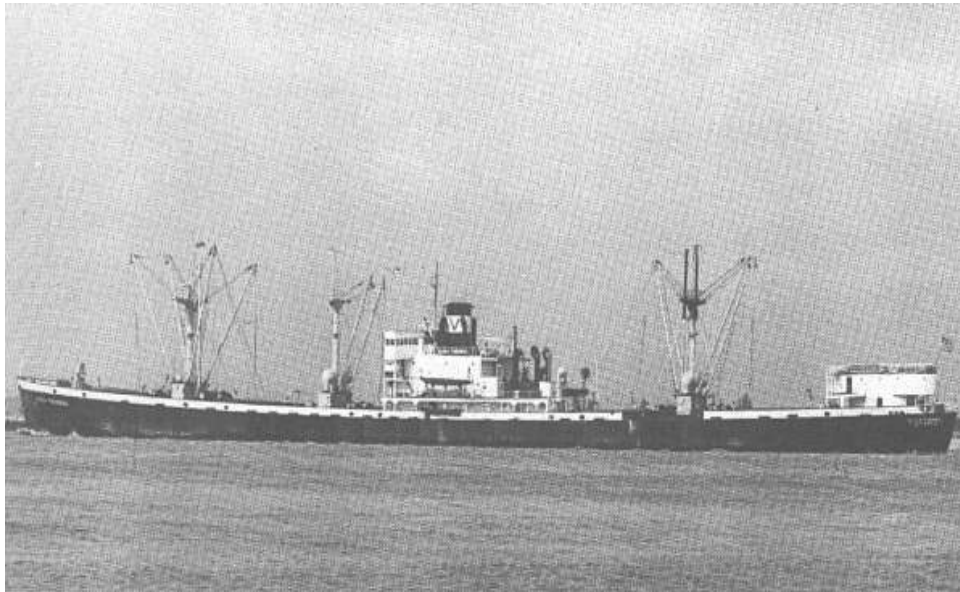


Philip George Branigan

Born: July 6, 1922
Hometown: Teaneck, NJ
Class: 1943
Service: Merchant Marine
Position / Rank: Deck Cadet
Date / Place of death: December 7, 1942 / 57-50N,
23-10W
Date / Place of burial: December 7, 1942 / Lost at Sea
– 57-50N, 23-10W
Age: 20



Philip G. Branigan signed on the SS James McKay as Deck Cadet on November 11, 1942 at New York, NY. Three other Kings Point Cadet-Midshipmen, Leonard L. Ehrlich (Engine), Walter C. Hetrick (Engine) and John J. McKelvey (Deck) were also aboard. In addition to the four cadets the ship's Third Assistant Engineer, Henry E. Harris, was a Cadet Corps alumnus.



SS James McKay

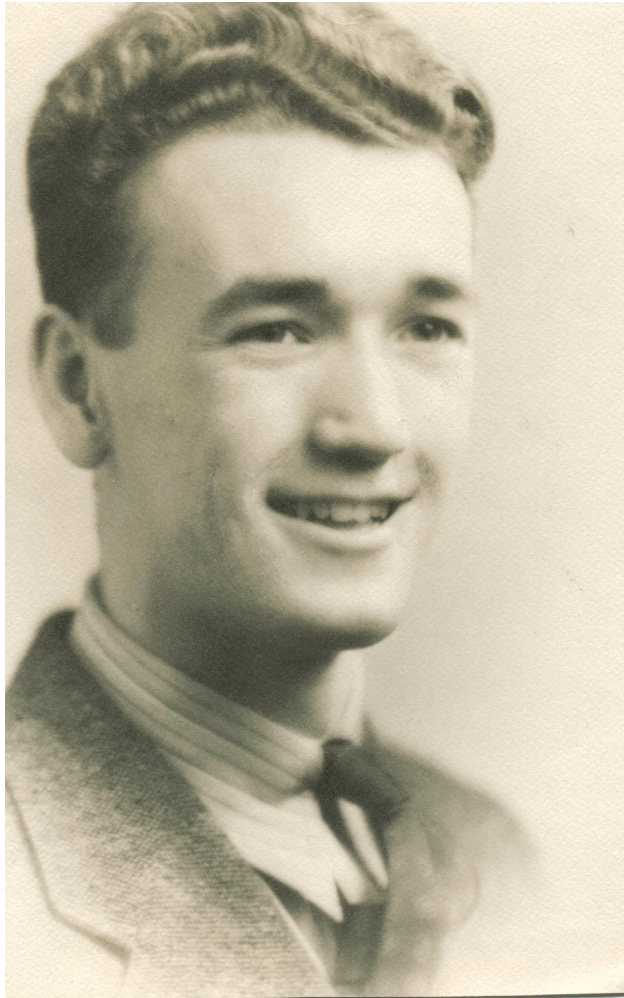
The James McKay sailed from New York with Convoy HX-216 bound for Belfast, Northern Ireland and Cardiff, Wales on November 19. On November 25 the convoy encountered a Northwest gale and reduced visibility that caused the convoy to partly scatter. The weather was

sufficiently rough to cause the James McKay's general cargo to shift, endangering its stability. As a result, the ship left the convoy and sailed into St. Johns, Newfoundland

on November 29 to re-stow its cargo.

After re-stowing its cargo, the James McKay sailed from Newfoundland to join up with the next eastbound convoy, HX-217. However, there is no indication that the James McKay ever actually joined up with HX-217, possibly due to the convoy being scattered in a Southwesterly gale from December 2- 4.

According to German Navy records, the James McKay was located and attacked by U-600 on the night of December 7/8, 1943 when the ship was about 400 miles south of Iceland. Three of U-600's torpedoes hit the James McKay, one amidships and the other two in the after portion of the ship.



Philip George Branigan

The ship stopped, sent out distress signals and the crew abandoned ship in two lifeboats although the ship was still afloat. It required two more torpedoes from U-600 to sink the James McKay. Neither the two lifeboats, nor any of the people aboard the James McKay, were ever seen again.

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

According to his niece, Maureen C. Bridger, Philip Branigan was very close to his sister Rose, Maureen's mother. Rose, who was just fifteen months older Philip, shared a wide circle of friends and went to dances, war bond rallies and other social events together. When they were little their grandfather took them out on his boat with him to go crabbing.

Maureen's mother told her that Uncle Phil was a talented singer and musician who played the bass fiddle. Phil was also an avid reader. At the beginning of the war Phil tried to join the Navy but had been rejected because his eardrums had been

damaged by ear infections as a child. He was determined to serve his country at sea, and was accepted at Kings Point. In going to Kings Point he became the first member of his family to enroll in a post-secondary educational institution. At the time of his death Philip was engaged to a young woman named Evelyn.

Phil's mother put a Gold Star in the window of her house after learning of his death. The Gold Star signified that someone on the house had died in action during World War II. Mrs. Branigan kept the Gold Star in her window even though neighborhood women criticized her for doing so because they felt that Philip wasn't a "real soldier or sailor."

Maureen remembers going on a shopping trip with her mother to New York when her mother thought she saw Philip in a crowd. After running to catch the person only to learn, of course, that it wasn't Phil. Maureen said that her mother always thought it fitting that Phil died just as he had wanted, aboard a ship serving his country.