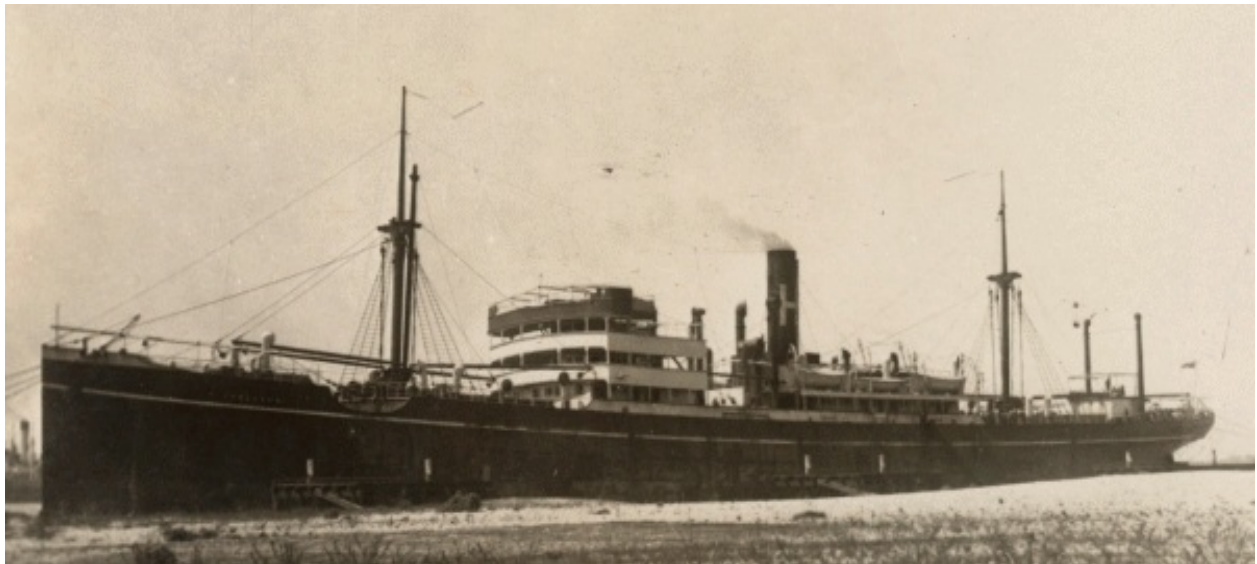


## William Bernard Ginnelly

Born: October 8, 1922  
Hometown: Philadelphia, PA  
Class: 1943  
Service: Merchant Marine  
Position / Rank: Engine Cadet  
Date / Place of death: November 14, 1942 / 12N, 30W  
Date / Place of burial: November 14, 1942 / Lost at Sea  
– 12N, 30W  
Age: 19



William B. Ginnelly signed on as Engine Cadet aboard the SS Scapa Flow on August 1, 1942 at Lynhaven Roads, Virginia. The Cadet-Midshipman Robert E. Benson, signed on the same day as Deck Cadet. The Scapa Flow was built in 1914 at a German shipyard. In December 1941 less than three weeks after attack on Pearl Harbor the Finnish flagged ship was requisitioned by the War Shipping Administration. Renamed, registered in Panama and crewed with a combination of U.S. and non-U.S. sailors, the ship began serving the U.S. war effort.



**SS Scapa Flow**

The ship sailed shortly after the new cadets signed on bound for Trinidad and Takoradi, West Africa. At Takoradi, the ship picked up an Armed Guard Sailor who had been left

behind in the hospital there and loaded a cargo of manganese. The ship proceeded on its scheduled calls to ports on the West Coast of Africa, including Marshall, where it loaded additional cargo of latex in drums and bales of rubber. At Freetown, Liberia the ship picked up another Armed Guard Sailor, a survivor from the sinking of the SS John Carter Rose a month before. The Scapa Flow also loaded the metal lifeboat from the John Carter Rose to replace one of its own boats. On November 7, 1942, the Scapa Flow sailed unescorted from Freetown bound for Trinidad and the U.S. East Coast with a crew of 47 and a thirteen man Armed Guard contingent.

Seven days later, approximately 700 miles northwest of Freetown, and 350 miles southeast of the Cape Verde Islands, the Scapa Flow was located by U-134. Due to a boiler casualty the ship was making a little more than six knots and was not steering evasive courses. According to German Naval Records, the U-134 had to request permission from German Naval Headquarters to attack the Scapa Flow. After receiving permission to attack, U-134 positioned itself and fired. At about 1430 the Scapa Flow was hit almost simultaneously by two torpedoes on the port side at #2 hatch and amidships, just below the bridge. The damage caused the ship to sink within 45 seconds of the impact.

In the words of Cadet-Midshipman Robert Benson, the torpedoes simply “ripped the ship apart.” Another survivor reported that the “bottom seemed to fall out of the ship.” Of all the ship’s life boats and rafts, only the life boat from the SS John Carter Rose could be launched although a hole in its hull had to be plugged with life jackets to keep the boat afloat. In the hours after the sinking, this boat was able to pick up 21 members of the crew, and seven Armed Guard Sailors. However, the survivors did not include Cadet-Midshipman William B. Ginnelly.

According to survivor’s accounts, sometime within an hour of so of the sinking, U-134 surfaced. After questioning the survivors the submarine’s commander and its crew offered the survivors bandages for the badly injured, gave them their position. Although the Cape Verde Islands were closer, adverse wind and current conditions prevented the life boat making the course. Sailing with the wind they set sail for Freetown, instead. The survivors spent 17 days on board the lifeboat under the command of the ship’s Fourth Officer, Mr. Keel. On December 1, 1942 the boat was spotted and rescued by an escort for a convoy bound for Freetown, HMS Armeria (K 187).

Cadet-Midshipman William B. Ginnelly was posthumously awarded the Mariner’s Medal, Combat Bar with star, Atlantic War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal, and the Presidential Testimonial Letter.

William B. Ginnelly was the youngest of John Ginnelly and Nora Ginnelly’s two sons and daughter. William’s siblings were Catherine (12 years older) and John, Jr. (7 years older). William’s father and sister worked at an electric storage battery manufacturer where John was a molder and Catherine an inspector. Documents from Kings Point show that William Ginnelly reported to Kings Point for Basic School on the afternoon of April 6, 1942.