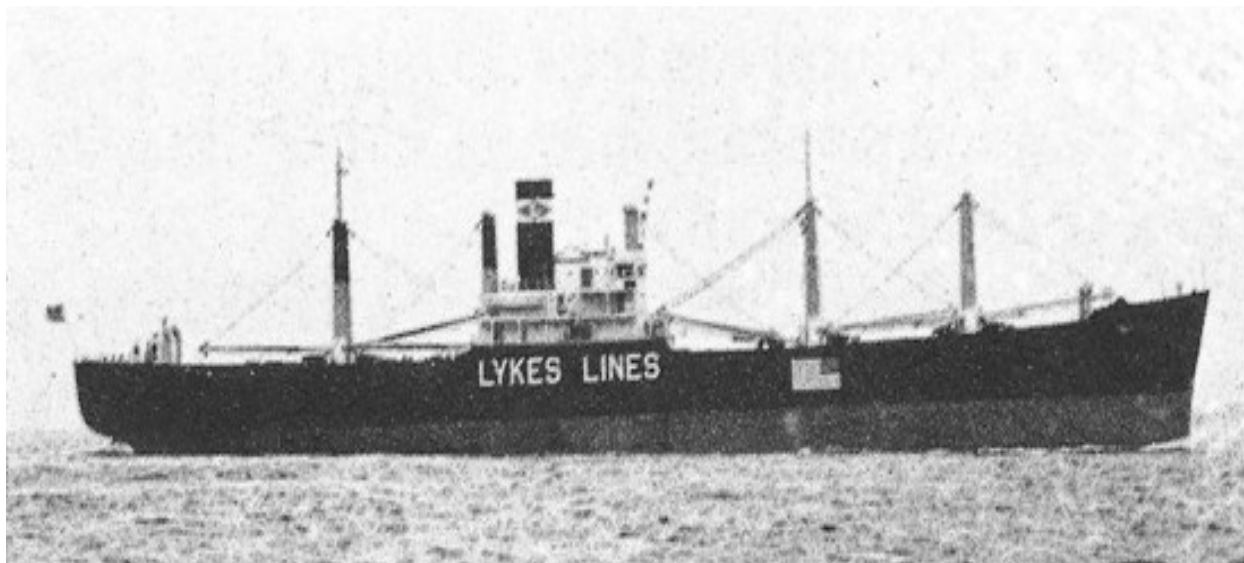


## Charles Conrad Gassner

Born: November 17, 1921  
Hometown: Pittsburgh, PA  
Class: 1943  
Service: Merchant Marine  
Position / Rank: Deck Cadet  
Date / Place of death: January 9, 1943 / 56-15N, 22W  
Date / Place of burial: January 9, 1943 / Lost at Sea - 56-15 N, 22 W  
Age: 21



Charles Gassner signed on aboard the SS Louise Lykes as Deck Cadet on October 18, 1942 at New York, NY. He was joined by three other Kings Point Cadet-Midshipmen, Allen Miller (Deck), Robert Vancure (Engine) and Eugene Walters (Deck). In addition, the ship's Third Assistant Engineer, Frederick Baumann and Third Mate, Harry Wolfe, were former U.S. Maritime Commission Cadet Officers. The Louise Lykes made one voyage to the Mediterranean and returned to New York on December 12, 1942. A fifth Cadet-Midshipman, Marion Chrobak (Engine) joined the ship for its next voyage. The ship sailed on January 2, 1943 loaded with general cargo and ammunition bound for Belfast, Northern Ireland. For unknown reasons the ship did not sail in a convoy and was not escorted. On January 9, 1943 the ship was in mid-Atlantic several hundred miles south of Iceland.



**SS Louis Lykes**

On the evening of January 9, 1943, U-384 located the solitary ship and fired four torpedoes while surfaced. Two torpedoes hit the ship which, according to German Navy records, disintegrated in a massive explosion. The captain of the U-384 reported that he had to submerge the submarine to prevent damage from falling debris. When the submarine re-surfaced 5 minutes later that was no sign of the ship or its crew. There were no other witnesses to the disaster, and there were no survivors among the 50 merchant crew, 34 Naval Armed Guard, and 10 U.S. Army personnel aboard, including the five Cadet-Midshipmen and two Cadet Officers. This was the single deadliest sinking in the Academy's history.

Cadet-Midshipman Charles Gassner was posthumously awarded the Mariners Medal, Combat Bar, Atlantic War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal, and the Presidential Testimonial Letter.

Charles C. Gassner was the youngest son of Charles C. Gassner, a stationary engineer at a meat packing plant in Pittsburgh, PA. Charles lived with his father, grandfather Conrad, grandmother Elizabeth and brothers Elmer C. and Robert J on Prospect Street in Pittsburgh. Charles Sr. and his parents were immigrants from the Alsace-Lorraine area of the French/German border. According to the 1940 U.S. Census, Charles Sr. was no longer living at the same address as his parents and children. Since Charles Gassner's next of kin is listed as his grandfather, Conrad, it is possible that Charles Sr. died, leaving the boys to be raised by their grandparents.