

## Denniston Charlton, Jr.

Born: December 28, 1923  
Hometown: Great Neck, NY  
Class: 1944  
Service: Merchant Marine  
Position / Rank: Deck Cadet  
Date / Place of death: January 1, 1943 / 35-34N, 00-45W  
Date / Place of burial: January 1, 1943 / Lost at Sea – 35-34N, 00-45W  
Age: 19



Denniston Charlton signed on aboard the SS Arthur Middleton as Deck Cadet on November 21, 1942 at New York, NY. Also aboard was Cadet-Midshipman Ben Gafford who signed on as Engine Cadet. At New York and Norfolk, VA the Arthur Middleton loaded a cargo of ammunition, explosives and mail with LCT-21 stowed on deck. The ship sailed from Hampton Roads on December 12, 1942 for Oran as part of a “slow” convoy, UGS-3 with 42 crew, 27 Armed Guard and 12 passengers (11 crew from LCT-21 and one Army officer).

Upon arrival at Casablanca eleven ships bound for nearby Oran split off from the convoy and proceeded to their destination. When the eleven ships were about eight miles away from Oran, the convoy slowed and the signal was given for single column for entry into the harbor. The SS Rhode Island, the Commodore’s ship, was maneuvering at slow speed to line up for the harbor approach while the other ships formed a line astern.

The Arthur Middleton was near the port quarter of the Rhode Island when it was struck near the bow by two torpedoes fired by U-73 at 1411 GCT. According to U-73’s Commanding Officer, the Arthur Middleton violently exploded less than 20 seconds after being hit by the torpedoes, sending flames and parts of the ship soaring 1,000 feet into the air. The front half of the ship disintegrated from the Number 5 hatch to the bow, but a small section of the stern remained afloat for about a minute. Of the 81 men on board, only three men, members of the Armed Guard who had been stationed on the after section and were able to jump overboard, survived. These three were picked up 25 minutes after the attack by the HMS Boreas (H77), and transferred to the British Hospital Ship, HMHS Oxfordshire. Cadet-Midshipmen Denniston Charlton, Jr. and Ben P. Gafford were among those lost in the attack.

Cadet-Midshipman Denniston Charlton was posthumously awarded the Mariner's Medal, Combat Bar, Atlantic War Zone Bar, the Mediterranean-Middle East War Zone Bar, Victory Medal, and the Presidential Testimonial Letter.

Denniston Charlton, Jr. was the son of Denniston Charlton, Sr. and Lois Wibberly Charlton. He had one older sister, Lois Elizabeth. According to passenger lists for ships arriving in the Port of New York, Denniston and his sister visited Havana, Cuba with their mother in 1926 and 1928. The senior Charlton was a successful produce manager in a Connecticut supermarket. The family moved to Great Neck, Long Island sometime before 1939, where Denniston Jr. finished high school.