, 1943

125 S.S. BLOODY MARSH

U.S. Tanker, built 1943; 10,195 gross tons; cargo, fuel oil.
Departed Houston, Texas, 30 June, 1943, for New York.
Torpedoed 2 July, 1943, 1208 EWT; 31°45 N.- 78°45 W.
Weather, thunder storms; sea, choppy; wind, variable.
On board, 78; saved, 75.
Vessel: total loss.

At 1208 on the third day out on her maiden voyage, the automatic torpedo indicating device registered an approaching torpedo on the port side, and the wheel was swung hard a-port. While the ship was turning sharply, the first torpedo struck on the port quarter, entering and demolishing the engine room, and killing the three men on watch. A few minutes after the explosion, the submarine was observed to surface, but the guns could not be brought into action owing to the failure of the auxiliary power supply, and the jamming of the centering pin on the after gun.

The ship was abandoned after the first torpedo hit, which had demolished #6 lifeboat. Gear on the #5 lifeboat, one of two which were motor equipped, jammed and could not be lowered, so the crew made use of #1, #2, #3 and #4 boats and 3 life rafts, from which the survivors were taken into the boats at daybreak. The armed guard officer and 3 of his men remained aboard until the after gun turret was awash, then jumped, and were also rescued at dawn.

Soon after all hands were safely off, a second torpedo was launched by the submarine, passing directly under #2 lifeboat in which Captain Albert H. Barnes was, and striking the BLOODY MARSH nearly amidships. She was seen to break in two almost at once, the bow section plunging obliquely under, and the after part settling in a horizontal position. Two shots had been fired by the submarine, but, whether at the tanker or at the lifeboats, is not known, and no results were visible.

Between 5:30 and 6:00 the following morning, the U.S. Navy Blimp K-52 sighted the survivors, and, with a Navy PBV, stood by until the Coast Guard SC-1049 picked them up at noon and took them in to Charleston, S. Car. The vessel had carried 78 men, including 50 merchant crew and 28 armed guard personnel, of whom 3 of the merchant crew perished in the initial explosion; and the remainder were brought safely to shore.

