

12 May, 1942

59. S.S. VIRGINIA

U.S. Tanker; built, 1941; 10,731 gross tons; cargo, gasoline. Departed Baytown, Tex., 11 May, 1942, for Baton Rouge, La. Torpedoed 12 May, 1942, 1530; 28°53 N.- 89°29 W. Weather, clear; sea, calm; slight breeze. On board, 41; saved, 14. Vessel: total loss.

The VIRGINIA was dead in the water preparatory to picking up a pilot 1-1/2 miles from Southwest Pass, at the mouth of the Mississippi River, when she was struck by a torpedo from the port side. The hit was in #8 tank, and caused no fire; but it was followed two minutes later by a second and third which touched off the cargo of gasoline, and the vessel was aflame from stem to stern in a matter of seconds. There was no possibility of launching any of the rafts or boats, and those who survived did so by plunging overboard immediately.

The burning gasoline poured out on both sides of the ship, and she went down within a few minutes. The following day, the superstructure, which was not submerged, was still burning.

The survivors were in the water about 30 minutes before being picked up by PT 157 and landed at Burrwood Base. The USS COURLAN also recovered seven bodies. The Navy patrol sighted the submarine and took counter measures, but results are unknown.

Merchant Marine Distinguished Service Medals were awarded to Mike Kuzma, and to Bert E. McDowell (Posthumously) for heroism above and beyond the call of duty when the S.S. VIRGINIA was sunk by the enemy.

