

ACTION OF ENEMY

CONFIDENTIAL

Name of Vessel JEAN NICOLET (Cont'd)
Date of Casualty 7-2-44

us with anything they had in their hands. In this period of circling the fellows on the foredeck, of which I was one of them, we were numerous times washed by the waves that came over the bow of the submarine. Finally I was led aft and on my trip I noticed the armaments on the sub, they were in their mounts. Then I was forced to go through a gauntlet and there were about twelve men at least that I went through and all these men had clubs or pipes or some means of punishment, and I got hit upon the head, suffered a severe gash and finally sub-consciously I toppled overboard, and I managed to stay afloat until about six o'clock in the morning when a couple of fellows that were on the sub managed to get loose some way and untied me. From there we just made plans, more or less, to swim back towards the ship, where she previously went down, in the hopes that we might find wreckage or something that would keep us afloat, because at that time we seen planes in the air searching and we knew they had seen us, or knew of our conditions and help would be arriving shortly. When these two fellows that untied me saw they were weakening, and I felt pretty good, I told them to stay where they were and swim to where the ship went down, and get some floating material and brought it back. I started out on my own, and enroute I met an army captain, and he was on his last legs, so I gave him an encouraging word and went on my way. In circling the ship, I noticed this life raft there. The ship was reboarded by three fellows afterwards. Three fellows swam after they got loose and got back aboard. So one fellow tried to launch this life raft and it failed to operate, so he used a navy doughnut and throw that over the side. Eventually, when the ship rolled over and went down, this other life raft released itself."

Name of Vessel JOHN A. JOHNSON
Date of Casualty 10-29-44

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"Sworn statements of 15 selected survivors and unattested statements of other survivors brought forth the following facts with regard to the activities of the sub subsequent to torpedoing of the ship:

When the #2 boat, containing 28 men was about 1/2-3/4 miles away on the port side of the ship, the sub surfaced about 200 yards away from the boat. Sub moved slowly in the water and circled the area, observing the results of the torpedoing, then turned at a point about 200' from the boat and bore directly down upon the boat at an estimated speed of 8-10 knots. When it was apparent that the sub intended to ram the boat, all of the occupants went overboard and some swam away from the boat, others stayed nearby in an effort to hang on to the side. The bow of the sub brushed the boat which continued

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10-29-44

on its way. When the sub was approximately amidships of the boat, machine-gun and pistol fire was opened on the boat and on the men in the water by a group of the sub's crew standing along the starboard rail on the main deck of the sub. The range was estimated to be about 30'. The pistol fire came from a member of the sub's crew who was on a higher elevation than those firing the machine gun and who was dressed differently from the other crew members. Sub had a spotlight which it turned on the men in the water as it fired its machine gun. Survivors stated that the pistol was being deliberately fired at men swimming in the water. Tracers were hitting the boat and the men in the water. After the sub had passed on, men could be heard thrashing about in the water and crying for help. The sub proceeded on, trying to swing its stern in an effort to catch some of the men in the water in its screws. The survivors returned to the lifeboat and the sub then turned and returned on a course bearing directly on the lifeboat but at a slower speed than before. The occupants who had not been hit by previous gunfire again abandoned the boat. Again the bow of the sub brushed the boat and when the boat was at a point approximately amidships of the sub a brilliant white light was turned on the boat. One survivor believed that this light was used to take a picture. No guns were fired from the sub at this time although immediately after the light was removed the sub was turned hard port, obviously in an effort to involve the boat and as many men as possible in the screws. A large number of the sub's crew were standing on its deck and gathered around in the conning tower and were yelling, 'Banzai' and laughing at the predicament of the men in the water. After the sub had gone only 15 men climbed back into the boat. There were several bullet holes in the boat. Survivors stated that 5 members of the group in the #2 boat were killed in the strafing attack on this boat. After sub had passed the lifeboat the second time it again circled the area and then fired on the fore and aft portion of the ship.

Seventeen men on the raft drifted around the stern of the ship. Sub started for the raft and when about 150' away, machine-gunned the raft. The occupants jumped into the water. Sub passed by the raft at about 150' and the raft was reboarded. Sub circled the ship and, in coming around, attempted to ram the raft but a wave threw it out of the way. Sub continued on her course circling the ship again. As she came around a third time, this time the sub hit the raft and, as it passed, again fired its machine gun tracers hitting the water near the men. The men on the sub were yelling 'Banzai' as it passed. The first shot fired after the ramming of the raft was a pistol shot. Sub passed on and made a circle about 1/2 mile from the raft. It passed the raft again at about 200' but did not fire. Splintered side members and severely dented tanks bore out the ramming of the raft. After the sub left there were only 14 men who reboarded the raft.

The #4 lifeboat with 21 men circled the ship picking up 3 or 4 survivors and then pulled away from the ship. When about 1/2 miles away a sea anchor was put over. Sub was seen to surface approximately

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Date of Casualty 10-29-44

100 yards from the boat. About 20 minutes later the sub started toward the lifeboat. Occupants abandoned lifeboat and sub passed 10 yards of the boat but did not fire on the boat. About 20 minutes after shelling the after section of the ship, sub returned and attempted to ram the lifeboat but did not fire on it. The boat was sheared off the sub with a glancing blow but no damage was caused. After the sub had passed and the men came back to the boat there were still 21 men.

A total of 8 men reached the #3 lifeboat which was swamped. Boat drifted well clear of the ship and the other boats could be seen at a distance in the darkness. Sub surfaced about 400-500 yards from this boat and the occupants went over the side keeping the boat between them and the sub. After sub had been surfaced some 10 - 15 minutes, machine-gun fire could be heard and tracer bullets seen, very brilliant and red in color, directed away from the boat. Then rays from a searchlight could also be seen. After sub had shelled the ship it made its last run passing about 300 yards away from this boat. It apparently did not see the #3 boat as it was swamped, only the bow and stern being about 6" - 8" above water."

Name of Vessel JOHN H. CLAYTON
Date of Casualty 1-1-45

Master

"We didn't see the plane at all. We heard the plane for about maybe a matter of ten seconds before it came in without hardly any noise until it got close to the ship. I don't know how close. Then, of course, it speeded up to an awful roar and just as she started roaring, why, we got hit and I doubt whether the people on the bridge even saw it. I talked to all of them about it except the gunnery lieutenant and they all say that they didn't see the plane. There was just this terrible roar coming in and we were hit and I was standing on the port wing of the bridge with the second assistant and I think that he dropped his bomb, naturally, before he got to the ship, and then he started strafing, you see, to try to get the gunners there on the gun tubs on the bridge and all around me and the second assistant after we went back again there was holes in the deck and the bulwarks - no, not the bulwarks, but the bulkhead on the port side of the wheelhouse was all torn up by gunfire."

Name of Vessel HENRY B. PLANT
Date of Casualty 2-6-45

Chief Mate

"I saw the submarine later when we were in the lifeboat
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