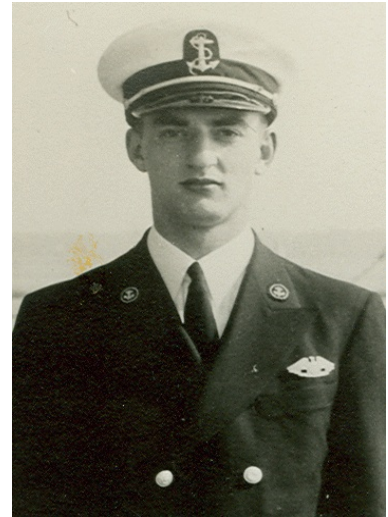


## Herman Gerard Garritsen

Born: February 23, 1922  
Hometown: Ridgewood, NJ  
Class: 1943  
Service: Merchant Marine  
Position / Rank: Engine Cadet  
Date / Place of death: November 4, 1942 / 71-02N, 13-05W  
Date / Place of burial: November 4, 1942 / Lost at Sea – 71-02N, 13-05W  
Age: 20



Herman G. Garritsen signed on as Engine Cadet aboard the Liberty Ship SS William Clark in New York harbor on August 17, 1942. Also joining the ship on the same day were Engine Cadets Richard Holland and Peter Smith and Deck Cadet Robert Everhart. They joined a crew of 38 merchant ship officers and seamen along with 30 officers and men of the Navy's Armed Guard.



**SS William Clark**

The ship sailed on August 22, 1942, carrying a cargo of general military supplies in its holds and a deck cargo of aircraft and tanks to Murmansk, Russia. The William Clark traveled with convoys via Boston (BX-35) and Halifax, Nova Scotia (SC-99) to Reykjavik, Iceland where the ship would normally have joined a Murmansk bound convoy. However, due to the high losses of the previous two Murmansk Convoys, PQ-17 and PQ-18, and the demand for warships to support the landings in North Africa, the Murmansk convoys were suspended. In the interim, supplies still had to flow to Russia. So, the seven British, five U.S. and one Russian merchant ships that would have been

in the next Murmansk convoy were ordered to sail independently from Reykjavik in twelve hour intervals between October 29 and November 2, 1942 in what was called Operation FB. Of the thirteen ships, three turned back to Reykjavik, five arrived safely and five, including the SS William Clark, were lost.

At 1135 on November 4, 1942, near Jan Mayen Island, the SS William Clark was hit on the port side, amidships, by one of three torpedoes by U-354. The explosion completely destroyed the engine room killing all five of the engineers on duty, including Cadet-Midshipman Peter J. Smith. The remaining crew abandoned ship into two life boats and a motorboat. Although the motorboat was able to keep the survivors together by towing the lifeboats, the towline was eventually broken and the boats became separated. One boat with 26 survivors was rescued after three days afloat by HMS Elstan (FY 240). The second boat with fourteen survivors were rescued by HMS Cape Passiser (FY 256) after over a week at sea. Cadet-Midshipman Herman Garritsen apparently was in the motorboat which, with twenty other crew members, was under the command of the Captain. This boat was never heard from again.

Cadet-Midshipman Herman G. Garritsen was posthumously awarded the Mariners Medal, Combat Bar with star, the Atlantic War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal, and the Presidential Testimonial Letter.

Herman Garritsen was the only son, and youngest child of Herman H. Garritsen and Bernadine Peters Garritsen. According to the 1930 U.S. Census, the elder Garritsen was a house painter. Herman Jr. started his seagoing career early, sailing across the Atlantic in 1925 when he was three years old to visit relatives with his mother. His nephew, Frank Ludica, said that he was known as a precocious youngster with a lively interest in music, sports, photography, science and journalism. He was an accomplished pianist who wrote and arranged his own music.

Frank said,

“I remember him as an outstanding basketball player on his high school team. He went on to study at Columbia University before entering the Academy. As my uncle he was a role model and a loss I feel very deeply!”