

Robert J. Bole, III

Born: July 7, 1920
Hometown: Drexel Hill, PA
Class: 1943
Service: Merchant Marine
Position / Rank: Deck Cadet
Date / Place of death: September 19, 1942 / 11-20N,
58-50 W
Date / Place of burial: September 19, 1942 / Lost at Sea
- 11-20N, 58-50 W
Age: 22



Robert J. Bole signed on aboard the freighter MS Wichita as Deck Cadet on May 21, 1942 at New Orleans, LA. He joined Cadet-Midshipman Chester E. Klein who had signed on a few days earlier signed on as Engine Cadet. Ceslaus A. Maciorowski, who had received his License as Third Assistant Engineer just days before, signed on as Third Assistant Engineer on May 20. The MS Wichita had was originally a World War I-era "Hog Islander", but was converted from steam turbine to diesel propulsion in 1929. The ship sailed for Africa in late May. After calling at several ports the ship's final loading port before sailing for the U.S. was Takoradi, Ghana.



MS Wichita

The Wichita sailed from Takoradi on September 1, 1942, without any escort, bound for St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands loaded with general cargo. According to German Navy records the Wichita was located and attacked by U-516 on the morning of September 19, 1942, when the Wichita was about 300 miles east of Barbados. The submarine's

initial attack was unsuccessful. However, after re-positioning itself the U-516 hit the Wichita with a torpedo between the foremast and the bridge, despite zig-zagging at a speed of about 11 knots. The Wichita sank in less than a minute with no survivors.

The U-516's log book states that the submarine surfaced and searched the sinking area but found neither survivors nor lifeboats. Cadet-Midshipmen Robert J. Bole, III, Chester E. Klein and Third Assistant Engineer Ceslau Maciorowski were all killed in the attack.

Cadet-Midshipman Robert J. Bole was posthumously awarded the Mariner's Medal, Combat Bar, Atlantic War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal and the Presidential Testimonial Letter.

Robert J. Bole was the oldest of six sons and three daughters of Robert J. Bole and Elizabeth Doris O'Rourke Bole. Known as "Bobby" he was adored by his younger siblings. He attended the Pennsylvania Nautical School for some period of time and applied to the U.S. Naval Academy. However, by December 1941 he was a freshman engineering student at Drexel University. He subsequently applied for and was accepted for the Maritime Commission's new Cadet program. One of his brothers says that the following quote from William Shakespeare describes Bobby Bole best,

"Heaven doeth with us, as we with torches do; Not light them for themselves; for if our virtues Did not go forth for us, 'twere all alike as if we had them not."



Robert Bole (rt) with brothers (l - r) Ted, Bill, Tom (in back) and Ken



Robert Bole (rt) aboard ship with crew member he rescued after he fell overboard