

6 July, 1944

142 S.S. ESSO HARRISBURG

U.S. Tanker; built, 1942; 9,670 gross tons; cargo, crude oil.
Departed Cartagena, Col., for New York City.
Torpedoed 6 July, 1944, 1940, EWT, Atlantic, 14° N. 71° W.
Weather, overcast; wind, moderate NE; sea, rough.
On board, 72; saved, 64.
Vessel: total loss.

Members of the crew first saw the wake of what appeared to be an object just under the surface, moving parallel to the tanker, to starboard, and about a mile away. The wheel was put hard left, but less than two minutes later, there was an explosion under the stern, which demolished the 4" gun aft, and rendered the rudder and screw useless, and the vessel began to settle by the stern. The order was given to abandon ship, and five minutes later, a second torpedo struck the starboard side, forward of the engine room, followed, a quarter of an hour later, by a third in almost the same spot. The entire complement is believed to have abandoned ship successfully, but four of the merchant crew, including the Master, and four armed guard members were apparently lost in the rough sea.

Survivors were taken from 2 boats and a raft by the USS C-1299 and the Dutch PC, QUEEN WILHELMINA, in the afternoon of 8 July, but #2 lifeboat, due to strong current and wind, drifted rapidly out of sight, and set a course south for the coast. Five days later, at sunset on 11 July, they made a landfall and rowed ashore near Dibulla, Colombia. Next morning, a U.S. Navy blimp was contacted, and these men were taken to Barranquilla, Colombia, and subsequently repatriated.

