

23 May, 1942

(1) 70. S.S. SAMUEL Q. BROWN  
(See also Group 7, 7 July, 1942)

U.S. Tanker; built, 1921; 6,624 gross tons; cargo, fuel oil.  
Departed New Orleans for Honolulu.  
Torpedoed 23 May, 1942, 0140; 20°15 N.- 84°38 W.  
Weather, overcast; sea, choppy; wind, light N.E.  
On board, 55; saved, 52.  
Vessel: total loss.

While she was passing through the Yucatan Channel, a torpedo struck this ship, just forward of the break in the poop deck on the port side, exploding with an incendiary effect accompanied by a strong smell of sulphur. Engines were reversed from 'full ahead' to 'slow astern', and fire broke out immediately. The Master ordered the boats and rafts let go, and all hands to jump overboard and swim to them, and 53 did so, one of whom was drowned. The submarine came alongside one of the lifeboats and asked questions about the vessel's name and cargo, then departed, still on the surface.

About 1330 a Navy patrol plane from the Canal Zone flew over and took off the 5 injured men, carrying them to the hospital in Key West. The boats were picked up 24 hours later by the USS GOFF, and taken to Cristobal, C.Z.

The hulk, completely gutted, was still ablaze the following day, and was sunk by the Navy.

George Thornthwaite, of the SAMUEL Q. BROWN, received the Merchant Marine Distinguished Service Medal for heroism above and beyond the call of duty when this vessel was sunk by enemy action.

