

Henry James Bogardus, Jr.

Born: March 12, 1923
Hometown: Montclair, NJ
Class: 1944
Service: Merchant Marine
Position / Rank: Engine Cadet
Date / Place of death: June 6, 1943 / 30-10S, 34-10E
Date / Place of burial: June 6, 1943 / Lost at Sea – 30-10S, 34-10E
Age: 20



Henry J. Bogardus signed aboard the SS William King as Engine Cadet on November 16, 1942 at Philadelphia, PA. According to the report submitted by one of the ship's other cadets, Cadet-Midshipman John H. Lueddecke, the ship sailed from Philadelphia loaded with Army trucks, ammunition, food, blankets, medical supplies and railroad car axles bound for Bushire, Iran. The William King sailed in convoy to the Panama Canal and then down the West Coast of South America, around Cape Horn to Karachi, India and its destination. After unloading its cargo in the Persian Gulf the William King sailed from Basra, Iran, refueled in Saudi Arabia, and sailed for Cape Town, South Africa. On May 28, the ship received a message from the British Admiralty via the radio station at Mombasa, Kenya to divert to Durban.

At about 1140 GCT on June 6, when the William King was about 200 miles east of Durban, it was sighted and attacked by U-198. The submarine's first torpedo hit the ship on the port side at the Number 3 hatch and the engine room. Both of the ship's two boilers exploded, stopping the ship immediately and starting a fire in the engine room. The crew members in the engine room, including Cadet-Midshipman Henry J. Bogardus, Jr., were believed to have been killed instantly.

Captain Owen Harvey Reed immediately ordered the crew to abandon ship, using the two starboard lifeboats and a life raft since the port lifeboats were destroyed in the explosion. However, the Second Mate and the Armed Guard remained on board for another 40 minutes, attempting to fire on the submarine until a second torpedo missed the stern of the ship by about 15 feet. Shortly after abandoning ship in three of the life rafts, U-198 fired one more torpedo which hit on the starboard side amidships. A large explosion and shooting flames ensued and the ship sank almost immediately.

After the entire crew had abandoned ship, the German submarine surfaced, questioned the survivors about their nationality, and the name, tonnage, and destination of the ship. The U-Boat crew also demanded to know where the Captain was and fired several rounds of sub-machine gun bullets into the water. Captain Reed gave himself up, said goodbye to his crew and boarded the submarine. Three weeks later he was turned over to U-196's supply ship the Charlotte Schliemann. In turn the Charlotte Schliemann turned its prisoners over to a Japanese Prisoner of War camp in Batavia, Java in August 1943. Captain Reed, along with 2,300 other POWs, were aboard the "hell ship" SS Junyo Maru perished when the ship was sunk by HMS Tradewind (P 329) on September 18, 1944.

The gun crews in the life rafts were rescued after 36 hours in the water by the anti-submarine trawler HMS Northern Chief. Twelve hours later the Northern Chief found one of the lifeboats. The survivors in the other lifeboat (who had managed to sail within fourteen miles of land) were picked up on 12 June by the British destroyer HMS Relentless (H85). All of the 59 survivors of the sinking of the SS William King, including Bogardus' fellow Cadets, Patrick F. Canavan, Joseph A. Gagliano and John H. Lueddecke, were brought to Durban.

Cadet-Midshipman Henry J. Bogardus posthumously received the Mariner's Medal, Combat Bar, Atlantic War Zone Bar, the Mediterranean-Middle East War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal and the Presidential Testimonial Letter.

Henry J. Bogardus was the eldest son of Adelaide V. Bogardus. Henry was raised in Montclair, New Jersey with his older sister Dorothy and younger sister Beatrice and brother Robert. The family survived difficult times during the Great Depression. Bogardus was a talented musician, and played tuba in his school marching band and bugle at Boy Scout Camp in the summers. Despite suffering from asthma that kept him out of athletics he was an Eagle Scout and an excellent student. After high school, Bogardus enrolled at Cooper Union College night school, and worked at Union Carbide Co. in New York City before attending the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy.

His brother Robert says,

"Henry lived by the fine motto of the Boy Scouts of America: Be Prepared. It should be said that he paid the price, by preparing for achievement!"

Captain Richard R. McNulty, Supervisor of the Cadet Corps, received a letter from R.H. Farinholt, Chief of the Merchant Marine Personnel Records and Welfare Section on June 16, 1943, informing him of Bogardus's death. A handwritten note in McNulty's hand at the bottom of the page reads,

"This is 100th gone. Too damned many of these fine lads gone. Wish there was more we could do to minimize losses."