

Robert Walker Allen

Born: April 18, 1919

Hometown: Edgewood, PA

Class: 1940 - USMMCC Cadet
Officer
1939 - Pennsylvania Nautical
School

Service: USNR

Position / Rank: Lieutenant

Date / Place of death: January 10, 1943 / 5-40S,152-
2E

Date / Place of burial: January 10, 1943 / Lost at Sea – 5-40S, 152-2E;
Tablets of the Missing at Manila American Cemetery Manila,
Philippines

Age: 23



Robert W. Allen was appointed a Cadet, Merchant Marine Reserve on March 25, 1939 while he was attending the Pennsylvania Nautical School. Following his graduation from Pennsylvania Nautical School later that year he began sailing as a Cadet Officer (Engine) when he signed on aboard the SS Asura on December 20, 1939. According to crew lists on file in New York, he signed on as Third Assistant Engineer aboard the SS Exilona in March 1940 and remained aboard in that capacity until August 1940. During his time aboard the SS Exilona he apparently applied for an appointment as Ensign, USNR. Upon his acceptance of the appointment on September 16, 1940 he was placed on active duty and was initially assigned to the USS Arkansas (BB 33).

After completing this assignment, Robert Allen was transferred to the Submarine School at New London, CT. Upon graduation he was assigned to the USS Argonaut (SM 1). The Argonaut, one of the largest submarines in the U.S. Navy, was designed to lay mines. In January 1942 the Argonaut began conversion to a troop carrying submarine at the Mare Island Naval Shipyard. After the conversion the Argonaut carried Marines of the 2nd Raider Battalion to Makin Island for a diversionary raid. The Argonaut retrieved them upon completion of the raid two days later.

After returning from the raid, the Argonaut was assigned to operate out of Brisbane, Australia. In December 1943 the Argonaut sailed from Brisbane for a patrol area in the Solomon Islands between New Britain and Bougainville. On January 10, 1943, the Argonaut sighted a convoy of five freighters, escorted by Japanese destroyers, and

attacked. A U.S. Army plane was flying over the scene and witnessed the Argonaut's attack on the convoy.



USS Argonaut

Although the Argonaut successfully torpedoed at least one destroyer, the other escorts counterattacked with depth charges. The Army plane circling above noticed the Argonaut surfacing at an odd angle, its bow protruding upwards from the waves, indicating that the counter attack had damaged the Argonaut. The destroyers surrounded the submarine and pumped shells into her bow, sinking her. All 105 men aboard the Argonaut, including Lieutenant Robert W. Allen, were lost.

Lieutenant Robert W. Allen, USNR was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart Medal, the American Defense Service Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Area Campaign Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal. For his merchant marine service he also earned the Merchant Marine Defense Bar.

At the time of his death Robert Allen was married to Dorothy Danton Allen. Robert W. Allen was the second of the three sons and four children of Kenneth Pratt Allen and Isabel Louise Bortree Allen. Robert's older brother was Kenneth. His younger siblings were Donald and Mary. According to the 1930 U.S. Census, Kenneth Allen was employed by the local power company.