

Vincent Jerome Corrigan

Born: July 19, 1922
Hometown: Glendale, NY
Class: 1944
Service: Merchant Marine
Position / Rank: Engine Cadet
Date / Place of death: January 27, 1943 /
36-37N, 30-55W
Date / Place of burial: January 27, 1943 / Lost at
Sea – 36-37N, 30-55W
Age: 22



Vincent J. Corrigan signed on aboard the SS Charles C. Pinckney as Engine Cadet on January 1, 1943 at the port of New York. Joining him on the ship as Deck Cadet was his classmate, Cadet-Midshipman Robert Lamac. On the same day Theodore Scharpf, a former Merchant Marine Cadet Corps Cadet Officer signed on as First Assistant Engineer.

The Charles C. Pinckney sailed with convoy UGS-4 from Hampton Roads, Virginia on January 13, 1943 loaded with ammunition, a general cargo of war supplies and mechanized equipment bound for Casablanca. On the night of January 21, 1943 the Charles Pinckney, SS City of Flint, and SS Julia Ward Howe, straggled from the convoy. All three, no longer protected by the convoy escort of six U.S. Navy destroyers, were sunk by U-boats.

On January 27th the Pinckney was about 200 miles south-southwest of Fayal Island, Azores. During the morning the watch sighted a submarine far off on the horizon, traveling parallel to the Pinckney, apparently at great speed. The gun crew fired a few shots at the submarine, but even at maximum elevation, these did not come close to their target. The Pinckney then increased to its maximum speed of 11 knots.

Late in the afternoon, the Pinckney changed its course to proceed directly away from the submarine, but the crew was unable to tell whether or not the submarine followed. At about 2145 local time, the Chief Mate observed a torpedo, fired by U-514 heading directly for the ship, and ordered a hard right rudder. The order came too late and the torpedo struck just behind the ship's bow, detonating part of the cargo. The explosion blew off the bow killing two men in the forward gun crew. On the Captain's order, the crew abandoned ship immediately, with all but one of the boats lowered successfully.

The gun crew remained on the ship at great peril to their own lives, given the cargo of munitions on board. When the German submarine which had fired the torpedo later surfaced near the port beam, the gun crew fired on the sub. Although the gun crew claimed they sunk the submarine, it had actually made an emergency dive.

Since the ship did not immediately sink, the crew re-boarded the ship to see if it could be repaired. After inspecting the ship's engines the Chief Engineer reported that it would not be possible to raise steam and continue sailing the ship. However, the crew was able to collect additional supplies, and send a distress signal. Around midnight U-514 fired two more torpedoes. The second torpedo hit the Pinkney, causing the crew abandoned ship again. Soon thereafter U-514, approached the boats and questioned the survivors.

The four lifeboats began making for the Azores, but were unable to stay together in heavy seas during the second night. One lifeboat, carrying six crew members, including the Second Officer, and eight Naval Armed Guard Sailors, was picked up on February 8th by the Swiss ship Caritas I, and later landed at Horta, Fayal Island. The other three lifeboats were never seen again. Of the 73 persons aboard the Pinckney (42 crew, 29 Naval Armed Guard, and 2 U.S. Army Security Officers), only these 14 were rescued. Cadet-Midshipmen Vincent Corrigan and Robert Louis Lamac, along with First Assistant Engineer Theodore Scharpf were among those lost.

Cadet-Midshipman Vincent J. Corrigan was posthumously awarded the Mariners Medal, Combat Bar with star, Atlantic War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal and the Presidential Testimonial Letter.

Vincent J. Corrigan was the only son of Alice Corrigan. According to U.S. Census records Vincent and his mother lived with his Grandparents Michael and Marry Corrigan and their three adult children in Queens, NY. Vincent started his Basic School training at Kings Point in October 1942.