

## Leonard Laurence Ehrlich

Born: June 28, 1923  
Hometown: Brooklyn, NY  
Class: 1943  
Service: Merchant Marine  
Position / Rank: Engine 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: 19



Leonard L. Ehrlich signed on as Engine Cadet aboard the SS John Penn at Boston, MA on June 11, 1942. During his assignment to the John Penn it sailed to Murmansk, Russia in convoy PQ-18. On September 19, 1942 the John Penn was attacked and sunk by German aircraft. Fortunately, Ehrlich survived the sinking of the John Penn and returned to Boston, MA aboard the SS Queen Mary on October 15, 1942 as a member of the “Tin Fish Club”. After spending almost a month to visit his family and replace the clothing and personnel effects lost on the John Penn he was ordered to report to a new ship to complete his at sea training.

Leonard L. Ehrlich signed on aboard the SS James McKay as Engine Cadet on November 11, 1942 at New York, NY. Three other Kings Point Cadet Midshipmen, Philip G. Branigan (Deck) , 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 1942 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. 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 Leonard L. Ehrlich was posthumously awarded the Mariners Medal, Combat Bar with two stars, Atlantic War Zone Bar, Victory Medal and Presidential Testimonial Letter.

Leonard L. Ehrlich was the only son of William Ehrlich and Rebecca Ehrlich. According to U.S. Census records William Ehrlich worked as a clerk for a tobacco distributor. By 1940 Leonard's older sister, Shirley, was also working in a similar position, possibly with her father. Leonard arrived at Kings Point in February 1942 and completed his initial training while the school was still being organized.