

1 March, 1943

113 S.S. GULFWAVE

U.S. Tanker, built 1937; 7,140 gross tons; in ballast.  
Departed Noumea, New Caledonia, for Suva, Fiji.  
Torpedoed 1 March, 1943, 1555 L.A.T.; 22°30 S.- 174°45 E.  
Weather, clear; sea, moderate swell; wind, N.E.  
On board, 54; saved, 54.  
Vessel: salvaged.

The day was clear, with a moderate swell and northeast wind, when a gun crew member sighted the wake of a torpedo only ten feet from the side, too late to alter the vessel's course, and she was struck about 20' abaft the bridge on the starboard side. In spite of a gaping hole 40'x40', extending down the side and under the bottom, a flooded pumproom, two guns disabled, and instruments shattered by the concussion, the Master, Hans Sorenson, did not abandon ship, but opened fire with his remaining guns when the attacker's periscope was sighted at 1000 yards two minutes after the explosion.

Zigzagging at 9 knots, the ship was brought safely into Suva harbor under her own power, and without casualties. As no drydocking facilities were available there, I-beams were welded to the deck and both sides of the hull to keep the tanker from breaking in half, and she proceeded under U.S. Navy escort to Pago Pago, where additional braces were installed. Accompanied by the S.S. WISCONSIN, of Panamanian registry, the GULFWAVE departed for San Pedro on May 13th, battling head winds which lifted the bow continually, straining the ship badly, and sending the heavy seas crashing into the huge hole in her side. When still 2700 miles from San Pedro and only 800 from Honolulu, the course was altered for Hawaii, as the temporary braces were beginning to show the strain, and a break was feared. The two vessels arrived in Honolulu safely on the morning of June 7th, and the battered tanker was shifted to Pearl Harbor the following day for drydocking and repairs.



