

10 June, 1943

123 S.S. ESSO GETTYSBURG

U.S. Tanker, built 1942; 10,173 gross tons; cargo, crude oil. Departed Atrico, Port Arthur, Texas, 6 June, 1943, for Philadelphia, Pa. Torpedoed 10 June, 1943, 1550 EWT; 31°02 N.- 79°15 W. Weather, clear; sea, smooth; wind, light S.W. On board, 70; saved, 15. Vessel: total loss.

During the morning before the attack, this tanker had been protected by a Navy Blimp, which left, owing to adverse weather conditions, but failed to return after the weather cleared. In mid afternoon, a torpedo crashed between midship house and mainmast on the port side, and a second entered the engine room a few seconds later from the same side, exploding on contact, and enveloping the after part of the ship in flames at once. One round was fired from the forward 3" gun, although no target was visible, and a lifeboat and raft were freed, but consumed in the burning oil which poured out onto the water. Survivors jumped as the tanker seemed about to capsize, and swam away from the blazing sea around her, but remaining in the vicinity.

A lifeboat from which the woodwork was completely consumed drifted clear of the flames, and, after removing a charred body, some of the men got aboard, and succeeded in picking up 10 more survivors from the surrounding water. At approximately 1030 the following day, the boat was sighted by an Army patrol bomber, and at 1105 they were taken aboard the SS GEORGE WASHINGTON and landed at Charleston, S. Car.

The abandoned tanker is presumed to have gone down during the night of 10-11 June, 1943.

