

4 April, 1942

38. S.S. COMOL RICO

U.S. Tanker; built 1919; 5,034 gross tons; cargo, molasses.
Departed Humacao, Puerto Rico, 3 April, 1942, for Boston, Mass.
Torpedoed 4 April, 1942, 1506 L.A.T.; 20°46 N.- 66°46 W.
Weather, clear; sea, choppy; wind, moderate N.E.
On board, 42; saved, 39.
Vessel: total loss.

The first torpedo was seen when 150 feet from the vessel, but it was too late for "hard-left rudder" to take effect before the torpedo struck the engine room, blowing out the whole side, and killing three men on the watch below. The gun crew manned the guns, but the submarine did not surface until after the vessel sank. The crew abandoned ship, using the one lifeboat not demolished by the explosion, and all four life rafts. A second torpedo struck, just after the crew were safely off, and the tanker broke in two and sank within 30 seconds after the second explosion.

The submarine surfaced and two men appeared on its deck, but nothing was said, and the submarine left. Although flares were sent up, an approaching passenger steamer changed its course to avoid them, and the boat, with three rafts in tow, set a course for Puerto Rico, about 130 miles away. Four days later they were sighted by a patrol plane, and on the afternoon of 9 April, they were picked up by the USS STURTEVANT and landed at San Juan at 2210.

