

SS OTIS SKINNER

On 12 January, 1945, the SS OTIS SKINNER was struck in the starboard side of No. 1 hold by a Japanese suicide plane in position 14.42 N rth, 119.35 East, while enroute in convoy from Hollandia, N.G., to Lingayen Gulf, Luzon, with a cargo consigned to the Army and consisting in part of explosives and gasoline. None of the 71 persons on board were killed, but both the ship and its cargo burst into flame and part of the cargo exploded. The following quotation from the testimony of the master of the S.S. OTIS SKINNER, just as in similar cases, vividly illustrates the quality of Coast Guard approved fire fighting equipment, as well as the courageous attitude of the crew:

"Immediately after the plane hit, the boys were there with their life jackets right quick and went to the fire and began plaxing the hoses according to the Chief Mate's and my instructions. After the explosion and when the flames went down and there was no danger of the gasoline having exploded, the gang all went back to their stations at the hoses. We wanted to get down into the holds, so we put a stage over the side and lowered a steel ladder and the two men went down in there with the hose to see whether they could put the fire out better that way. They stayed there half an hour and came on up to be relieved by another couple of men. Well, the men worked very well and did it without having to be told. They got right in there. We didn't have to tell any certain men to go in the holds, although there were some of the men that went after the most dangerous jobs and were an example to the other fellows about getting in there, but on the whole they did exceptionally well. The mate was caught in the deck cargo at the time the flasks of oxygen in the hold exploded and caught fire and he was severely burned. One wiper got, I think it was, a corneal burn from fighting the fire through the hatch."