

18 March, 1944

138 S.S. SEA KAY

U.S. Tanker; built, 1942; gross tons, 10342; cargo, oil.
Departed New York for United Kingdom.
Torpedoed 18 March, 1944, 50° N. 20° W; 1010 GCT.
Weather, clear; sea, moderate; wind, N.W., light.
On board, 85; saved, 84.
Vessel: total loss.

This vessel was in the leading position of the fifth, or starboard column of a convoy, and an emergency turn to port had just been ordered by the convoy commodore, due to the suspected presence of enemy craft. The torpedo hit to starboard, well forward, and the flash of the explosion touched off the deck load of planes, which caught fire. Fire-fighting equipment rapidly became unnecessary, since the rising water extinguished the flames as the SEA KAY settled by the head. Five minutes after the vessel was hit, the master gave the order to abandon ship, which was carried out in an orderly manner, using all four lifeboats and one raft. The bow continued to go down, and by fifteen minutes later, she had turned completely over, in which position she remained, with the after part of the keel above water, until sunk by depth charges dropped by the escort vessels at 1210.

The survivors were picked up by the USS REEVES, one of the escorts, after about an hour. One of the boats turned turtle alongside the rescue ship, and one armed guard member was drowned, but the remaining men were landed at Londonderry on 21 March.

