

13 May, 1943

119 M.S. NICKELINER

U.S. Tanker; built, 1938; 2,249 gross tons; cargo, aqua ammonia.
Departed Nuevitas, Cuba, 13 May, 1943, for Nicaro (Antilla), Cuba.
Torpedoed 0328 EWT, 13 May, 1943, 6 miles from port of Manati.
Weather, clear; sea, calm; no wind.
On board, 31; saved, 31.
Vessel: total loss.

This small tanker, which had just been remodeled at considerable expense for the purpose of carrying bulk aqua ammonia, was torpedoed while being convoyed by three Cuban sub-chasers. The other merchant ship of the convoy, the tanker LAMBI, was also torpedoed and sunk, and it is felt that the 2 or more enemy submarines involved in the attack must have had accurate information as to the great value of this particular cargo.

The first torpedo struck on the port bow, exploding with a loud report and a flash of red flame. Less than a half-minute later, a second hit slightly abaft the first, making less noise, but releasing large quantities of ammonia from the cargo, and shattering instruments on the bridge. Full speed ahead was rung, but the speed gradually decreased due to the bow plowing under, and after about 10 minutes the engines stopped. The ship was settling slowly but surely and the Master gave the order to abandon it at 0355. All hands got away safely in the two lifeboats, and the tanker plunged under, bow first at 0415.

The survivors from the lifeboats were landed at Nuevitas, Cuba, by the escorts later the same morning. The Master of the NICKELINER commented favorably on the conduct of 6 merchant marine seamen making their first voyage after leaving training school.

