

21 March, 1942

32. S.S. ESSO NASHVILLE

U.S. Tanker; built, 1940, 7,943 gross tons; cargo, fuel oil.
Departed Port Arthur, Texas, 16 March, 1942, for New Haven, Conn.
Torpedoed, 21 March, 1942; 0015 ship's time; 16 mi. NE Frying Pan Shoals.
Weather, raining; wind, SE, light; sea, moderate.
On board, 38; saved, 38.
Vessel: stern section salvaged.

A heavy impact, thought to have been caused by a "dud" torpedo, was felt aboard this vessel about one minute before a second missile crashed into the starboard side just aft of the midship house, and exploded, covering the deck with a heavy spray of oil. Communications between bridge and engine room were disrupted, but, according to previous arrangement, the engines were stopped after a few minutes. Fire did not break out, but the Master gave the order to abandon ship, since her back was broken and she seemed in imminent danger of capsizing. All four lifeboats were employed, and two, containing 8 survivors, were picked up by the USS McKEAN and taken to Norfolk, Va. The Coast Guard Cutter TALLAPOOSA rescued one boat with 21 aboard, who were taken to Savannah, Ga. The Master, in trying to enter a lifeboat, fell into the water and was injured, and unable to reach the boat; however, after some difficulty, he hauled himself back aboard his ship, where he remained in safety until removed next morning by the Coast Guard Cutter AGASSIZ, which also picked up the remaining lifeboat with eight men (thus accounting for all hands).

The forward section of the ESSO NASHVILLE broke off and sank some time during 21 March, but the after end, from #5 tank, floated on an even keel and was towed into port and reconstructed for further service.

An enemy submarine, possibly the one which attacked this vessel, was sunk by an Army bomber in this vicinity at 1400 the same day.

