

3 December, 1943

134 S.S. TOUCHET

U.S. Tanker; built, 1943; 10,171 gross tons; cargo, fuel oil.
Departed Houston, Texas, 1 December, 1943, for New York.
Torpedoed 3 December, 1943, 0230 EST, Gulf of Mexico, 86°15'W; 25°15'N.
Weather, overcast; sea, choppy; wind, light Southeast.
On board, 80; saved, 70
Vessel: total loss.

About 5 seconds before 0230, this ship's warning device was activated, indicating a torpedo to port, and the alarm was sounded and the wheel put hard left in an effort to avoid the impact, but the torpedo struck and exploded with a flash about 10' aft of the stem. Full speed ahead was ordered, but as the bow was driving under, the order was changed to full speed astern. The torpedo indicator again sounded just as she was gaining sternway, and a heavy thud was felt in the port midship section, but no explosion followed, and the Master believes this was a dud. At 0245, the abandon ship order was given, and all left the tanker in lifeboats and rafts, with the exception of 10 armed guard members, who stayed to man the guns if the submarine should be visible. At 0330, the wake of a third torpedo was spotted 50' from the vessel, and struck aft on the starboard side, causing a tremendous explosion, which undoubtedly demolished and flooded the machinery spaces, and fired the midship house. The armed guardsmen jumped, but it was impossible to rescue them.

The 6 lifeboats tried to keep together, but became separated during the night, and, after 3 to 4 days in the boats, they were picked up and landed at the widely separated points of Key West and Pensacola, Florida, and Galveston, Texas.