

David Lincoln Edwards

Born: February 12, 1918

Hometown: Brighton, MA

Class: 1940 - USMMCC Cadet Officer
1938 - Massachusetts Nautical School

Service: Merchant Marine

Position / Rank: Chief Mate

Date / Place of death: February 23, 1943 / 46-15N, 38-11W

Date / Place of burial: February 23, 1943 / Lost At Sea – 46-15N, 38-11W

Age: 25



David L. Edwards started his sailing career on August 1, 1938 as a Cadet Officer assigned to the Coast and Geodetic Survey ship SS Hydrographer. He subsequently sailed as Cadet Officer aboard the SS Delnorte and as Third Mate aboard the SS Delplata, Delorleans and Delmundo. On August 13, 1942 the latter ship was torpedoed and sunk. However, David Edwards survived the sinking and returned to sea. He signed on aboard the SS Jonathan Sturges on or before January 12, 1943. Among the ship's crew on that date were Cadet-Midshipmen Harry Burlison, Grover Leitz, Ralph Kohlmeyer and William Wilson.

After safely delivering its cargo to England the Jonathan Sturges was returning to New York with Convoy ON-166 from Liverpool to New York City when it fell behind the convoy on the night of February 23/24, 1943. The ship, with a crew of 44 merchant mariners and a Naval Armed Guard of 31 was carrying 1,500 tons of sand ballast. In bad weather and poor visibility the Sturges was making 6 knots, about ½ its full speed. At about 1 am, the vessel was struck in the forward part of the ship by two torpedoes fired by U-707. The engines were secured, but the ship, which had apparently been broken in two, began to sink bow first. Survivors recalled that the explosions gave off a sweet odor, and left a sweet taste in their mouths for hours after the incident.

Although the radio officer was able to send a distress signal, there was no time to await a reply as the crew abandoned ship. Two lifeboats and four life rafts were successfully launched. According to the post sinking report of the survivors, nineteen men were able to get into one life boat while the Master, Chief Mate David Edwards and fifteen others were in the other boat. The other twenty-four survivors were able to reach the four life rafts. However, the boats and rafts were soon separated.

On February 27, three days after the sinking, the boat with nineteen men aboard met up with a lifeboat carrying three survivors from the Dutch ship SS Madoera who had been in the same convoy. Eight of the Sturges' survivors climbed into the Madoera's boat. Although one of the Jonathan Sturges' crew eventually died of exposure, the other eighteen (along with the three Madoera survivors) were rescued by the USS Belknap (DD 251) on March 12, 1943. However, the other lifeboat with its seventeen survivors was never seen again. Of the twenty-four men on the life rafts, only 6 survived. These men were rescued on April 5 by U-336 and spent the rest of the war as Prisoners of War.

Based on his merchant marine service David L. Edwards was posthumously awarded the Mariners Medal, Combat Bar with two stars, Atlantic War Zone Bar, Victory Medal, and the Presidential Testimonial Letter.

David L. Edwards was the son of Harry Phillip Edwards, Sr. of Brighton, MA. He had at least one sibling, brother Harry, Jr. At the time of his death he was married to Marie Edwards who was living in New Orleans, LA.

According to his U.S. Coast Guard file, David Edwards served aboard the USS Nantucket as a Cadet from March 28, 1936 to April 5, 1938. The former USS Nantucket was assigned to the Massachusetts Nautical School, now Massachusetts Maritime Academy, in 1901. With the exception of its reactivation and service in the U.S. Navy during World War I, the Nantucket served as the Massachusetts Nautical School's training ship until 1940. In that year the former USS Nantucket was transferred to the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy to serve as its training ship. Two years later the Nantucket was renamed the Emery Rice. After eighteen years of service to Kings Point the Emery Rice was scrapped in 1958. However, the "heart" of this early piece of Kings Point history, the ship's engine, remains at Kings Point as a National Historic Engineering Landmark.