

143 S.S. JACKSONVILLE

U.S. Tanker, built 1944; 10,448 gross tons; cargo, gasoline. Departed New York, 19 August, 1944, for Loch Ewe, U.K. in convoy. Torpedoed (presumably) 30 August, 1944; 1345 GCT: 55°30 N.- 07° W. Weather, fair; sea, choppy. On board, 78; saved, 2. Vessel: total loss.

The JACKSONVILLE had made a turn, together with four other ships bound for Loch Ewe, leaving the rest of the convoy to go to Belfast. Not long afterwards, she was struck at some point forward of the engine room and probably near the bridge. The crew rushed on deck, and the ship was enveloped in flames 200 feet high in a matter of seconds. There was no opportunity to launch boats or rafts, or even, in some cases, to snatch life preservers, before jumping into the sea of blazing gasoline which surrounded the boat. Observers on other ships saw half of the burning vessel slide into view from the cloud of dense smoke which shrouded the scene of the disaster. The one merchant seaman who survived, almost miraculously reported that two explosions were heard, but could not say whether or not one was a cargo explosion. He had been forced to jump without a life preserver, and was badly injured internally. However, he later managed to secure a life-jacket which he had to remove from the charred body of a former shipmate.

The two survivors, one Navy armed guard and a fireman/watertender of the merchant crew, were taken aboard an escort DE and landed at Londonderry.

Photographs of the burnt out stern section show the lifeboat davits turned down and at least three boats gone, as well as the raft skids empty or demolished. However, none of these boats has been reported to date.

