

Richard Paul Farrell

Born: July 27, 1920
Hometown: Los Angeles, CA
Class: 1943
Service: Merchant Marine
Position / Rank: Deck Cadet
Date / Place of death: November 7, 1942 / 11-34N, 63-26W
Date / Place of burial: November 7, 1942 / Lost at Sea – 11-34 N, 63-26 W
Age: 22



Richard P. Farrell signed on aboard the SS Nathaniel Hawthorne as Deck Cadet on May 10, 1942 at Portland, OR just a week after the ship was delivered to the War Shipping Administration by its builder, Oregon Shipbuilding. Joining him on the ship was his Basic School Classmate, Cadet-Midshipman William Weis. By November 1942, the ship was en route from Georgetown, British Guiana to New York, via Trinidad, loaded with a cargo of 7,576 tons of bauxite. The vessel was traveling in convoy TAG-19, and carried a complement of forty crew members, ten Naval Armed Guard, and two passengers.

At 0340 on November 7th, while the convoy was traveling about 40 miles northeast of Isla de Margarita, the Nathaniel Hawthorne was struck on the port side at the Number 1 hold by a torpedo fired by U-508. Seconds later, another torpedo struck the port side near the engine room. The engines stopped after the second hit, and the entire midsection of the ship was blown to pieces. The ship listed to port, and after a third explosion (most likely involving the acetylene supply on board), sank quickly.

Of the 52 men on board, only 10 crew members, 3 Naval Armed Guard, and one passenger survived. Cadet-Midshipmen Richard P. Farrell and William R. Weis, Jr. were lost in the attack. Those who survived had managed to jump overboard and swim to one of three rafts that floated free of the ship after it sank. Thirty-nine hours later, they were rescued by the crew of the USS Biddle (DD 151). The Nathaniel Hawthorne's Armed Guard officer, Ensign Kenneth H. Muir, USNR, was awarded the Navy Cross for directing his men to safety as the ship sank, despite being severely wounded.



Launching of SS Nathaniel Hawthorne

middle of San Francisco Bay. He was one of the earliest Cadet-Midshipmen to begin training on the West Coast.

Cadet-Midshipman Richard P. Farrell was posthumously awarded the Mariners Medal, Combat Bar with star, Atlantic War Zone Bar, Pacific War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal, and the Presidential Testimonial Letter.

Richard P. Farrell was the youngest of David A. Farrell and Virginia B. Farrell's two sons. Richard's older brother, David, Jr., was about seven years older. The 1930 U. S. Census indicates that the Farrell family owned a business selling electric furnaces in which both parents worked.

According to information assembled by James Hoffman, Richard Farrell sailed as an unlicensed Deck Seaman aboard the SS Pacific Sun in December 1941. Shortly thereafter he reported for his basic training at the West Coast Basic School's temporary home, the Navy's Training Base at Treasure Island in the