

## Burton Gale Bergeson

Born: June 3, 1922  
Hometown: Lake Park, MN  
Class: 1943  
Service: Merchant Marine  
Position / Rank: Deck Cadet  
Date / Place of death: September 24, 1942 /  
56N, 31W  
Date / Place of burial: September 24, 1942 / Lost at  
Sea – 56N, 31W  
Age: 20



Burton G. Bergeson signed on as Deck Cadet aboard the SS John Winthrop on August 12, 1942 at Boston, MA shortly after the ship was completed and delivered to the War Shipping Administration. He joined Cadet-Midshipman Jonathan F. Sturges who signed on as the Engine Cadet. After a voyage to the United Kingdom, the SS John Winthrop sailed from Glasgow, Scotland to join the sixty merchant ships and seventeen escorts of Convoy ON-131 which was bound for New York.

On September 21, 1942 the SS John Winthrop straggled from the convoy. For three days the straggling SS John Winthrop managed to evade German U-boats prowling the area. However, according to records of the German Navy, on the evening of September 24 the straggler was found by U-619. The submarine fired five torpedoes, breaking the John Winthrop into two pieces, which remained afloat. U-619 then surfaced and sunk the remaining portions of the ship with its deck gun. There were no survivors amongst the John Winthrop's crew of 39 Armed Guard complement of 15. Of the 61 ships in Convoy ON-131, the SS Jonathan Winthrop was the only ship sunk.

Cadet-Midshipman Burton G. Bergeson was posthumously awarded the Mariners Medal, Combat Bar with star, Atlantic War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal and Presidential Testimonial Letter.

Burton G. Bergeson, was the eldest of Reno Rino Selmer Bergeson and Anna Joanna Skei Bergeson's five children. He had two little brothers, Rudolph (three years younger) and Harold (six years younger). Burtons two sisters were Enid (one year younger) and Janice (two years younger). According to the 1940 U.S. Census, Reno Bergeson was an insurance salesman.

According to recollections of his sister Janice, Burton was considered a role model for his siblings. Janice recalls that Burton walked to school, was a good student and attended church regularly. She also remembers a childhood filled with outdoor sports both summer and winter.



**Memorial in Lake Park Cemetery, Lake Park, MN**

Janice recalled that In one notable year Burton “rolled up his sleeves” to help install indoor plumbing in the family home when they became available. During summer vacations in high school Burton worked for the Northern Pacific Rail Road. He graduated with highest honors from Lake Park High School where he played both football and basketball. After graduation he enrolled in Concordia College. However, the war broke out during his freshman year and he applied for entrance into the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy – changing the course of his life.